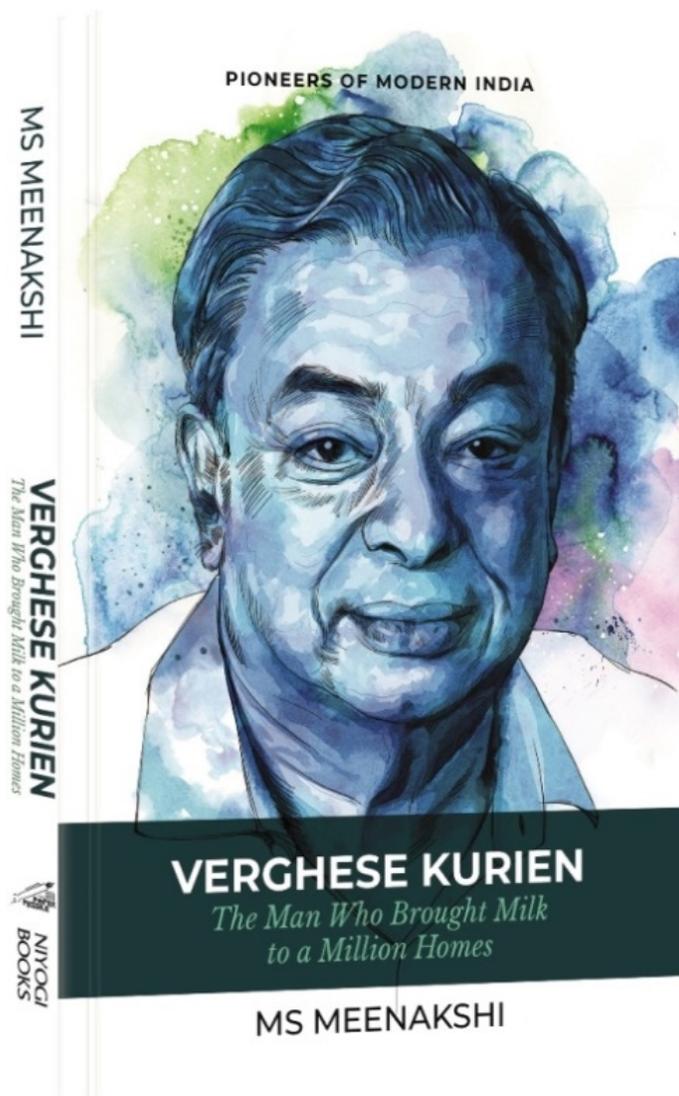


Vergheese Kurien: The Maker of India's Self-Sufficient Dairy Sector



Vergheese Kurien: The Man Who Brought Milk to a Million Homes. Written by M.S. Meenakshi. New Delhi: Niyogi Books India, 2024, ISBN: 9789391125981.

Vergheese Kurien, a visionary entrepreneur and social reformer, revolutionized India's dairy industry, transforming the country from a milk-deficient nation to the world's largest milk producer. Kurien's life and works are a testament to his unwavering commitment to empowering rural communities and challenging

entrenched interests. The Book titled "Vergheese Kurien: The Man Who Brought Milk to a Million Homes", written by M.S. Meenakshi, critically examines the life, achievements, and legacy of Vergheese Kurien, evaluating his impact on India's dairy industry and rural economy.

The book is structured into eleven Chapters, namely, (1) Life before Anand, (2) Settling Down in Anand, (3) Polson and Milk Cooperatives, (4) Acceptance and Growth, (5) A Homecoming of Love and Surprises, (6) The Impossible Made Possible, (7) AMUL – Taste of India, (8) Empowerment of the Cooperative Movement, (9) The White Revolution, (10) The Wind Beneath the Wings, and (11) Epilogue: The Man and His Vision.



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Chapters 1 and 2 depict his early life and journey into dairy development. Verghese Kurien came from a well-educated family and graduated in engineering from Madras University in 1943. Initially inclined toward metallurgy, Kurien was awarded a scholarship to study in the United States, where he pursued a Master's degree in Metallurgy and Dairy Engineering from Michigan State University. Upon his return, he was assigned to a government dairy in Anand, Gujarat, which is a rural town that would become the epicentre of his revolutionary work. Although reluctant at first, Kurien was soon inspired by Tribhuvandas Patel, the leader of a small cooperative, and became committed to the cause of rural dairy farmers. This pivotal moment redirected his life toward the cooperative dairy movement, fundamentally altering India's agricultural landscape.

In Chapters 3 to 6, Meenakshi portrays the formation of the Anand model and the cooperative movement in India. In 1949, Kurien joined the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union (KDCMPU) in Anand, Gujarat, as its first paid manager. He, along with Tribhuvandas Patel, a local farmer-leader, pioneered the Amul (Anand Milk Union Limited) model. This cooperative union empowered the farmers, ensured fair prices, and introduced innovative dairy practices. Amul's success inspired the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), which Kurien founded in 1965.

In Chapters 7 and 8, Meenakshi describes the ideas of the Operation Flood and the White Revolution. Kurien's brainchild, Operation Flood (1970-1996), aimed to replicate the Amul model nationwide. This ambitious project linked rural dairy cooperatives to urban markets, increasing milk production and improving rural livelihoods. By 1996, Operation Flood had

transformed India into the world's largest milk producer, with over 70 million farmers participating. The cooperative movement became a catalyst for economic change, boosting the incomes of millions of rural households and initiating the socio-economic empowerment of rural women, who were at the forefront of milk production in many communities. Kurien's White Revolution had several critical impacts. First, it shifted India from a milk-deficient country to the largest milk producer globally by the late 1990s, effectively reducing the country's dependency on imports. Second, Operation Flood provided a sustainable income for rural farmers, enabling rural communities to become economically self-sufficient. The project's benefits reached beyond financial gains: rural dairy cooperatives offered social cohesion and fostered education, healthcare, and infrastructural development within these communities. By integrating modern technology with traditional agriculture, Kurien achieved what was previously deemed impossible in Indian agriculture.

In Chapter 7, the author also describes how Kurien faced formidable opposition from entrenched interests, including multinational companies and bureaucratic red tape. Undeterred, he championed the cause of Indian dairy farmers, advocating for policies that favoured domestic production over imports.

This Book is a powerful rejoinder of the critical role Verghese Kurien played in shaping not just milk cooperative movement in India, but societies at large as he reinforced a visionary leadership in India's dairy landscape. This is a must-read book for the budding dairy professionals, public policymakers, public administrators, public sector leaders, and social science researchers, who will not only enrich their knowledge through this book, but also learn the making of self-sufficiency in India's dairy sector.

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