

## The Role of *Manthan* in Depicting the White Revolution in (Gujarat) India

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### **Introduction**

The White Revolution, also known as Operation Flood, was a movement that began in 1970, led by Dr. Verghese Kurien and the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). One of its primary goals was to mobilize dairy farmers into cooperatives to enhance milk production across India. This initiative resulted in significant improvements in the dairy industry and the livelihoods of countless farmers. White Revolution; India changed from a country that had a deficit of milk into being the largest producer of milk in the world. This movement not only provided millions of rural farmers with economic gain but also transformed rural society by establishing fair prices and eliminate agricultural who had, previously exploited these farmers. The White Revolution is one of the great achievements in India's agricultural history initiated in 1970 during Operation Flood. Dr. Verghese Kurien, who is known as the Father of the White Revolution in India, was the head of the movement carried out by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) that transformed India from a milk-deficient nation to the world's largest milk producer country. It was vital in addressing food management, empowering the farmers, achieving rural development. To enhance milk production and production of dairy products, to develop dairy cooperatives, ensure fair compensation to the farmers and assure dairy products self-sufficiency was the main objectives of the White Revolution. The movement was large for imported milk products, the rural farmers had a tough time making a living due to middlemen betrayal. The White Revolution was the answer that provided a National Milk Grid connecting the rural areas.

The revolution itself took place in three phases. The first phase, often referred to as, “The Milk Phase,” lasted from 1970 until 1980 and focused on developing urban milk grids using the available surplus milk powder and butter oil from the European Economic Community. The focus of the project from 1981 to 1985 was on improving basic household infrastructure such as transportation and extending the area for milk production towards rural regions and developing dairy cooperatives in the industrial sector. The third and final phase witnessed from 1985 to 1996 focused on enhancing dairy product variety, enhancing product quality supremacy as well self-sufficiency. New methods, i.e. proper feed management, veterinary care as well as proper cattle breeding helped to achieve the objectives of the White Revolution. Furthermore, the introduction of modern milk storage facilities along with bulk milk chillers also helped maintain the quality of the milk produced. Amul started as a cooperative but rapidly grew during the revolution and came to symbolize the success of the revolution itself.

However, the White Revolution had many challenges too. The most glaringly obvious in rural parts were the roads and refrigerator facilities. Some states were ahead then the others, and not every corner was able to take advantage of revolution. There was also concern regarding the survival of pure Indian cattle, as there was too much dependence on crossbreeding. These failures, however, do not compromise the legacy of the White Revolution as it is. It made most of its population dependant on milk and dairy products through the provision of these products across the country, thus, ensuring health as well as food security. By 1996, the movement gave birth to hundreds of dairy cooperatives supporting and benefiting over 10 million farmers, underscoring the power of unity.

### **Objective**

This paper explains how *Manthan* portrays the cooperative movement in Kheda, and what it documents as the overall effects of the White Revolution. While analysing the cinematic case, we will investigate the reciprocal character of social reality and audiovisual industry where the latter represents and contributes to social change.

## **Significance**

The importance of the impact of *Manthan* and many others as well is because it allows us in the understanding of how films can be to understand and educational tools geared towards people on formidable social issues. Films such as *Manthan* explore how collective action can lead to rural advancement and community empowerment and motivates the audience to see possibilities of change in the real world.

## **Literature Review**

In fact, the postcolonial theory would further discover *Manthan*. For instance, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak analysed the ways through which postcolonial societies can rebuild the power structures remained by the colonial rule. Said's *Orientalism* criticized western powers acts of describing the orient as a motivation for colonization (Said 1978). Bhabha's *Hybridity* theory discloses the process through which the colonized people manufacture new, mixed identities to deal with colonization (Bhabha 1994). Meanwhile, Spivak concentrates on the voices of the subaltern or those who belong to the marginalized, arguing that they are not heard very often in any story (Spivak 1988). These ideas help us comprehend how *Manthan* portrays the rural poor and their struggle for empowerment.

Shyam Benegal's movie *Manthan* released in 1976 is a powerful portrayal of the photographic depiction of the rural India owing to the green revolution. It highlights how females and low-class cultivators work towards establishing a milk cooperative that challenges the traditional authorities in the society. One such effective way of getting the deeper meaning of the movie is the postcolonial theory which analyses the effects of colonization and the means by which people heal themselves. For the most part, it is intellectuals like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak who can offer foundational viewpoints enabling the audience comprehend how *Manthan* engages the themes of empowerment, identity and resistance.

