

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS\*

It gives me much pleasure to meet you here in this Conference. Somehow Statistics has always had a great attraction for me. The fact that during the greater part of the time when I was a member of the Uttar Pradesh Government I kept this particular department under my personal charge may not prove that I have any worthwhile knowledge of the subject but I hope it does give an indication of my interest in it. To me, it appears that a series of statistical tables is not only a condensed source of useful information but is also something of a work of art. However, I know my limitations and do not intend to fall a victim to a tendency which so many laymen like me betray when addressing a body of experts like you. It would be foolish on my part to imagine that I can tell you anything particularly novel about the subject.

You are at present engaged in dealing particularly with agricultural statistics. It may be convenient, for certain purposes, to divide the earth into regions, some of which are predominantly agricultural and others apparently intended by nature for a more industrial economy but, taking the world as a whole, as we must, Agriculture easily occupies the first place in the economy of mankind. Even the non-vegetarian among us is dependent upon the produce of the earth for his food, even though indirectly, even if we leave out of consideration all the other amenities which agriculture confers upon us. Its importance has been recognised from the very earliest times. You know the Vedic injunction:

“अन्नम् बहु कुर्वति”

which can be translated into the modern slogan “Grow More Food”. In a country like India, the importance of agriculture can, therefore, be easily understood. Rulers of the country all down the ages have always paid the greatest attention to whatever methods were available in those days to help the agriculturist to carry on his work and as is borne out by the evidence of foreign observers during the times of the Maurya and Gupta emperors, even when two states were engaged in

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\* Inaugural Address by Dr. Sampurnanand, Governor, Rajasthan, at the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics, New Delhi, held at Jaipur, Rajasthan, on Friday, the 3rd January 1964,

a war, their contending armies did not disturb the cultivators working in the field.

Today, however, agriculture has become more important than ever. Population has increased immensely and is going up with rapid strides while there is very little land left which can be brought under cultivation, unless we invite a disaster on our heads by denuding the country of its forests. Food has to be found for these mouths. We can, to some extent, import food from outside but, in the first place, this is not a very happy position. We are living in a world which may any day be plunged into a destructive war of global proportions. If anything like such a catastrophe happens, all hope of transporting food from one country to another will have to be given up. Again anything purchased from outside has to be paid for either in cash or kind and a comparatively undeveloped country like India finds it very difficult to make payments in either of these ways. A mounting debt can hardly be said to be a satisfactory indication of national prosperity. We must, therefore, produce more and produce a greater variety of agricultural goods. We require not only enough food in a purely quantitative sense but good and well-balanced food as well.

I have spoken from what might be called the internal point of view but the production of agricultural goods has to be looked upon from another and a no less important angle. A country like ours which has yet to find its proper place on the industrial map of the world finds itself financially in a very difficult position. For a number of years, it must import goods on a large scale, finished articles, machines and machine tools, the larger means of transport, and defence requisites have all to be brought from outside but they have to be paid for. Even if the country is able to secure long-term credit, payment will have to be made ultimately for what it has purchased. The only way to prevent the national economy from tumbling down under their heavy load of unrepayable debts is to increase exports so that exports and imports may balance each other. But the fact is that at present the country has not much to export in the form of manufactured goods. What we can largely export is the direct or indirect produce of the farm-yard. Much of this is not in the processed form which the foreign customer demands. As the tempo of our industrial development has gone up, the necessity for more, more variety and better processed exports has grown apace. We are now in a position, fortunately, to export finished goods also and the Government has adopted measures which facilitate export of Indian goods. Still a good deal remains to be done. I understand that it was estimated that we should export

Rs. 35 crores worth of goods to make our balance of payment satisfactorily during the Third Five-Year Plan. This is the third year of the Plan but such figures as are available show that there is every reason to fear that this target will not be reached although the volume of our exports is growing up fast. It is also to be constantly kept in mind that the amount of foreign exchange available in the country is not very high for the reasons stated above and if, for one reason or another, it has to face exceptional demands in the near future, we may find ourselves in a very tight position.

If exports are to rise rapidly to enable our economy to expand without further weakening of our foreign exchange position, agriculture must also play its part. Unfortunately, it has not been able to do so. The surveys that have recently been made and the discussions that have been going on in the Parliament and elsewhere show that agricultural production has not come up to expectations. It is easy enough, of course, to give a list of reasons why this has happened. Every one knows them by heart. The proverbial conservativeness of the Indian cultivator is there to receive without protest any amount of blame, when everything else fails, the State Governments can be castigated for their carelessness and lack of vigour and vigilance in implementing the Plan. Perhaps all this is right. In any case, self-analysis is always very useful. But I hope that every impartial observer will admit that our planning has to be more complete and more realistic if it is to bear any relationship to the facts of life. And planning cannot be realistic without the willing and active help of experts like yourselves. You have to deal not only with actualities but trends as well. Your surveys have to indicate not only what is being done but what should be attempted. You have to keep before your mind the implications of agricultural production on the country's internal and external needs and you have to think in terms of human beings and not merely of figures. Figures are useful but they are only symbols. If some of these facts are not kept in mind, as unfortunately happens at times, the results are disastrous. It is possible for figures to be cooked. It is still more possible for them to be misinterpreted but the result in either case will be misleading. A rosy and optimistic picture may be painted but the man with a hungry family cannot be expected to be satisfied with figures alone. An unduly optimistic or pessimistic basis will make the whole of planning—and it has to be remembered that some kind of planning is absolutely necessary for undeveloped countries which want to catch up with more developed nations—go away and

