‘Pure Milk is Our Right’

Mumbai Grahak Panchayat (MGP), India
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Period of Activity- June 2014 to April 2015

Abstract-

Cattle milk is largely produced and consumed all over India. India is the second largest producer of Cow milk and the largest producer of Buffalo milk. Milk is a key contributor to improve nutrition and food security in developing country like India. Indian food culture promotes daily consumption of milk as primary source of nutrition from infants to senior citizens. Cow milk and Buffalo milk are easily available in almost all parts of India. Yet, there finds large amount of adulteration and substandard quality in this milk sold in Indian markets. This is very disgusting reality and widespread consumer detriment. Gullible consumers continue to buy milk not knowing the purity of it.

Mumbai Grahak Panchayat (MGP) is a leading consumer organization in India with the membership of almost 32,000 families in 5 districts of Maharashtra, the western part of India. We took up the campaign for ‘Pure Milk – Our Right’, thanks for the opportunity given by Right Choice Fund and Consumers’ International (CI).

We came across with following Findings-

We tested More than 800 samples of Milk for adulteration of water, urea, sugar, and starch. The findings of adulteration and quality standards are shocking:

1. 30 % Samples were Adulterated. WATER was added to increase volume in 25% of milk samples we tested. Urea, starch and sugar was added in 5% of milk samples
2. 46% Samples were Below the Standard. These samples had lower Fat and Solid Non Fat than the prescribed standards of Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the Government of India.

We had a trained group of 50 activists to test milk samples. We held ‘Milk Testing and Awareness Camps’ in different localities where consumers came with their milk samples. We tested the samples in four ways:

- We checked the pouch of branded milk- we checked the seal and saw whether the label was perfect and abided to labeling standards set by Food Safety Act of India and Legal Meteorology Department of Food Ministry.

- We checked the density of milk sample using standard lactometers approved by National Dairy Development (NDDB).

- We have bought DSK Milk Analyser, a digital machine. With its help, we analysed the milk sample and got the details like percentage of fat, SNF, Protein, water, etc.

- We also have bought NDDB Reagent kit. Using those reagents we tried to find out if the milk sample contains any adulterant like starch, sugar, neutralizer, urea, fertilizer, etc.

Our activity is still going on. Till date we have tested almost 800 sample tests in 5 districts of Maharashtra- Mumbai, Pune, Thane, Raigad, and Ratnagiri.

We have submitted our Report to the State Government and appealed them to frame a New Milk Policy to ensure Pure Milk to All. The response of the Government is though positive, but slow. We underwent change in the Political leadership this year, in this Project Period. Newly formed Government seems to be slow and cautious while making decisions as they are novice in running Government. In a positive step, a consultative Committee has been formed by the Legal Meteorology Department to ensure Pure and Fair distribution of Milk to all. We, MGP volunteers are playing a leading role in this committee and making effective representation to the State Government. The systematic study of Milk market is helping us to contribute substantially to the committee.

We are aiming at total system correction. India is a country famous for the First White Revolution of reaching Milk to all. Launched in 1970, it was the world's biggest dairy development programme that made India a milk-sufficient nation. All
this was achieved by production of milk by the masses and reaching milk to the masses. Initially Indians benefitted by this White Revolution, and habituated to consume milk daily. But in last few years, with uncontrolled privatization and politicization of the Milk Business, there developed many flaws and frauds in the system of Milk Production and distribution. Our new endeavor is to successfully bring the Second White Revolution for curbing the malpractices and improper systems prevailing in the Milk market and facilitate system correction to ensure pure milk at fair price to all.

Acknowledgements -
Mumbai Grahak Panchayat (MGP) is thankful to:

