

# Lest we forget!

[Nutrition](#), [Healthy Food](#)



Lest we forget! Dr. Verghese Kurien - the man who came to Anand almost 60 years ago after completing his graduation in the US, had decided to leave soon in search for better opportunities. But something made him stay back forever — the “ billion-litre” idea - to transform the life of millions of milk producers in the country - and he stayed on to become the “ Milkman of India”, the Father of White Revolution. Hardly, one would find a young graduate with a lucrative career ahead settling to improve the lives of the poor but Dr. Kurien was an extraordinary man who cherished a dream of the dairy industry of India. Kurien was only 28 when he came to Anand in Gujarat in 1949, and was soon working relentlessly to help a budding cooperative grow. For him the dairy farmers were the rightful owners of the milk business. By 1955, the co-operative owned Asia's largest dairy and was producing more than 20, 000 litres of milk a day. This is when AMUL (meaning priceless), Asia's top milk-producing brand today, was born. Soon Anand had been transformed from a small village in the country to the Milk Capital of India. Kurien replicated the Anand model throughout India as Operation Flood, making India the world's largest producer of milk. Not only did Gujarat’s farmers benefit immensely from Kurien’s work, the other milk producing states such as Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh also started flourishing under Kurien’s guidance. He is hailed as an iconic figure who transformed Bihar and gave the milk revolution to the state, while he was the chairman of the Patna Dairy Project. He strongly believed that by placing technology and professional management in the hands of the farmers, the living standards of millions of rural poor could be improved. His creation of community owned cooperatives empowered millions of rural families, mostly

landless and small farmers, in India. Today over 10 million farmers across the country at 200 dairies produce over 20 million litres of milk a day. It was due to success of the Operation Flood model that India achieved the laurel of becoming the largest milk producing nation globally. India today contributes about 17 per cent of the total milk production in the world. Kurien's revolutionary efforts in the milk industry helped the milk producers in the country produce milk powder from buffalo milk while the rest of the world used cow milk to make milk powder. Kurien was an excellent marketing person. He marketed the "Anand Success Story" as a management model for rural institutional development wherein a commodity was used as a tool for socio-economic development. In order to improve the liquid milk marketing system across the country, Kurien set up a milk intervention programme, a national milk grid, under the Operation Flood programme. Through the milk grid he ensured that surpluses from higher milk produce areas reached deficit areas. At the demand side, he established Mother Dairy and bulk vending system which could deliver loose hygienic milk at a reasonable price to the urban consumers in competition with the loose milk supplied by city milk dwellers. He not only established around 30 institutions of excellence including AMUL, GCMMF, IRMA, NDDB but also created several grassroots institutions especially to provide skill-oriented training and encourage socio-economic development of the rural masses. Winner of Padma Vibhushan (India's second-highest civilian honour), the World Food Prize and the Magsaysay Award for community leadership, Dr. Kurien played an instrumental role in the marketing of award-winning director Shyam Benegal's greatest work 'Manthan' featuring Kurien himself on the silver

screen for his path-breaking initiatives in the milk co-operative movement. Kurien, however, had a painful exit from the institutions he founded. In 2006 he stepped down as founder-chairman of both GCMMF and IRMA. His detractors felt he was unduly clinging on to power. It is indeed a matter of shame that the man who deserved much India's highest civilian honour - the Bharat Ratna — was not conferred during his lifetime. After Kurien's death, P. A Joseph, his former executive assistant, said, " We don't want it now even if it is conferred." Who could believe that the man who gave so many milk drinkers to the country, did not himself ever taste milk! Even if Dr. Kurien was not awarded Bharat Ratna, India salutes him for empowering the lives of millions of farmers and for bringing the Milk revolution in the country. Every young graduate can look forward to walk on the footsteps of this man, who made India milk sufficient country on a global platform. Amul's' mascot for the first time ever was seen weeping (since 1964) in an advertisement " Thank You For Giving us Hausla, Pragati & Anand..... Dr V Kurien 1912-2012," the ad read.