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PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES OF CO-OPERATIVE BANKING SYSTEMS IN INDIA: A DESCRIPTION PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT: The Co-operative banks also called co-operative societies re-incorporate in the legal formal form of co-operatives. All these co-operative banks/societies or co-operative institutes have to obtain a license from the banking regulatory body 'Reserve Bank of India (RBI)' before starting a financial business with strictly follow up the guidelines and policies set, and issues have been framed by the 'RBI' established under the Indian constitutional provision. At present, there are 68 different types of co-operative banks integrated with the Indian co-operative banking system. Most of them have been constituted to enforce sustainable agriculture development and sustain the rural economy. However, the Indian cooperative banking system's basic objective has not yet been fulfilled. Hence, in this paper, the author/s has described various Governing (Government) Support, Management Concerns, Financial Assistance, Banking Services and Facilities and Customer Awareness and Satisfaction, etc., internal as well as external problems faced by the Co-operative banking system of India.

Keywords: Co-operative societies, Co-operative banks, RBI, NABARD, StCD's, DCCB's, UCB's, Financial assistance, Banking service, Banking facilities, Customer satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The 'Co-operative banking systems in India forms the backbone for overflow of credit to rural areas to the sustainable development of agriculture and improves the social economy of rural areas in India'.

All banks whether the district central or urban co-operative banks offer basic banking services, facilities, functions, and activities in rural, urban, and semi-urban areas, where the banking facilities are scarce. These banks occupy a position of cardinal importance in the co-operative credit structure. The success and failures of these banks depend on their financial strength. Unlike commercial or private banks whose sole purpose is profit-making in anyways, but co-operative banks are government-backed institutions that are mainly setup to empower the agriculture sector in a state of India and improve agriculture productivity which makes farmers economically strong, then work towards the growth of agriculture economy, also provide access to credit in rural areas and secure the poor and the low-income groups both in rural and urban areas.

In India, the cooperative movement was founded primarily to address the issue of rural lending. The Cooperative Societies Act, which was passed in 1904, marked the beginning of Indian cooperative banking. To "promote thrift, self-help, and collaboration among agriculturists, artisans, and persons of restricted means," this Act set out to establish cooperative credit societies. This Act allowed for the creation of numerous cooperative credit societies. The Cooperative Societies Act of 1912 acknowledged the need for new organisations to be set up for cooperative credit provision, monitoring, and auditing. These institutions included a union of primary societies, central banks, and provincial banks.

Even if steps have been taken to create cooperative organisations and issue cooperative credit, progress was still insufficient during the time before independence. Even though it has been around for 50 years, cooperative credit only made up 3.1% of all rural lending in 1951–1952. A cooperative bank is a firm that was founded on a cooperative basis and conducts standard banking operations. The Co-operative Banks, like other banks, are established by raising money through share purchases, taking deposits, and making loans. The following is how cooperative banks differ from joint stock banks:

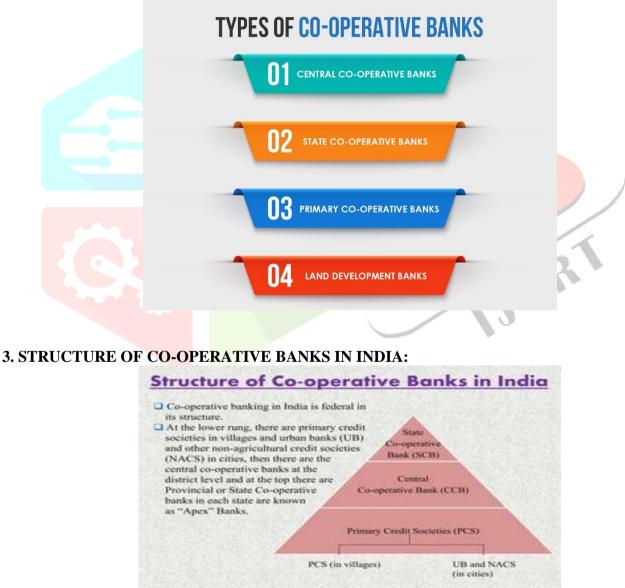
1. While joint stock banks issue shares with limited responsibility, cooperative banks issue shares with unlimited liability.

