



Dr. Verghese Kurien

The Legend Lives on

A man whose achievements defied those of ordinary mortals, whose single-minded mission of rural empowerment transformed a nation, and whose efforts propelled India into a global dairying power...the legend lives on. Tributes galore have been paid to the achievements of Dr Verghese Kurien. Today, as we celebrate Indian Milk Day, it is time to look back and ruminate on what made Dr Kurien one of India's most potent agents of change. Let us ponder on the vision of a man who continues to be relevant not just today, but will be the guiding light in all future endeavours related to dairying, rural and socio-economic upliftment. Let us examine the immense contributions of his oft-replicated Cooperative model as well as myriad other successes.

The Man, the Vision, the Legacy

Dr. Verghese Kurien was born on November 26, 1921 at Kozhikode, Kerala. His father was a Civil Surgeon in Cochin and mother was a highly educated Syrian Christian lady. He graduated in Physics from Loyola College, Madras in 1940 and then did B.E. (Mech) from the University of Madras. He went to USA on a government scholarship to earn his Masters in Mechanical Engineering from Michigan State University from where he passed with distinction.

Dr. Kurien returned from America in 1948 and joined the Dairy Department of Government of India. In May 1949, he was posted as Dairy Engineer at the Government Research Creamery, a small milk-powder factory in Anand. At this time the newly formed cooperative dairy, Kaira District Cooperative Milk

Producers Union Limited (KDCMPUL) at Anand, was facing stiff challenges from the privately owned Polson Dairy, which had hitherto monopolized the dairy trade. KDCMPUL had been formed in 1946 under the initiative of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Enthused by the challenge of doing something for the milk farmers, Dr. Verghese Kurien resigned from his government job and volunteered to help Shri Tribhuvandas Patel, the Chairman of KDCMPUL. As Manager, Dr. Kurien provided the necessary administrative and scientific direction to the dairy union leading to its rapid expansion.

By 1962, the Cooperative which was organized in 1948 by combining two village milk producer societies stood transformed. Dr. Kurien's efforts had brought into the Milk Producers' Union 219 farmer societies with 46,400 members.

The Taste of India...

Dr. Kurien realized the importance of brand in order to market the milk products of the Union. The catchy brand name AMUL (an acronym for Anand Milk Union Ltd.) was derived from the Sanskrit word “Amoolya” which means priceless. The brand which was launched in Oct 1955 and registered in 1957 soon became a household name. The birth and growth of AMUL tells the oft-documented success story which has served as a model for not just Indian cooperatives but has been replicated in several parts of the world.

Amul formed several co-operative societies for a group of villages. These co-operative societies collected milk from the village farmers twice a day. The payment was made to farmers according to the fat content in the milk. Sufficient steps (such as standard fat measurement machine, surprise checks, educating farmers etc.) were taken to prevent malpractices and enhance the overall process. The milk was then transferred to nearby Milk Chiller Unit on the same day. It was kept in storage for a few hours before being transferred for pasteurization and finally to the cooling and packaging unit. The efficient upstream supply chain was entirely designed by Dr. Kurien and Mr. Tribhuvandas Patel and by the end of 1960 Amul had become a major success story in Gujarat. This cooperative model not only made farmers earn more, but also brought about a social revolution by empowering women, increasing hygiene and medical standards of both people and cattle, and breaking caste and religious distinctions.

A singular achievement of Dr. Kurien, a feat at that time thought quite preposterous and impossible by global standards, was being able to produce milk powder from buffalo milk.

NDDB

In 1965, the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, created the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) with Dr. Verghese Kurien at the helm to replicate the success story of Amul throughout the country. Dr Kurien was the Chairman of NDDB from 1965 to 1998. Under his leadership the mission achieved thrust and direction with the launch of ‘Operation Flood’.