1. Consumers International (CI) and Right Choice Fund for giving us a wonderful opportunity to work on the vital issues of Milk.
2. MGP Chairman Adv. Shirish Deshpande for his guidance & directions.
3. The Dairy experts Dr. Rajendra Kokane and Dr. Ravindra Naik, who educated and trained our team to test the milk samples and analyse the data.
4. The 1000s of MGP members who participated in this project at various levels like organizing Milk Testing and Awareness Camps, mobilizing consumers, testing the sample, conducting Awareness drives, etc.
5. The Core Team of “Pure Milk- Our Right” who travelled in the periphery of almost 500 km to conduct Milk Testing and Awareness Camps.
6. Mr. Sanjay Pandey, Controller of Legal Meteorology Department, Maharashtra State for taking actions against fraudulent milk sellers and supporting our Mission for Pure and fair distribution of milk to the consumers.
7. Mr. Girish Bapat, the Hon’ble Minister for Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs for showing his willingness to regularize the milk production and distribution system.
8. The Ex-Chairman of FDA, Dr. Purushottam Bhapkar for warning all major Milk Producers against adulteration and substandard production of milk and initiating punitive actions against fraudulent milk producers.
9. The Crime Branch of India and Maharashtra Police department for booking some fraudulent milk sellers against whom we had lodged complaints and putting them behind the bars.

10. MGP staff members who were always supportive.

11. All the consumers who participated in our Milk testing, awareness and survey activities with great trust and enthusiasm.

**Introduction**

Consuming Milk everyday in a raw form and in tea or coffee is a daily habit of many Indians. Indian food culture promotes daily consumption of milk as primary source of nutrition from infants to senior citizens. Milk is a key contributor to improve nutrition and food security in developing country like ours. Cow milk and Buffalo milk are easily available in almost all parts of India. Yet, there finds large amount of adulteration and substandard quality in this milk sold in Indian markets to make more profits. In a statistics provided by the Indian Government to the Supreme Court of India last year, it was admitted that almost 68 per cent of the total milk samples were found to be adulterated with water, Urea, detergent powder, caustic soda, artificial fat, glucose, skimmed milk powder, etc. This was a horrifying fact that prompted us to take up this issue. There is a lack of strict system of production and distribution of milk in almost all parts of India. We thought this is very disgusting reality and widespread consumer detriment. Milk is sold as a loose commodity and also as a packaged one. The issue of quality of milk is found in both the forms. There lacks awareness in the consumers to doubt the quality of milk and check it on different parameters. Thus the gullible consumers continue to buy milk not knowing the purity of it. Also packaged milk is often sold at more than Maximum Retail Price (MRP) printed on the package.

Mumbai Grahak Panchayat (MGP) is a leading consumer organization in India with the membership of almost 35,000 families in 5 districts of Maharashtra, the western part of India. We took up the campaign for `Pure Milk – Our Right'. It was a good opportunity given by Right Choice Fund and Consumers' International (CI) to plan a systematic and time-bound programme for Pure Milk to All.

**We aimed at following objectives**-
1) To ensure and promote food safety by undertaking campaign 'Pure Milk- Our Right'.

2) To sensitize rampant adulterations in the milk consumed by common consumer and highlight adverse impacts or ill-effects of consuming adulterated milk.

3) To educate consumers to detect various types of adulteration in the milk.

4) To encourage consumers to pursue complaints against milk adulteration.

5) To prevail upon the law enforcing agencies like FDA, Police etc. to take action against those found adulterating milk.

6) To appeal the State Government to frame a Policy for curbing all malpractices in the production and distribution of milk and the system to implement it.

To meet these objectives we conducted some structured activities and some activities were unstructured.

**Project Activities Conducted**-

- In May 2014- MGP team met Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Dr. Mahesh Zagade and his team to know the present system to protect Food Safety and Security Act of India (FSSAI) and understand how FDA can help us in curbing the practice of adulteration and providing substandard milk to the consumers.

- We conducted a survey asking consumers the basic information of their milk choices. What type of milk they buy, for what price, whether they are satisfied with the quality they get? We distributed the Questionnaire to our 30,000 members. This gave us a good data base of Consumer choices of milk brands and their opinion and pricing.

- We formed a team of 50 activists from our Volunteers’ pool who were well-educated and ready to dedicate an year’s time for this cause. We sought the advice of Dr. Rajendra Kokane - Vice President of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and discussed with him the line of action. Also met Dr. Ravindra Naik- Ex GM of State controlled Mahanand Dairy.
MUMBAI GRAHAH PANCHAYAT
May 5, 2015.

- In June 14, we bought NDDB Milk Testing Kit for adulteration examination. This Kit helps us identify the adulteration of Urea, Starch, Neutralizer, Fertilizer, Sugar and Detergent.