2. No matter how many shares a shareholder owns, they all have the same amount of votes in a cooperative bank. The number of shares a shareholder has in a joint stock bank determines how many votes he has.

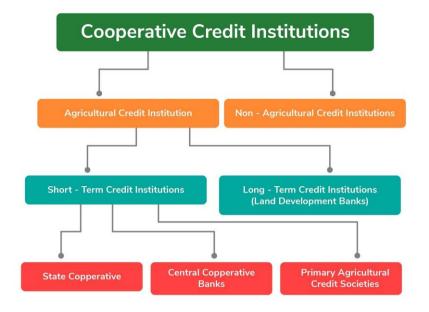
3. Cooperative banks often focus on rural loans and offer financial support for rural and agricultural activities. The credit requirements of trade and industry are of primary significance to joint-stock enterprises.

4. The structure of cooperative banking in India is federal. In the bottom position are Primary Credit Societies. State Cooperative Banks are located at the state level, and central Cooperative Banks are located at the district level.

2. TYPES OF CO-OPERATIVE BANKS:



4. STRUCTURE OF CO-OPERATIVE CREDIT INSTITUTIONS:



The differentiation between co-operative and commercial banks is pointed out as follows. **Tabale-3.01: Co-operative v/s commercial banks**

Co-operative banks	Commercial Banks
These banks provide limited services to mainly farmers, labourers, and small businessmen as government	These banks provide wide verity of services to individuals, trade, and corporations as business norms
Operations of a Co-operative bank which are confined a limited areas	Operations of these banks are comparatively longer than Co-operative bank
These banks' primary function is to accept deposits from members, and the public and grant loans to farmers and small businessmen	These banks' primary function is to accept deposits from the public and grant loans to individuals and businesses
These banks' provide limited products to limited members	These banks generally offer an array of products to their customers
These banks were incorporated under the 'Co-operative Seociety Act in 1965'	These banks are registered under the 'Banking Regulation Act 1949'
These banks can be private entities only	These banks can be either private or public entity
These banks follow the guidelines by both the Registrar of Co-operative Societies and RBI	These banks are following the guidelines of RBI and are governed directly by RBI
Non-performing assets (NPA) are comparatively less than commercial banks	Non-performing asset (NPA) are higher than the co-operative banks.
These banks don't offer merchant banking services to customer	These banks offering merchant banking services to their customer
These banks are don't offer SIP/Mutual fund service	These banks or their subsidiaries also offer SIP/Mutual fund service
These banks or their subsidiaries are not facilitating invoice discounting and L/C service	These banks or its subsidiary are facilitating invoice discounting and L/C service to manufactures or suppliers.

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These banks do not provision foreign exchange service	These banks provision foreign exchange services to customers
Member shareholders are the borrowers	Account holders are borrowers
These banks offering a slightly higher rate of interest to their depositors	These banks offer lower interest for loans or deposits than the co-operative banks
These banks' Member shareholders can influence the lending policy of the bank which they have voting power	These banks only provision access to accounting benefits, no such voting power to account holder
These banks are the apex institutions in the state, central/district C.C. banks operating at district the level, PCSs working at the village level	These banks are organised on a unitary basis
These banks do not make prepayment charges on loans	These banks are making prepayment charges on loans
These banks do not make processing charges on loans	These banks make processing charges on loans
In these banks, there is a limitation for the quantum of loan amount	Quantum of loan amount offered can be very high
In these banks, the loan disbursal processing time is very slow	In these banks, the loan disbursal processing time is very fast
In these banks, the eligibility criteria to get a loan is not very strict	In these banks, the eligibility criteria to get loan are very strict
In these banks, the member's credit score is very essential to release a loan	In these banks, the account holder's credit score is very essential to release a loan
In these banks, shares of the bank required to get a loan	In these banks, shares of the bank ate not required to get a loan
These banks mainly operating rural areas, but they also operate in urban areas.	These banks mainly operating urban areas, but also operate in rural areas on a small scale
In these banks, credit recovery performance is weak	In these banks, credit recovery performance is very strong.
In these banks, there are limited funds available	In these banks, there are massive funds available
These banks do not nationalised	These banks are nationalised
These banks are not operated with mutual funds	These banks operate with mutual funds

The co-operative banking system must play a crucial role in promoting rural and is especially suited to developing countries like India conditions. These banks come due to exist to the pace of agricultural development.