Operation Flood

‘Operation Flood’ was aimed at replicating and

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Positions held

- Chairman, National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India Limited
- Chairman, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd, Anand
- Chairman, Board of Governors, Institute of Rural Management, Anand
- Chairman, Tribhuvandas Foundation, Anand
- Chairman, Amul Relief Trust
- Chairman, Viksit Bharat Foundation
- Chairman, National Dairy Development Board (1965-1998)
- Chairman, Kiriya Milk Industries of Lanka Private Limited (1997-2000)
- Chairman, Indian Dairy Machinery Company (P) Ltd. (1992- 2001)
- Chairman, Board of Directors, Hindustan Packaging Company Limited (1987-1999)
- Chairman, Board of Anandalaya Education Society, Anand (1988-2001)
- Chairman, Bharat Aseptic Packaging Industries Ltd. (Polar Chem-Coats Ltd) (1992- 2003)
- Chairman, Technology Mission on Dairy Development
- Member, Technology Mission on Oilseeds Policy, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India
- Chairman, Gujarat Electricity Board (1960- 1966)
- Chairman, Board of Governors, Institute of Agriculture, Anand (1969-1972)
- Chairman, Gujarat State Cooperative Cotton Marketing Federation Limited, Ahmedabad (1975-1981)
- Chancellor, Gujarat Agricultural University, Dantiwada (1984-1985)
- Director, Bank of Baroda (upto 1969)
- Director, Central Board, Reserve Bank of India (1972-1983)
- Director, Industrial Development Bank of India, Bombay (1972-76)
- Director, Life Insurance Corporation of India Limited, Bombay (1970-1974)

scaling up the Anand Pattern Cooperative model all over India. Dr. Kurien ensured that NDDB set up for the purpose remained autonomous — legally and financially. He insisted on making farmers’ cooperatives an integral part of ‘Operation Flood’. Started in 1970 and culminating in 1996, it was one of the world’s largest rural development programmes.



Director of GCMMF. Under his stewardship India became the largest producer of milk in the world. Today, GCMMF is a ₹ 18,000 crore federation and Amul is one of India's strongest names. With the demise of Dr. Kurien, the song might have ceased, but the melody lingers on. At present, his model of cooperative dairy development links over 10 million farmers at 200 dairies across India producing over 20 million litres of milk every day.

IRMA

Dr. Kurien realized the importance of quality managers to serve the needs of rural farmers. He exhorted professionals to come forward to lead and work for rural India. With the help of like-minded people, he set about establishing the

Institute of Rural Management (IRMA) at Anand, Gujarat. A pioneering institute, it provides management training and research support to rural cooperatives.

IRMA's basic premise, as borne out by Dr. Kurien's work in dairy cooperatives, is that the key for effective rural development lies in professional management. He once said, "Students of IRMA should lead. Of course, when you lead you have to walk with the others. You cannot lead unless you work with others." Chairman of IRMA from 1979 to 2005, IRMA gained momentum to become one of the country's best management institutes under his guidance.

A Man of Exceptional Abilities

Indian Dairy Association was privileged to have Dr Kurien as its President during 1964 - 1965 where he left an indelible impression. In 1965, he had to leave IDA to head the newly formed NDDB. His association with IDA however remained strong. In 1978, he delivered the Inaugural Address at 14th Dairy Industry Conference (DIC) in Bangalore. In 1983, he

A National Milk Grid linked milk producers throughout India with consumers in over 700 towns and cities, reducing seasonal and regional price variations while ensuring that the producer gets fair market prices in a transparent manner and on a regular basis.

Dr. Kurien as the main architect of "Operation Flood," helped usher a "White Revolution" in India. Popularly known as the Anand Model, the programme assured a better economic future and sustenance for nine million farm households in 75,000 villages in India. NDDB has since integrated 96,000 dairy cooperatives in a milk grid following the 'Anand Pattern'.

GCMMF

In 1973, Dr. Kurien set up GCMMF (Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation) which brought under its umbrella the various village cooperatives of Gujarat. They could now compete with the private sector as a combined and stronger force. From 1973 to 2005 Dr. Kurien was the Chairman cum Managing

“ Self-reliance means many things to many people. For me, self-reliance will be achieved the day the last citizen of India is able to afford and buy the milk and milk products she desires. ... Let us look beyond. ”

“ We must create the financial, physical, research and extension, education and training, transportation, communication and information infrastructure on which a modern dairy industry must depend. We must innovate - new products, new processes, new markets, better marketing - the imperatives of a sustainable future. It is a task of all these years. ”

“ If we are to compete internationally, our goal must be to produce the world's finest milk and milk products at internationally competitive prices. ”

delivered the Keynote address at a symposium on Socio-economic Impact of Operation Flood at IDA (West Zone). Further, the 27th DIC was held at Anand in 1996 coinciding with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Amul. Befitting the stature of its illustrious President, IDA instituted the Dr. Kurien Award to honour persons who have rendered valuable service to the dairy sector.