- In July 14, we had organized two-days Training session to train these activists on how to use NDDB testing kit, how to check density of milk, how to examine the milk package, etc.

- Since August, our Milk Testing camps were started. In the very first camp at a Santacruz colony, some samples were found to have water addition.

- From 14th to 17th August 2014, MGP had a 4-day Mega-event of Consumer Shoppe for Eco-friendly Ganapati Festival. This Activity of MGP is very unique and attracts thousands of consumers. There we had reserved stall for Milk Testing. Meantime we bought DSK Milkotron Electronic Milk Analysing machine along with NDDB Test tube kit. We conducted 100s of milk samples tests in Ganapati Peth using 4 methods – examining the Milk package carefully, Applying Lactometer test to identify the density of milk, Using DSK Milkotron Analyser for content analysis of milk sample, checking adulteration by NDDB Test tube kit. We purposely brought samples from doubtful places like Dharavi, Worli Camp, Kalina slum, Mahim labour camp etc. And rampant water adulteration was found in many samples.

- From September 2014 to February 2015 – Almost 50 Milk Testing and Awareness camps were held 5 districts- Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Pune. Local activists of MGP helped us organizing the Milk Testing and Awareness Drives in their localities. They used to mobilize people with their own milk samples. They also used to bring all available milk samples from local milk-sellers. Our team travelled to such places with these testing apparatus. The consumers were then informed about Right Choice, CI and the Milk Mission we had undertaken. There we used to educate them how to be very careful while buying and opening any milk package, how to examine your milk package for sealing, labeling, its touch, feel, look, etc. We used to check the pouch of branded milk… specially the seal and see whether the label was perfect and abided to labeling standards set by Food Safety Act of India. Then we used to examine the density of milk sample using standard lactometers approved by National Dairy Development (NDDB). Then, with the help of DSK Milk Analyser, we used to analyse the milk sample and get the details like percentage of fat, SNF, Protein and water. The last step was
to apply NDDB Reagents to find out if the milk sample contains any adulterant like starch, sugar, neutralizer, urea, fertilizer, detergent, etc.

- The results were tabulated systematically in a hand-written chart, which we then computerized for a data-base. The results were alarming. Some of milk packages we examined were tampered. Some samples we tested were contaminated with water, tap water being freely and easily available in Mumbai and around. Also some samples in the areas outskirts of Mumbai were found to have Urea, starch and sugar.

- We were told about the fraudulent milk adulteration activities being conducted by some sellers at different places in Mumbai. We appealed FDA to raid such places, but FDA was not that proactive.

- In Nov 2014- One of our members told us about an agitated young consumer- Vinayak Banayat- who has located a milkman in their area that was selling adulterated milk. Vinayak Banayat filed a case at local police station. We decided to take this up as a test case. Insisted that the police should take the case seriously and should pursue vigorously. We also asked FDA to intervene in this case. With persistent efforts, we could make Police arrest the fraudulent milkman. Also we learnt that some milk adulteration case is being handled by another adjacent Police station. We strived hard to get the details of that case. We tried to bridge the gap in both the police stations, thinking that both the cases were related to each other. Both these Police stations did not know each other’s case, as they were functioning in isolation. Finally we could establish the linkage. We wondered to know that the ’Wanted Accused’ in one Police station was already detained by Crime Branch at another Police station. We could establish this link by our alertness and persistent follow-up. Senior Inspector of Crime Branch praised us for such prompt co-ordination. He could also detain Pouch-sealing machine from the accused along with tampered milk pouches of different companies.

- This Police case attracted media attention. Pure Milk –Our Right Project got good coverage in Print as well as TV media.

- In December 2014, Pure Milk –Our Right Project team travelled 400 km away to small towns and village places of Konkan area. We had camps at Dapoli, Khed, Mahad and nearby villages. There we also got to test some milk samples of House cattle. That milk was 100% pure. And pouch milk of a
brand that was very popular in that area was found to have adulteration of Urea and Sugar.

- During that tour, we got a good opportunity to visit Agriculture University and we got Orientation from the Professor of Dairy Science Dept. Mr. Suhas Joshi. He educated us on the how the quality of milk can be enhanced by good cattle care and hygienic environment. He also explained us how and why quality of milk deters and how milk is adulterated.