Some important factors of co-operative banks are determined as follows.

- Alternative Credit Source: provide an effective alternative to the traditional defective credit system of rural money lenders. These banks tend to save rural communities from the clutches of money lenders who have so far dominated rural areas, and they are exploiting the poor people with very high-interest rates and manipulating their bank accounts.
- Solution Cheap Rural Credit: the co-operative banks have cheapened the rural credits both a) directly means, these banks charge comparatively low-interest rates as well and b) indirectly means, the presence of these banks as an alternative agency has cut money lenders' domination in rural areas, thereby impose them to reduce the interest rate of lending and deposit money.

- ▶ **Productive borrowing:** the co-operative credit system is to be a change in the borrowing, credibility, and recovery nature of the loan. Previously the cultivators used to borrow for consumption and another unproductive purposes. These co-operative banks discourage unproductive borrowing.
- Savings and investment: it encourages saving and investments by developing the habits of parsimony among the agriculturists in the district and instead of holding money the rural people tend to deposit their savings amount in the co-operative or other financial institutions.
- **Improving agriculture and farming system:** it must help to improve the agric and farming system. These societies provide financial assistance to members to purposing quality seeds, and chemical fertilisers and assist in the adoption of modern technology. The marking provisions and processing societies have helped the members to purchase their inputs cheaply.

5. PROBLEMS OF CO-OPERATIVE BANKS:

Most of the committees, banking & financial commissions, expert groups, assessment reports, governing councils, major or minor research projects and research (PhD) studies that have reviewed the working of the co-operative banks structure and banking system in India have pointed out several professional, administrative, and service gaps and weaknesses of the co-operative banking system. Also, all the above have made the most appropriate suggestions and recommendations to improve the existing banking system. Realty fact revealed that there is a lot of distance between suggestions and the way to execute plans to improve the existing system according to suggestions made by all. Some of the major weaknesses, gaps and inconveniences are presented in the following sections which are broadly divided into five categories, such as:

2.1. Governing (Government) Support:

The major problem of co-operative banks in India is the Government and along with that, there are some other problems pointed out as below.

- **RBI & NABARD**: These banks still rely very heavily on re-financing provisions from the central as well as state governments, especially from RBI and NABARD. Prior approval of RBI is mandatory for business expansion through new units of StCB's, DCCB's and UCB's. All these co-operative societies are required to submit the proposal for the opening of new business units or branches to RBI through NABARD, whose recommendation is first and foremost taken into consideration while giving permission.
- Lack of democratic spirit these societies came into existence for sustainable rural development and empowerment of social welfare in rural areas. However, most of the studies and committees felt that co-operative members, directors and other authorised personalities of the society are ill-informed about ongoing happens and activities of the co-operative due to their illiteracy and indifferent attitude. The majority of the members do not respect to objectives of the society and only dominating personalities are make use to take advantage of the resources of the society.
- StCBs these banks are not able to frame and formulate their policies and guidelines for investment of their funds like surplus resources and expansion of business & business units because of certain administrative limitations and power of restrictions.
- Political interference in the process of sanctioning a loan, limiting of loan, finding borrowers for a loan and recovering of loan there is political inference and pressure on administrative chairs of the bank through various ways. The entry of politics, political influences, groups, and vested interests most effect on growth and development of the co-operative banking system.
- ▶ Imbalance of deposits deposits the fact the co-operative societies have covered all remote and rural areas across the country, its rural household's membership is only 45%, therefore 55% of rural households are not yet covered under these co-operative credit systems in India.
- Non-accountability the central as well as state governments gave too many more financial benefits through different agriculture, rural development and social welfare development schemes and packages. But then there was no further accountability which led to these co-operative societies becoming more and more lethargic and there was no contest they have become more costly, these are not all efficient, just become the worst part of government and pass on the burden of cost to customers.
- Co-operative legislations: due to co-operative legislation, enactments, and government interferences, i.e., deliberate control of societies by the government, nomination & participation of board of directors by the government and deputation of government officers or representatives to co-operative financial institution and other governing or monitoring activities has become a regular feature of day-to-day functionalities and administration of the co-operative societies.