In his memoirs, '**I Too Had a Dream**', published in 2005, Dr. Kurien says "... the leader has to set a personal example and make others understand in what ways 'change' is going to be useful. I believe that professionals working in our organizations must have clarity of thought combined with a passionate pursuit of mastery of their subject."

Awards

During his scintillating career, the "Father of the White Revolution" won many accolades and awards. The house where he and his wife lived in Anand was converted into the Amul museum and most of his awards are displayed there. According to Dr. Kurien, the more than 150 awards and citations from across the world which are housed in that museum are testimonials to the achievement of India's dairy farmers.

Personal Life and Philosophy

Dr. Kurien considered Tribhuvandas Patel his mentor and was greatly inspired by his ideals and values. In his autobiography, he says he deliberately chose to remain an "employee of farmers all his life" when he could have had the best of careers anywhere else. He often stressed the importance of integrity and honesty in one's life. "I have always spoken of integrity as the



most important of values. If you are always honest to yourself, it does not take much effort in always being honest with others".

Dr. Kurien has helped to lay the foundation of democratic enterprise. By successfully involving the people in their own development he gave meaning to what is today called "grassroots participation". The way was fraught with challenges but each time he lived up to them. "In every crisis, if you look carefully, you will spot an opportunity. My insistence is on finding and seizing that opportunity. I never try to sidestep a crisis." Truly, this pioneer's life serves as a lesson in leadership and enterprise.

Dr. Kurien's proactive professional career lasted almost six decades. He retired in 2006, having been a source of inspiration to a legion of followers. In the 1940's and 50's, when industrial reforms in India were unheard of, he formed one of the biggest cooperative movements for milkmen.

The Future

Dr. Kurien's baton has passed on to succeeding generations. With the advent and growth of the private sector, it would seem dairying in India is set for an overhaul. None but the great Dr Kurien realized that 'change was the only constant'. But this change had to be ushered keeping in mind the welfare of the rural dairy milk producers. Any change that was based solely on the intent of profiteering was doomed as the lot of the farmers remained unchanged. It is here that the seeds of institution building and social entrepreneurship laid by Dr. Kurien in the last century find relevance. It

AWARDS

- Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership (1963)
- Padma Shri (1965)
- Padma Bhushan (1966)
- Krishi Ratna Award (1986)
- Wateler Peace Prize Award of Carnegie Foundation (1986)
- Krishi Ratna Award (1986)
- the World Food Prize(1989)
- World Food Prize Laureate (1989)
- International Person of the Year(1993) by the World Dairy Expo, Madison, USA, and
- Padma Vibhushan (1999).

LANDMARKS

Honorary Degrees

- Doctor of Science, Michigan State University, USA (1965)
- Doctor of Laws, University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK (1974)
- Doctor of Science, Acadia University, Canada (1985)
- Doctor of Humane Letters, Ottawa University, Canada (1985)
- Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) from Anna University, Madras (1988)
- Doctor of Public Service (DPS) from the University of New England, Australia (1989)
- Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) from University of Guelph, Canada (1991)
- Doctor of Science from Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidya Nagar (1992)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris Causa) from Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University, Hyderabad (1996)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris Causa) from Gujarat Agricultural University, Anand (1996)
- Doctor of Social Sciences (Honoris Causa) from the University of Roorkee (2000)
- Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) from the Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur (2000)

elaborates on how an individual with personal integrity along with commitment, dedication and the national spirit can bring about social and economic transformation.

Ahead of his times, Dr. Kurien was the first to advocate women empowerment. He affirmed that the White Revolution or 'Operation Flood' — the greatest and most successful



cooperative endeavour in the world — was almost entirely due to the commitment of rural women. Dr. M.S. Swaminathan in his tribute to the legend published in September 2012 of 'Indian Dairyman' says that Dr. Kurien realized the importance of a decentralized production of milk primarily by women and supported by key centralized services in animal nutrition and processing. With Cooperative milk societies he developed the 'one stop' method of meeting the needs of over 75 million women milk producers.

Further, India has today realized the worth of its sizeable buffalo population-the country needs to harness this advantage fully in order to forge ahead of other dairying nations. As Dr. Swaminathan says, "Thanks to Dr Kurien's emphasis on payment based on butterfat content, the buffalo started gaining atten-

tion once again. The survival of milch buffalo breeds and their dominant role in the dairy industry today is primarily because of milk purchase and pricing procedures introduced by the visionary."