- Looking at the proportion of adulterated and sub-standard milk we came across during our Testing camps, it was imperative to call all the major Milk companies/Co-operatives and discuss our results and concerns. It would have been effective if FDA calls for such a meeting than a Consumer organization. We appealed so to the FDA Commissioner. He called for the meeting of Dairy Managements. Office-bearers of almost 200 of Dairies had come to the meeting. FDA Commissioner warned them to end adulteration and substandard production and be ready for stringent action against frauds.

- As a follow-up action FDA teams raided few milk production units and fined some of them. Unfortunately such a fighter FDA Head was transferred to other department showing as if it was a routine transfer order. It was a setback to our Milk Mission.

- In March, we did a data-analysis of our Milk Testing and Awareness Drives till then. We made a Brief Report on the basis of our data.

- The Report portraying the Alarming results was then submitted to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and the Minister of Food, Civil Supply and Consumers. We also submitted the report to Member of Legislative Assembly of our locality.

- We distributed Lactometers along with user manual to our members through our Monthly distribution system, so that they can test at home their milk for water adulteration.

- In March, there was an Assembly session of the State Government. Two Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) raised the issue of Milk Quality and asked for Government intervention and strict action.

- We also approached Media and presented our findings and report to few media representatives. Some leading Newspapers like Maharashtra Times, Hindustan Times, Prahar and Lokmat published news based on our report.
Some TV Channels like ABP Maza, TV 9, Sahara TV showed the news features on the basis of our Report.

- To create awareness we published a brochure on milk adulteration and ways to check our milk at home and distributed it to the consumers.

- We also made a Whatsapp short film on how to check the milk pouch and be alert consumer of milk. The film was circulated, forwarded and seen by 1000s of consumers.

- MGP has a very efficient distribution system for grocery & household items every month. We included Lactometer on our list. We bought the Lactometers for bulk from NDDB and could get 50% off on MRP. Also we provided for a simple manual. Thus many of the MGP members have lactometers at home and they can test their milk density as on when they wish. Almost 3700 members purchased lactometer. One lactometer will be shared by almost 11 members, thus almost 40700 consumers can use the lactometer and check their milk density.

- Another important point we raised was of Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of Milk being sold to consumers. Most of the branded milk-sellers charge us Rs 1 to 3 more than MRP, which is illegal. There is on-going battle between Milk Companies and retailers about low levels of commission. And the burden is passed on to gullible consumers. Controller of Legal Meteorology, Sanjay Pandey took up this issue very well and asked the consumers to lodge complaints on a Whatsapp number. He booked many milk-vendors for Over-charging.

- Our team visited Expo of Indian Dairy Association at National Exhibition Centre at Goregaon. We saw different modern Milk analysers, testers and polymer films for milk pouch, etc. We also discussed with them about the new technologies and systems of milk distribution to avoid adulteration.

- There was a Surprise visit/Raid by Legal Meteorology Department to Mahanand dairy on 2nd May 2015. We participated as Panch. We visited their Quality control department and sample testing lab. We discussed with them how milk comes to them, the process of testing and rejection, line of production and dispatch of milk. Also saw their book of records. We came across certain important facts –

  1. They reject the milk tanker if the milk in it is below the standard. This practice is started after November 30,
2014. (When we had a discussion with FDA Commissioner Dr. Bhapkar about this) Earlier they used to be lenient on this and used to accept substandard milk.

2. Mahanand being a Govt dairy, is under severe political pressure. They get pressurized if they reject a tanker of milk.

3. Their milk gets dispatched around 12 at midnight. Even if the milk is travelling in nearby area or longer, it makes no difference. We suggested them to have a meeting with distributors and send the milk tankers according to the location of distribution so that there will not be a time lag, ruling out the possibility of adulteration. They agreed to this suggestion. We need to follow it up further.