- It found that, still there is no formal and unique system of co-operative governance in both urban & district co-operative banks, many of these banks have become the hotbed of political benefaction, deceitful financial practice, and gross mismanagement.
- The dual control system of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as well as the state government on cooperative banks; has the most impact to work in the form of uniqueness and effectiveness in these banks.
- Solution Co-operative banking policies unsound lending and borrowing policies resulting in over-lending to actual needs and diversions of loans for other needs.
- >>> Uncertain minimum prices for agriculture products.

2.2. Management Concerns:

In the co-operative banking system, there are three major inconveniencies such as a) financial irregularity for the banks, failure of the international control system and then under-reporting of exposures. Along with that, these co-operative financial institutions are suffering from following management issues.

- Inefficient Management & control: The management of a district co-operative bank is different from other banks, here everyone has the right to ask and change the banking system. Management appointed inefficient persons by the influence of local politicians or others, the staff is untrained, there is partiality in the appointment of staff and employees, lack of skills, knowledge, and experience of leading officers, for all-for always political pressure on working employees and employees do not have respect about co-operative banks principles and concerns, Indifferent management or mismanagement of primary credit co-operatives.
- **Improper supervision and control:** most of the district co-operative banks are suffering with sufficient administrative and professional staff to supervise and control over primary credit co-operative societies and monitor their work progress. Localised staff always show a don't care attitude about their higher officer's order and complete assigned responsibilities.
- ▶ **Financial benefits to big landowners** most of the financial benefits of the banks have been covered by big landowners due to they have strong socio-economic position.
- Limited capital: in these banks, deposits are not collected on a large scale. Due to limited capital of the bank, the bank does not strengthen financial assistance through loans to whoever has an increase in the number of registered members, primary credit societies and other Self-Help Groups.
- Insufficient deposits the D.C.C. Banks do not keep an attractive deposits and attractive rate of interest is not given to deposits also risks are not taken into collecting personal deposits, Thus, capital funds of D.C.C. Banks are not increased.
- **Lock of co-ordination** the different co-operative societies at different levels don't have proper coordination and collaboration between and among the central primary credit co-operatives disrupting working together. Without cooperation, coordination, and collaboration no system will move forward in a proper direction of achievement or development. Coordination & collaboration is the key to the success of any organization.
- Quality and Quantity: in this co-operative environment, it seems that the quality is more than quantity, those who go in for quantity this reasons a major inconvenience because they think it's a quick way to earn money. Thus, it generally affects productivity.
- ▷ Inadequate supervision over the make use of loans & advances by the eligibilities and poor recovery efforts.
- These banks don't look like financial institutions and don't inspire and stir confidence in the potential members, depositors, borrowers and other banking beneficiaries.
- Solution Most of the co-operative banks in India as well as in the state are suffering from a lack of professional management.
- > Lack of adequate control of co-operative banks over primary credit co-operatives and their functionalities.
- Lack of proper co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration between credit and marketing institutions.
- **Co**-operative credit now constitutes a unit proportion of the total borrowing of the farmers in their regional areas.
- The essentials of tenants and small & medium farmers are not yet fully met.
- The inability of the people is providing the prescribed security for loans borrowed by farmers, creates problems in the recovery of loans from farmers.
- >> Inadequacy of prescribed credit limits and ineligibility of certain purposes of loans used by the borrowers.
- >>> Lack of up-to-date land records, family conflicts on lands and more loans taken on the same land records.

The average loan credit amount has been issued per borrowing member and the proportion of loans going to weaker sections.

2.3. Financial Assistance:

The financial crisis of co-operatives has opened new scenario for the co-operative system, which is one hand has exaggerated its support and encouragement for business and sustainable development of the Indian rural belt, while on the other has forward against the limits of its governance system.

