

I Admire

The word 'Amul', brings to me the vision of a chubby wide eyed girl in a polka dotted dress making a social comment usually with a pun and ending with the words "utterly butterly delicious - Amul". The sheer thought fills me up with a nice feeling, taking me down the road to my childhood, teens and the years gone by – a warm and happy feeling. The advertisement campaign which started in 1967 is probably the world's longest running campaign based on a theme and still brings in the same cheer and fun as it has for 40 years.

Amul or Gujarat Milk Marketing Federation was started in 1946, over 60 years back as a small cooperative in Kaira District in Gujarat, pasteurising milk for the then monopoly franchisee of the government called Polson Dairy. Farmers had to travel long distances for delivering milk which in summer months often went sour. The private traders and middlemen controlled the marketing, distribution and prices of milk and made unconscionable profits. Milk being a perishable commodity, farmers were at the mercy of these men who exploited the situation and pushed the farmers to destitution. These farmers inspired by leaders like Sardar Patel, Morarji Desai and importantly, a local farmer and social worker, Tribhobandas Patel decided that only if they took their destiny in their own hands and marketed milk themselves, they would salvage their situation. This realisation is called Amul, where they could pool their milk and work and cooperate as a society. Dr. Verghese Kurien joined the movement shortly.

The growth of Amul from 250 odd farmers in 1948 to about 2.4 million producer members today is a very fascinating one. A key reason for success is use of indigenous technology, then developed by Mr. H.M. Dalaya for spray drying and processing *buffalo milk* which was never done earlier anywhere in the world. This changed the shelf life of milk forever and this innovation to a great extent laid the bed rock of white revolution in India.

Amul was born in a world of scarcity and exploitation and as an organisation for 60 years, stayed within their core competence of being in milk related businesses. They developed a world class supply chain and managed their costs very efficiently, to make their products affordable and creating a 'value for money' proposition.

They created admirable infrastructure for supply, inventory management and distribution, used technology and best practices from global businesses to create a sustainable and thriving business. As an example, Amul has a Geographical Information System, which tracks the movement at the milk collection centre through to the marketing system. The end to end of supply chain!

Amul progressively entered every segment of the value chain of dairy business from milk, ice creams, ghee, flavoured milk to cheese etc.

They compete very successfully against some of the largest private sector and global companies and today are nearly a billion dollar enterprise. Incidentally, in October 2007, Amul's pro-biotic ice cream won the prestigious International Dairy Federation Marketing Award at the World Dairy Summit in Dublin.

This is what makes Amul so special. A dream of a few villagers, standing up against exploitation and then going on to innovate to bring in the wave of white revolution and changing the rural scape in many states of India forever.

This is the India for our dreams and admiration. The dream gets bigger everyday.

Kaushik Dutta

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