Key Observations of Milk Testing Camps

- 30 % Samples were found Adulterated.
- 50 % Samples were Below the Standard.
- Common adulterants were as follows-
  - WATER: to increase volume: 25% of milk samples
  - Urea and starch: for thickening and Sugar: for sweet taste - 5% of milk samples.
- Government standards for Fat and Solid Non Fat are –
  - Cow’s milk & Toned Milk - Fat 3.5 % SNF 8.5%,
  - Buffalo’s milk & Full Cream - Fat 6%, SNF 9 %
  - Standard Milk - Fat 4.5%, SNF 8.5 %

50% of samples we tested had LOWER Fat and Solid Non Fat than these standards.

- Almost all the Cow Milk samples that are sold loose (Unbranded) in the market contained Water addition up to 20 %.
Almost all the Buffalo Milk samples that are sold loose (Unbranded) in the market contained Water addition up to 12%. Also the SNF of these samples was less than standard.

Some of the branded milk samples were adulterated with Starch, Urea and Sugar.

While interacting with consumers, we found that they buy milk without any basic knowledge of these standards. We published a brochure for the consumers and explained them what the standards are.

Hardly any consumers carefully look at the milk package and check whether it is tampered or not. We, in our camps educated them to spend few seconds to check the milk package before one cuts and uses the milk.

There is no habit of reading label of the milk packet among common consumers. We taught them how to read label. We also made a checklist for them and told them the importance to read the label carefully.

Many consumers said that they buy loose milk (Unbranded) for various reasons- some feel it is fresher, it is of higher quality, it is purer, etc. In fact, such milk many-a-times is below the standard and procured in unhygienic conditions, barring some exceptions.

Consumers in general are found to be very skeptical about the quality of milk they get. Thus there is wide-spread non-trust among consumers of milk. Some of them are going to the extent of reducing the milk consumption and choosing other sources of nutrition that can replace milk.

Consumers in general seem to be ignorant on what to do if they doubt the quality of milk, where to complain. They are not sure of getting justice if at all they complain.

Some consumers opined that the Police stations do not welcome such consumer complaints as they are not very familiar with Food Safety & Security Act.

In our survey we found that most of the consumers get their daily milk package (Branded) for more than Maximum Retail Price (MRP) and gullible consumers tolerate that.

Consumers told us that they have no idea about the source of the milk they get, how it travels and the distribution channel it goes through.
Thus there are many Grey areas in the White Milk Consumption.

Impact of our Project

- The Police sources told us the adulteration activities are reduced with MGP’s case against fake milk sellers. Police detained 5 culprits and increased the vigilance activities.

- When we visited Mahanand Dairy as a surprise Raid by Legal Meteorology department, we were told that they reject the milk tanker if the milk in it is below the standard. This practice is started after November 30, 2014. (When we had a discussion with FDA Commissioner Dr. Bhapkar about this and Dr. bhapkar raided and fined some dairies including Mahanand). Earlier they used to be lenient on this and used to accept substandard milk.

- The Committee has been formed by the Controller of Legal Meteorology Department of the Government to streamline the milk business and MGP leaders are part of this committee. To demand for proper distribution network and discipline the distribution network of milk and audit their accounts are the important targets of this committee. Such a move will reduce instances of over-charging and adulteration of milk, which is, at present rampant.

- Hon’ble Minister of Consumer Affairs Mr. Girish Bapat has promised to take initiative for Pure Milk at fair price for all consumers. He has warned all the Milk companies to improve their infrastructure and network and do this business responsibly. He is also in the process of forming Citizen’s Watchdog Committees to monitor milk business.

- The idea of having a Milk Policy for the nation has been mooted by the Government officers. The Committee is studying the possibility.

- Some honest milk companies are coming forward to set up milk distribution channels with the help of MGP.

- Our continuous write-ups in our In-house monthly House Magazine for last 8 months made our 35,000 members & their family members aware about milk standards, tampered pouches and adulterations. They can now check the milk pouch carefully and complain if they find anything wrong.
Print and TV media is responding well to the Milk mission. We are getting continuous coverage in making readers aware and alert. MGP members check their milk frequently for water addition, with lactometers we have provided to them.

MGP activists are lodging complaints against over-charging milk than MRP and seeking justice.

Aware consumers are forwarding our short film and brochure to educate others.

As the awareness is spread through our campaigns, consumers from different localities are coming forward to arrange for milk testing and awareness camps.