- **Higher rate of interest** these co-operative banks interest rates on bank loans are generally higher as compared to commercial banks. In this connection, while acquiring the loans certain amount is deducted and the deducted amount is kept as bank deposits for investment purposes.
- Defective loan providing system due to lack of proper planning, while granting the loan the financially stability, capability, and ability to repay or recover of loans, project report and progress of the society or banking management, etc., such information is not frequently and properly checked.
- **Financial weaknesses** most of the co-operative banks primary credit societies are financial weak and they are unable to meet the production-orientated credit needs. Organisational and financial limitations of these societies considerably reduce their stability and credibility to provide adequate credit to the rural population.
- Poor system of recovery overdue of the societies are increasing alarmingly at all levels and these not societies have not been able to provide adequate and timely credit to the borrowing beneficiaries of farmers or other members.
- Quality assets these banks most suffered from the low level of quality assets of loans and advances and from the highly unsatisfactory recovery loans which were borrowed by the customer.
- Limitation of funds: these banks are there is not own financial funds to stabilise the banking system; because these banks unduly depend on government share capital rather than member or societies share capitals.
- These banks are too small to be economical and viable and on the other hand, too many of them are dormant existing only on a document or paper record.

2.4. Banking Service and Facilities:Banking systems all over the world are functioning associated with traditional as well as electronic. Changing the attitude of customers, competitive ecosystem of the banking industry and improving the performance efficiency of the co-operatives. The banks are looking forward to restructuring the existing system by adopting emerging technologies. In the way that banks are facing some major problems in different aspects is mentioned in the flowing section.

- Delay in sanction of the loan loan sanctioning process system in these co-operatives, the loan management committee takes more time to scrutiny and select beneficiaries for loans and the loan system is more complicated due to involvement or influencing by unauthorised personalities, i.e., local politicians, political party leaders and big landowner and other whoever have locally strong. The loans are not given when it is needed and whoever is required. Hence, it impacts farmers approach to loans from the lenders, with this, the basic aim of these banks is to get as meaningless.
- Increasing overdue due to lack of proper pre-planning, the defective loan distribution system and sanction of non-agriculture loans, i.e., property, home, vehicle, and personal loans, etc., is there an increasing trend in these co-operative banks. Importantly unauthorised personalities like i.e., local politicians, leaders, and big landowners an inference is seen while recovering of loans. Thus, loan borrowers such as customers or members of the society do not repay the loan EMI's frequently, they always overlook on government deducting loans whoever is taken from Co-operatives. A serious problem of the co-operatives is the overdue of the loans in co-operative financial institutions which have been continuously increasing over the years. The overdue in the short or long-term credit structure are most alarming in Indian co-operative banking sectors and it makes more disruption the recycling of the funds and adversely effects on lending and borrowing capacity and efficiency of the co-operative societies.
- Modern Banking Practices these financial institutions are poor with modern technological infrastructure compared then the commercial banks. They do not properly incorporate modern practices such as networking, mobile-enabled services, self-services, and other customer assistance services. Due to this these co-operatives have been eliminated and remained back foot in digital era of banking and marketing.

- These banks are not doing well in all the states of India; only a few bank accounts are used for a major part of their personal business improvements and business expansion in other parts of villages, semi-urban and cities.
- The utilization of technological advancement in the computerisation of data management and automated banking services is absent, except few more urbanised banks or co-operative societies.
- The banks have large regional disparities in the distribution of co-operative credits.

2.5. Customer Awareness and Satisfaction:

Every financial institution's first and foremost objective is to 'fulfil the financial needs of their customer's by provide attracting services and facilities for them. Most commercial banks are doing the same things to attract customers by providing colourful assurances and offers. But in the case of co-operative banks are not showing interest in think over customers' needs.

- ▶ Unbalanced developments these co-operative societies do not keep a balance while sanctioned and provide enough financial assistance to PCCSs in the Indian states. Due to unauthorised personality inferences, some co-operatives get more financial assistance while other co-operatives get inadequate financial assistance. Thus, balanced development among and between the co-operative is not achieved.
- Professional efficiency: In these co-operatives, the working staff, expert officers, and administrative officers are not available in the bank to ask customers' needs, requirements, and their inconveniencies. Staff may be recruited through influencing bias; those are not well aware of baking components, and they are not able to handle and use modern technological advancements. Thus, the working efficiency of the bank is not able to reach the optimum level.
- Lack of professionalism it reflects the co-existence of the high level of skills and competencies in performance efficiency of duties and responsibilities entrusted to individuals.
- The majority of customers of these banks are farmers, they are coming from rural, and they are not much aware of the co-operative banks.
- Lack of computer and digital literacy among the customers to make use of innovative banking products and services.