Edward Said is said to have had a unique perspective, as discussed in his 1978 book, *Orientalism*, where he uses Eastern societies being marked as weak and needing salvation as precursors to justify Colonialism. This perception is defied by *Manthan*. The focus of the film is the strength and determination of the rural poor instead of presenting them as vulnerable people. The communities unite and insist on their transformation despite the odds that are against them. With the cooperative movement shown in the film, the communities can sustain themselves and prove that they do not need foreign intervention to survive.

Bhabha's Hybridity defines hybridity as the process through which colonized people integrate new influences with ancient methods to create something new. This happens to be in *Manthan*, as demonstrated in the cooperation between the villagers and the urban specialist, While Dr Rao adds modern ideas to the cooperative, the villagers add their well of indigenous wisdom and customs. They come together to constitute a system that serves the interest of both parties. This blending of old and modern ideas allows the communities to remain faithful to their roots while adapting and developing.

Gayatri Spivak is concerned with the voices of the silenced or Marginalized place, women in particular. Women are seen as important characters in *Manthan*. One such character here is Bindu, who presents before us the problems of women in the rural areas, both those of poverty and patriarchal shadows, but does not stay silent and becomes a part of the movement. This film voices women like her, showing their active involvement in changing and thus liberating themselves rather than considering them mere victims.

Today, postcolonial studies concentrate on ideas that are pertinent to *Manthan* as well, such as decolonial thinking and intersectionality. Focus of decolonial thinking relates to emancipation from colonized minds politically, economically, and culturally. Regarding this, via cooperatives,

*Manthan* illustrates how an economy in a rural area becomes independent. Intersectionality is the ideology that identifies how caste, class, and gender intersect in the lives of an individual. It skilfully captures how such factors affect the lives of villagers, making their struggles and triumphs seem real and alive.

Some other studies have emphasized the economic significance of the White Revolution. The authors analyse how it accelerated milk production, opened access to markets, and increased farmers' earnings. Almost all critical works on Indian cinema always mention how films can reflect social truths. Movies such as *Lagaan* and *Swades* also express ideas about rural empowerment, much like *Manthan*.

### **Historical Context**

**The White Revolution:** During the 1970s, Operation Flood was started, which increased milk production on the Indian subcontinent. Organized by Dr Verghese Kurien, it formed cooperatives among farmers so that they could directly market milk without intermediaries. From then onwards, the milk vendors were able to get better prices and the evil middlemen, who exploited them generation after generation, were eliminated from the process. Among the most well-known successes of cooperative dairies in India is the Anand Milk Union Limited, or AMUL. From providing leadership in increasing milk production and farmer empowerment, the White Revolution had shaken the foundations of rural India's economy and society (Kurien 1997).

**Kheda District:** The dairy industry was not developed much in Kheda even before the White Revolution. The peasants got hardly any amount for their milk, and it was a person in between who earned most of the profit. It was only with cooperatives that the milk was sold at fair prices, uplifting the lives of the respective farmers. It changed the local dairy scenario and enabled the region to flourish economically and socially (Kurien 2005).

### **Manthan: the Churning**

*Manthan* (1976), by Shyam Benegal, is an inspiring story of White Revolution in India, especially through the setting up of dairy cooperatives to improve and strengthen the rural economy. A committed veterinary physician, Dr. Rao, is deputed by the government to aid the villagers in setting up a milk cooperative in the desert Gujarati village of Kheda for the movie. The movie clearly depicts how the lives of village people transformed in the wake of group exertions supported by the wisdom and experiences of Dr. Rao himself. At the start of the movie, the villagers are very cynical of Dr. Rao and his intentions. This cynicism is deeply rooted in the social and economic structures that have been prevalent in rural India for generations. Change is not sought after, and outsiders are not believed by the people. Instead, middlemen have had a hold over their lives and exploited their work to their own advantage, making them dependent and pauper. The people in the village are suspicious when Dr. Rao first arrives, and he finds it hard to convince them of the cooperative's potential benefits. Their caste divisions, especially those of farmers, made them wary of the idea that a joint venture could benefit them equally. Their perception of Dr. Rao, however, starts to shift as the cooperative takes shape and the villagers begin to realise the real advantages. In order to guarantee better living conditions and higher prices, Dr. Rao teaches them the value of milk production and how they may manage the process through teamwork. The villagers start to realise that social and economic advancement can result from their combined efforts as they see an increase in their milk cooperative earnings.