**Evaluation**

★ Though the project was carried out with good spirit for last 10 months, much is yet to achieve. Looking at the high population of our country, big volume milk business, level of awareness and change in political power we cannot expect to resolve all the problems that surfaced. It needs continuous actions and follow-ups. This project gave us good opportunity and money to study the Milk problem from all angles and levels. We could grasp and hit all the anomalies. We are doing our sincere efforts to surface all the issues and bring it to the light of concerned authorities. But the government and bureaucracy work with their own speed. We do not get the results as quick as we expect from them. Efforts are on to make representation to all the concerned Government authorities.

★ Also we are in dialogue with Indian Dairy Association to strengthen the systems at all the levels.

★ We are talking to dairy authorities to set up reliable and responsible supply chain that can nullify the possibility of adulteration.

★ Knowing our concerns about quality of milk and unrest over distribution system, few dairies have approached MGP and offered to supply milk to our members. We are negotiating with few dairies to supply milk directly to MGP members so that our 35,000 + members will benefit from Pure milk at fair price.
Widespread awareness and education drive is done and it will be still on through writing articles, spreading film via Smartphone, showing film via screen, TV programs and Radio talks.

Conclusion and Future Work-

Milk is an essential commodity and primary source of nutrition to all. Therefore it is necessary that the business of milk should be trustworthy. The Government should frame a Comprehensive Milk Policy to streamline all the levels - from procurement of milk from the farmers till delivery at home.

FDA should be empowered with more staff and good facilities. This is the crucial department and it should be active and alert. The Milk production centers should be checked often by FDA for standards and quality. Punitive actions should be taken against dairies that are failing to abide to the standards.

The distribution system of milk is not disciplined. Many milk companies do not have their own distribution channels and they bank of 3-4 tier system to reach the milk packages from Production unit to consumers. They should be compelled to invest in their own reliable and responsible distribution system. This may reduce possibility of adulteration.

It should be the responsibility of dairies to ensure having perfect supply chain of their own. They should take the responsibility till milk reaches the consumers unlike their current attitude to be responsible till the gate of the dairy.

Even if a consumer doubts of the milk adulteration, there is no easily available machinery to prove milk adulteration and establish the crime when a culprit is caught by the Police. The police department is also not aware of any such machinery. Thus Government should set up more laboratories to check milk samples, or facilitate school and college laboratories to test milk.

Police do not apply FSSAI in such cases. They are not much aware about this Act. There lacks co-ordination between Police and FDA. They should work hand in hand in food related cases.

Culprits in Milk cases, many times, get bail when arrested. They are released after some time, so they continue their activities. The police should
apply FSSAI, launch joint action with FDA and find out the sources that supply fake branded milk bags, sealing machines and be strict in action against fraudulent milk sellers.

● Culprits in such cases must be punished rigorously and such news must be spread continuously to every corner to arrest recurrence of such cases.

● When cases of fake/tampered milk packages are found, the concerned brands do not show keenness to initiate any action against the distributors.

● Packing centers of most of the dairies are in New Mumbai. Even though there are no much traffic obstacles if the milk vans start early in the morning towards Mumbai, they actually supply the milk to the vendors little after midnight, say by 12.30 to 1.30 a.m. These dealers begin their supply generally from 5 a.m. onwards. There is a scope to believe that all the illegal and unethical activities of tampering and adulteration are carried on during this time gap. This gap should be reduced.

● If the person consuming milk has even a little doubt about the quality of the milk he / she is not aware about the contacts of milk tasting labs and where to lodge complaint. There must be an effective and proper mechanism for creating awareness among the consumers and a systematic publicity must be made to this effect.

● Campaigns must be carried out on large scale to make aware the consumers about securing their right to pure milk.

● Another imp point- Most of the branded milk-sellers charge us Rs 1 to 3 Rs. more than MRP. This is illegal and it should be completely stopped.

● MGP is focused to continue the work on this issue till we achieve Second White Revolution for Pure milk to All at Fair Price.

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Co-ordinators ‘Pure Milk – Our Right’ campaign
MUMBAI GRAHAK PANCHAYAT
May 5, 2015.

Attachments –
1. Expenditure Statement
2. Photos
3. Consolidated Report/Data of our Milk Testing Drives
4. Press Coverage Web-links
5. Brochure
6. Video Clip