The co-operatives are functioning associated with dual control systems, government interference, political interference & pressures, obeying democratic values, and lack of physical & ICT infrastructure. Along with that, there is no proper plan for utilization of financial assistance, scrutiny & allocation of loans, improper investments & business expansion, proper work plans performance improvements. Then, defective functioning, emphasis on capital raising & recovery of loans, inadequate capital & deposits, recovery of overdue and high-interest rates on loans. Further, the delayed scrutiny & approval of loans, efficient management, supervision of management & control, and balance development, there is no proper professional co-ordination between staff and management. The ill-literate customer, lack of customer awareness about banking services & facilities, lack of digital literacy among the customers, cost of agriculture, there is no fixed minimum price for all agriculture products and technology not yet enforced in the Indian agriculture system and other are issues while the impact on un-effectiveness and un-success of co-operative banks in India.

6. ADVANTAGE OF CO-OPERATIVE BANKING:

- Co-operative Banking provides effective alternative to the traditional defective credit system of the village money lender.
- It provides cheap credit to masses in rural areas.
 - Co-operative Banks have discouraged unproductive borrowing personal consumption and have established the culture of productive borrowing.
 - Co-operative credit movement has encouraged saving and investment, instead of hoarding money the rural people tend to deposit their savings in the cooperative or other banking institutions.
 - Co-operative societies have also greatly helped in the introduction of better agricultural methods. Cooperative credit is available for purchasing improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, modern implements, etc
 - Cooperatives Banks offers higher interest rate on deposits.

7. ISSUES WITH CO-OPERATIVE BANKING IN INDIA:

- Organisational and financial limitations of the primary credit societies considerably reduce their ability to provide adequate credit to the rural population.
- Needs of tenants and small farmers are not fully met.
- Primary credit societies are financially weak and are unable to meet the production-oriented credit needs.

- Overdue are increasing alarmingly at all levels.
- Primary credit societies have not been able to provide adequate and timely credit to the borrowing farmers.
- The cooperatives have resource constraints as their owned funds hardly make a sizeable portfolio of the working capital. Raising working capital has been a major hurdle in their effective functioning.
- A serious problem of the cooperative credit is the overdue loans of the cooperative banks which have been continuously increasing over the years.
- Large amounts of over dues restrict the recycling of the funds and adversely affect the lending and borrowing capacity of the cooperative.
- Most of the benefits from the cooperatives have been covered by the big land owners because of their strong socio-economic position.
- Cooperative Banks are losing their lustre due to expansion of Scheduled Commercial Bank and adoption of technology. They are also facing stiff competition from payment banks and small-finance banks.
- Long-term credit extended by them is declining.
- Regional Disparities: The cooperatives in northeast states and in states like West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha are not as well developed as the ones in Maharashtra and Gujarat. There is a lot of friction due to competition between different states, this friction affects the working of cooperatives.
- Political Interference: Politicians use them to increase their vote bank and usually get their representatives elected over the board of director in order to gain undue advantages.

8. DUAL REGULATION OF URBAN CO-OPERATIVE BANK:

Urban Co-operative Banks are regulated and supervised by State Registrars of Co-operative Societies (RCS) in case of single-State co-operative banks and Central Registrar of Co-operative Societies (CRCS) in case of multi-State co-operative banks and by the RBI.

The RCS exercises powers under the respective Co-operative Societies Act of the States with regard to incorporation, registration, management, amalgamation, reconstruction or liquidation and in case of UCBs that have multi-State presence, are exercised by the CRCS.

The banking related functions such as issue of license to start new banks/branches, matters relating to interest rates, loan policies, investments and prudential exposure norms are regulated and supervised by the Reserve Bank under the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

9. CONCLUSION:

Co-operative banks in India are undeniably crucial for local area credit delivery and financial inclusion. However, to fully realize their potential and maintain financial stability, comprehensive reforms in governance, financial health, technological advancement, and regulatory oversight are imperative. Such reforms will not only enhance the efficiency and reliability of co-operative banks but also reinforce their role as the backbone of credit delivery to local and rural areas. The recent steps by the RBI and other regulatory bodies are positive moves towards reinforcing the health and governance of the co-operative banking sector.

The cooperative banking system in India faces challenges, it also holds great potential for fostering financial inclusion and community development. Addressing the identified problems and leveraging the positive perspectives can contribute to the overall growth and sustainability of cooperative banks in the country.

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