Tenets that Hold True

Some of Dr. Kurien's iconic beliefs can serve as a beacon to successive dairying generations:

In his book 'An Unfinished Dream' (foreword by Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug) he says "Cooperatives was an act of faith for me. My unfinished dream will only be accomplished when the farmers of India have a level playing field to compete with other forms of business...."

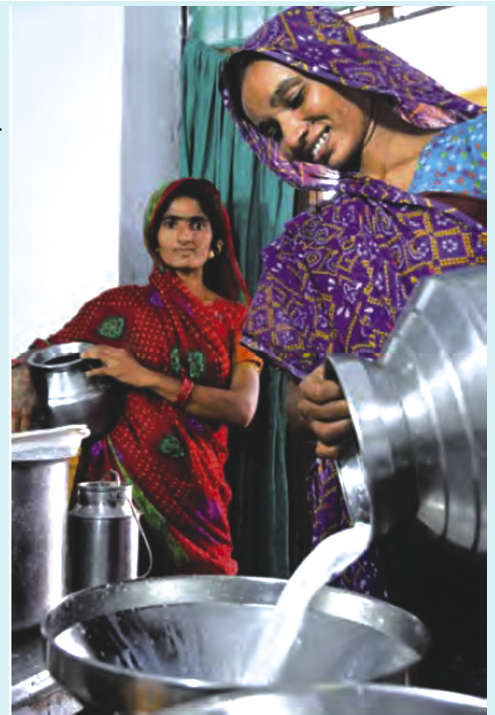
Meticulous to the end, Dr. Kurien placed great emphasis on the role of the professional. To become an agent of change, he has to perform 5 tasks: Mastering one's subject; a focus on other's need; an internalization of the exterior world one serves; constructive iconoclasm towards one's bureaucracy; and clarity of mind about the elements which make up great endeavours.

Technology

In Dr. Kurien's words, "the exploitation of technology has been central to our success in increasing the national milk supply. Dryers, UHT tetra-pak processing, modern

MILESTONES IN THE KURIEN GRAPH

- 1949**– Verghese Kurien arrives in Anand to begin his career at the Govt. Research Creamery
 - persuaded by Shri Tribhuvandas Patel, Chairman of KDCMPUL to set up dairy processing plant
- 1955** Birth of ‘Amul’ (Anand Milk Union Ltd.)
 - Dr. Kurien successfully produces milk powder from buffalo milk
- 1965** Creation of NDDB by Prime Minister, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri with Dr. Kurien as Chairman
- 1970** NDDB launches Operation Flood
- 1973** Establishment of GCMMF (which owns & markets Amul) with Dr. Kurien as its Chairman
- 1999** Honoured with the Padma Vibhushan
- 2006** – Retires from active service.
 - Stays on in his beloved Anand which he made his home nearly six decades ago.
- 2012** The legend passes away



vaccines, least cost feeds — all of these have contributed to a modern and efficient dairy industry that returns more to the producer.

Cooperative Leadership

India has learnt the abiding value of growth led by cooperatives through Dr. Kurien’s example. Cooperatives help ensure that our economy is built on a strong agricultural foundation. They can help develop a new generation of leaders who are able to rise above considerations of self.

Purposeful Co-existence

In the case of dairy, the private sector is continuing to support and encourage milk producers. Dr. Kurien was of the view that it should also create infrastructure to link it directly with the producers. The cooperative and capitalist structures can coexist to mutual benefit.

Prof. Y.K. Alagh, ex-Chairman, IRMA says that the demise of Dr Kurien does not signal the end of the iconic era. His legacy is in fact carried forward in several ways. The ambitious National Dairy Plan has recently been launched. This National Dairy Development Plan speaks of co-operatives, self help groups, and producer companies. Many NGOs have been working on these models with NABARD providing financial support to them.

Today, we find ourselves in the thick of a raging debate on FDI. In this context it is important to remember how Dr. Kurien, decades ago, turned the tables around a possible international conspiracy. By dumping butter oil and milk powder on to a poor nation like India, the Europeans would have killed our market, competitiveness, and abilities. Kurien used these very tools to launch ‘Operation Flood’ to make India self-sufficient in milk and even export dairy products. The onus of carrying forward these gains now rests on us.

Progressive and forward-looking to the core the milkman always had the best interests of producers at heart. It is up to the future generations to build upon this legacy.