the execution of such plans can only result in needless waste of time, money and effort and much misery to the common man.

We are witnessing great changes in the economic life of the rural population. There used to be a publication giving the results of quinquennial surveys of trades and occupations in the villages. I am not quite sure whether such reports are prepared or published these days. They made very interesting reading and showed how certain industries that flourished in those areas previously had practically disappeared, the people who had been carrying them on for generations having, no doubt, taken to other professions. Such economic changes are bound to be accompanied by important changes in social life also and cannot but have an important bearing on agriculture. The growth of large industries and the land reform which are being vigorously pushed through will no doubt affect agriculture. I have used the word 'will' but quite obviously they are having repercussions even at the present day. Take one item of land tenure to which Government policy is at present being directed. I refer Co-operative Farming. Assuming that efforts made by the States in this direction are crowned with success and Co-operative Farming is taken up on a sufficiently large scale, production will increase. It will be possible to use such resources as would normally not be available to the individual farmer but it would make a certain number of people surplus to requirement. There are a large number of persons seemingly employed in agriculture at the present time who could very well be dispensed with. Five or six people are engaged on a plot of land which will not require the services of more than two or three. They are there because there is no other work for them to do. Theoretically, they are employed but actually they should be classed among the unemployed. Their participation does not add either to the volume or to the quality of the produce, because they are really a living illustration of the Law of Diminishing Returns. If, however, Co-operative Farming becomes a fact, there would be no room for these men. Unless we begin to plan from now, the presence of a large number of such men will create not only an economic but a number of social problems as well. Such a result of Government policies can easily be foreseen and we should prepare to meet it. Our planning for the rural areas and for the development of agriculture should find a room for this. I cannot say if it is actually being done and, if so, who does it but tomorrow, if not today, you and others like you will have to take up this work as well. An estimate of the number likely to be rendered surplus will have to be prepared, suggesting also how they can be fruitfully employed.

I have not touched upon subjects like the provisions of credit, irrigation facilities, implements, seeds and chemical manures to the agriculturist because these questions, supremely important as they are, are being discussed at all levels all over the country. I might, however, make a passing reference to the question of manures. You will have seen from the papers that even a highly advanced country like the Soviet Union has realised that agricultural production has not kept pace with industry. It has, therefore, within the last fortnight or so, announced a drastic change in certain sectors of its current Seven-Year Plan. It is difficult for us at this distance to say what the exact reason is for this lag in production. There are thinkers whose opinions cannot be lightly brushed aside who say that one of the very important reasons for this fact is the utter absence of the personal profit motive in that country. I would not venture an opinion but all of us have to remember that agriculture like any other human activity is not merely a matter of physical science alone. One can ignore the facts of Psychology at very great risk, to say the least, but the leaders of Russia have come to the decision that what is needed is the further development of their chemical industries, so as to supply more and better manure to their fields. If that is true in Russia, it is much more so in India. We also need special attention to be paid to the development of our chemical industries from this special point of view. There must be a flow of cheap chemical manure to the villages but, at the same time, special attention has to be paid to the conservation of organic manures also. We are assured by the Government that the present production of coal in the country is highly satisfactory. This is happy news. You might well consider the advisability of how far, in the present circumstances, it is possible gradually to divert coal as fuel to the rural areas to save from destruction the cow-dung and the buffalo-dung that the cultivator is compelled to burn in the absence of any other fuel.

The Indian peasant may be a conservative but he is not a fool, even though he is not literate. He has a sound tradition of agriculture. He knows his soil and understands his climate and he certainly knows his own interests. He is prepared to take full advantage of modern knowledge, provided this knowledge is brought to him by sympathetic men who derive it not only from text-books but from experience of actual field conditions.

I do not think I shall detain you longer by wandering into fields which may not be quite germane to the discussions which you are

likely to hold here. I have been encouraged in my somewhat discursive mood by the fact that Prof. Rao is going to address you on the very important subject of Planning for Agriculture. As I understand the matter, the things to which I have made a passing reference are not entirely irrelevant to agricultural planning.

It is with the greatest pleasure that I inaugurate this Conference. Let me wish all success to your deliberations.