*Manthan* centrally focuses on the elimination of caste and class differences. The cooperative provides a much-needed opportunity for different castes that were divided and isolated in the past to work towards a common goal. This cohesiveness brings social cohesion along with economic benefits. The people of the villages, coming to realize that the cooperative can be a tool to break the currently solidified structures, start trusting Dr. Rao more. Dr. Rao helps the villages develop a feeling of collective pride and shared responsibility. Thus, the cooperative

modifies the village's gender dynamics. Women, who had previously been limited to simple domestic duties and had no authority over the family budget, now actively participate in joint endeavours. They now take part in the production and distribution of milk. They now have a voice in society and significant financial freedom as a result. For the village's social traits to change, a movement in power has been extremely important. *Manthan* is thus a tribute to communal power and grassroots change. Here, it is evident from Dr. Rao's catalytic work that change requires leadership, knowledge, and persistence in the face of resistance. Therefore, a straightforward, well-executed scheme such as the milk cooperative can eliminate issues of exploitation and poverty while promoting social and economic empowerment.

Ultimately, *Manthan* tells us that change is brought about by grassroot efforts and mass strength. When talking to the CNNIBN audience, Dr. Rao points out persistence, leadership, and literacy as tools used while working against change. The video will be an example of how this simple effective policy, the milk cooperative, provides social and economic empowerment by eradicating poverty, exploitation, and social inequality.

*Manthan* is essentially a tale of social and economic change. The film, which was made possible by Dr. Rao's initiative and the village's unity, brilliantly illustrates how an integrated cooperative can subvert established power structures, support social justice, and empower the underprivileged. As a result, it is a fantastic movie in which problems are recognised and resolved via cooperation and solidarity, paving the way for a brighter future for all.

### **Character Analysis**

- **Dr. Rao:** He was a symbol of progressive ideals of the cooperative movement. Such ideals were education, modernity, and faith in the power of collective action to affect change in society.
- **Bindu:** Bindu is a very confident lady who, in fact played the centre of the cooperative's success and represents the empowerment of rural women. At the same time, it depicts the importance of their contribution to movements like this.

- **Bhola:** Bhola, a conservative villager who initially opposed the cooperative, eventually becomes a strong advocate for it. His transformation reflects how rural communities can embrace change when they see its benefits.

### Themes

- **Collective Action:** One of the central ideas of the film is how people uniting can drive solutions to their problems. The cooperative of Manthan indicates how unity could help overcome economic and social hindrances among people.
- **Caste and Class:** The film further depicts the widespread castes and class division in rural India. Through the Cooperative movement, it appeals that economic development can be a great enabler of social equality.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The cooperative gives economic independence to the farmers in the film. In so doing, it ensures fair milk prices are maintained, with the living standards of farmers improving with improving rural development.

### Cultural and Social Impact

*Manthan* depicts how the cooperative movement helped the people of villages take control over their own resources. In the movie, a lot of importance has been enunciated about economic fairness and justice and how collective action can lead to real improvements in the lives of people. The cooperative system not only brought financial success among farmers but also brought social change by breaking barriers of caste and class as depicted in the film. It establishes the fact that only through joint efforts by communities will be possible the empowerment of the rural people. This film, therefore, is not just an echo of the White Revolution but a catalyst for inspiring and educating the people about what can be beneficial if done collectively.

## **Conclusion**

*Manthan* tells a powerful story of the White Revolution and the milk cooperative movement of Kheda. The film picks up its story as an example of collective action, whereby rural communities were empowered economically and socially. The cooperative system gave better control to the farmers over their own livelihoods and allowed them to break traditional social barriers. And it reminds one that change is indeed possible when communities come together to address common problems. It makes possible the understanding of how cinema may serve as a means to combat social ills and empower local communities. Thus, movies like *Manthan* are not films for entertainment but for educating and motivating the public to believe in the possibility of change through collective action. It is revealed by this argument that it indeed becomes possible for rural development to take place in India through cooperatives. At large, the film remains a reminder of the need to empower communities and bring economic opportunities to everybody.

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