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WELCOME ADDRESS

By

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Vice-Chancellor, M. S. University of Baroda

and

Chairman, Reception Committee

It gives me very great pleasure in extending a very warm welcome to you all to Baroda. I consider it a privilege and an honour that you should have chosen Baroda as a place for your deliberations.

For more than one reason I am glad that you have chosen this place for your Annual Conference this year. I find that in your programme on the 27th December, you are presenting a special number of your Journal and also a memento to Shri Manilal Nanavati for his long and noteworthy services to this Society. It is in the fitness of things that a function of this nature in recognition of his services and appreciation of his work should take place in Baroda. If I may say so, Baroda was the place of his apprenticeship in agricultural economics and that was the place where he garnered his rich experience, the benefit of which he subsequently gave to your Society. Shri Manilal Nanavati had the good fortune of working under the late Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda, one of the most enlightened and farsighted Ruler that the princely States in India have been able to produce. As a Ruler of the old State of Baroda he was naturally keenly interested in the welfare of his subjects, bulk of whom were agriculturists living in the villages. Very early during his long administration, he had appointed a Committee to enquire into rural indebtedness of the agriculturists in the State of Baroda. He had also deputed one of his Officers to Europe to study the question of consolidation of holdings and the legislative steps taken in European countries to prevent the fragmentation and sub-division of holdings. With most of these enquiries and with most of these Committees, Shri Manilal was actively connected. He was also connected with the Committee appointed to consider the question of starting land mortgage banks in the Baroda State.

I had been connected with the old State of Baroda for nearly twenty-seven years and was Shri Nanavati's colleague and had the pleasure of working with him. You will forgive me, if I make a personal reference here that I myself like Shri Manilal Nanavati was very early associated with problems of agricultural economics, and as early as 1929, I had done some work on the rural economy of Gujarat which was the subject of my Doctoral thesis for the University of London. In 1931 the Government of Baroda under the administration of

Shri V. T. Krishnamachari had instituted a very comprehensive enquiry into socio-economic conditions of some of the villages in Gujarat and Saurashtra of the former Baroda State. These enquiries were conducted by the revenue officials of the Baroda State and their reports were edited by me. It, therefore, naturally gives me very great pleasure that you should have your Sessions here in Baroda, and I should have the good fortune of welcoming you here on this occasion.

The other reason why I am so glad that you are having your Conference here is the fact that we have a University here. Though this University is a young University, it has several well developed Faculties, well staffed and well equipped for research. Agricultural economics forms a very important part of our academic studies in this University both in the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Commerce. We have started a Course of Post-graduate Diploma in Co-operation which lays considerable stress on rural economic problems. We are thinking of soon having a department of agricultural economics.

We are passing at present through very momentous times in the history of our country. Ever since we attained independence, those, who have been in charge of the shaping of the destiny of our country, have been engaged in a great and noble enterprise of creating a new India. We are planning to build a new India—a new India pulsating with life and hope, where our efforts will be mainly directed in waging an eternal war against disease, famine, poverty and hunger. As President Eisenhower only a few days ago, while opening the American Section of the World Agricultural Exhibition, observed that “by a creative union of human spirit, fertile earth and inventive science.....we see in modern agriculture a most effective instrument for a better life among all men.”.....“Today, we have the scientific capacity to abolish from the world at least this one evil, we can eliminate hunger that emaciates the bodies of children; that scars the souls of their parents; that stirs the passions of those who toil endlessly and earn only scraps.”

Your meeting here in one sense is extremely opportune. We are at present busily engaged in formulating our Third Five-Year Plan and it is expected that agriculture will receive the highest priority in it. Your deliberations will have, therefore, a great significance for this country and for our Third Five-Year Plan.

In this welcome address, I have no desire to talk about some of the important problems of agricultural economics which will be the subject of your deliberations during your stay here. You will, however, forgive me, if I make a very brief reference to some things which are uppermost in my mind. We are a predominantly agricultural country and more than 70% of our population subsists on agricultural industry. Yet the development of this industry has not yet received the attention which it demands. It is almost pathetic to think that we are not able to produce food necessary for our own needs and that we have to import it from foreign countries and to find the necessary additional foreign exchange which is badly needed for the implementation of some of the important programmes of our plans. Even though we realise the necessity of increased production of food, we have been more concerned with agrarian reforms regarding the ownership and tenure of land than our immediate need the more productive exploitation of land. I do not for a moment say that the question about equity and justice as regards the ownership of land should not be considered at all. I

only feel that emphasis should be placed more at present on greater production from land than its more equitable distribution. Though there is much to be said for the magic of private property, the ownership of land should be accompanied by greater production. Small holdings can only be economic units of cultivation, if they are intensively cultivated, and the holders have adequate finances and have the knowledge of improved technique, proper use of manure, the improved variety of seeds so as to maximise the yield. Our present agrarian policy has resulted in the creation of small peasant proprietors without the necessary finances, technical skill and the knowledge of any improved technique in agriculture. Under these circumstances of our present agrarian economy, if the production from land is to be stepped up, it can only be done by some kind of joint farming or co-operative farming without in any way disturbing the ownership of the land. I know I am treading here on controversial grounds. There may be many practical difficulties in the implementation of such a policy ; yet from a theoretical point of view this seems to be the only obvious remedy.

May I again welcome you and wish you all success in your deliberations in a matter which will have a vital significance for the prosperity of our country and the welfare of our masses?