CHAPTER VIII

MILK COOPERATIVES AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE:

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In the previous two chapters, analysis has been made about the relationship between MCs and social structure in the four villages studied. In this concluding chapter of the study, general conclusions will be drawn on the basis of the analyses made in the previous chapters. The discussion to follow will combine the perspective from below with the perspective from above, so as to give a total picture of MCs in Kheda district. An attempt will also be made to answer the questions posed in the first chapter.

One general conclusion that can be drawn is that the MCs in all the four villages are enmeshed in the local social milieu. The MC is an important institution of the village; and the importance of the MC lies in the benefits it brings to the village in general. The social, economic and political benefits have already been discussed in the previous chapters.

It has already been pointed out that the MCs of KDCMPU, on an average, are having lower collection of milk per society, even though claims have been put forward that milk yield per buffalo has increased over a period of time. The declining trend shown in average collection of milk per society and per farmer member as shown in Table V.3, gives an interesting insight which is in contrast to the claims of success of Amul.
In the following paragraphs an attempt is made to answer the questions posed in the first chapter.

(1) The first question posed is with regard to the position of the MC in the social structure; especially its relation vis-a-vis women and the Scheduled Castes. Of the large number of MCs in KDCMPU, there is to date only one milk producers' cooperative run by women, which reflects a low involvement of women in the running of the MC. This study based on a perspective from below, shows this to be true. Running the MC is the affair of men. No woman has been on the managing committee or on the staff of the MC in the four villages studied. As for membership in the MC, it has already been pointed out that a low proportion of women are members. And even those few women members, by and large, do not attend the general meetings of the MC. Thus women play no direct role in the activities of the MC, even though the rearing of buffaloes is done by women in Kheda district (and in other districts of Gujarat). The overall picture of women vis-a-vis MC is more in conformity with the position of women in the social structure of the region. The existence of milk producers' cooperatives has not resulted in a change in the low level of participation of women in the activities of MCs. The cooperative has not been able to overcome the traditional barriers so as to enable women to participate on an equal footing with men.

The situation with regard to the position of Scheduled Castes is different from that of women. An elaborate discussion about them shall follow in the section on agro-irrigation facilities and MC. Suffice it to say that the economic strength of Scheduled Castes is a crucial factor as to whether they are milk producers and sell
milk to the MC. And their economic strength is dependent upon the land held by them. The logic of the argument is that a landless Scheduled Caste person would find it difficult to be a milk producer. This factor is also true for other castes and religious groups as well.

(2) The second question posed is what is the socio-economic background of those who are milk producers and those who sell milk to the MC? From Tables VI.5, VI.6, VII.6 and VII.7, it has been noticed that a high proportion of households amongst the big landholders are milk producers. They are followed by the small and the marginal landholders in Patidar dominated villages. In the Kshatriya dominated villages, the order is different: at the top are the small landholders and then the big landholders, and thirdly the marginal landholders. The landless have the least proportion who are milk producers in all the four villages. The landless find it difficult to be milk producers; although the few who do, are able to keep buffaloes by rearing them on common grazing land, or from left over grass from fields (on which the landless work). But this does not assure a regular supply of fodder throughout the year.

As for those who sell milk to the MC, it is noticed from the same tables that the big landholders have a high proportion of households who sell milk to the MC, followed by the small, then by the marginal landholders and last by the landless.

It is seen from Tables VI.5, VI.6, VII.6 and VII.7 that there exist a disproportionately high share of milk producers and sellers amongst those having land, i.e., the marginal, the small
and the big landholding strata, as in comparison to the landless. This finding is consistent with the findings of A.S. Patel (n.d.) for Narsanda.

This feature, by and large, holds true for all castes and religious groups in all the four villages, though the Scheduled Castes show a remarkable distinction between the irrigated and the dry areas. In the dry non-Charotar area, as more of the Scheduled Castes households are landholders, they have a high proportion who are milk producers and also a high proportion who have sold milk to MC. In the irrigated area more of the Scheduled Castes households are landless. Further, the inequity between Scheduled Castes and other castes is not so sharp nor wide in the dry non-Charotar area, as in the case of irrigated-Charotar area.

(3) Another question posed is which section of the village society benefits from the MC? The answer to this question has been partly given while answering the previous question. The big landholders benefit the most as they have not only a high proportion of their stratum who are milk producers, but also because, as shown in Tables VI.4 and VII.5, they have a disproportionately high share of the households who sell milk to the MC in comparison to their share of total households. The small landholders are second and the marginal landholders are third in the scale of those who benefit by selling milk. The landless benefit the least. From Tables VI.7 and VI.8, it is also noticed that in terms of payments, the big and the small landholders receive proportionately a larger share of the payments disbursed by the MC, when compared to the marginal landholders and the landless.
It is also noticed from the same tables (VI.7 and VI.8) that the dominant castes corner a larger share of the payments.

(4) The next question is to do with leadership, viz., who are the leaders of the MC and what is the position and the role of the secretary vis-a-vis the managing committee members (the leaders). As far as the leadership of the MCs is concerned, it is seen that the dominant caste dominated the managing committee right from the time of the inception of the MC in three MCs and for a period of a decade and a half in the case of one MC which came into existence in 1951. Another feature noticed is that the Scheduled Castes find a place on the managing committee in the dry villages, while in the irrigated area, they do not. The reason for this is to do with the economic position of the Scheduled Castes. In the dry area, the Scheduled Castes have a higher proportion who are landholders as compared to those in the irrigated area. As already pointed out earlier, the gulf between Scheduled Castes and other castes is not sharp in the dry area as in the case of irrigated area. Another aspect noticed is that the managing committee is dominated by the landholding strata. In two villages, the marginal landholding stratum has been gaining a larger representation on the managing committee as shown in Tables VI.9 and VII.9. The changes in the composition of the managing committee over a period of time are more to do with local social structural factors. The MC, owing to its sizeable money power, has become another arena for politics.

It is our observation that the secretary of the MC plays a crucial role, as in comparison to the managing committee, in the
successful running of the MC. He could make or break an organisation owing to the power wielded by him. The secretary's role is more like that of a managing director in a private/public limited company. Baviskar (1983) has also highlighted the importance of the secretary in a different way. He observes for village Sanjaya, that the secretary has a "dominant" position and "enjoys far more powers than any member of the managing committee."

Another point that has to be made is to do with the role of Patidar secretaries. It is observed that MCs with Patidar secretaries, irrespective of the caste domination of the village, are more efficiently managed. A systematic analysis with a perspective from above has not been made and if made would throw light on the complementary aspect to the present findings. A.S.Patel's (1983) analysis of chairmen of MCs would be more complete if information on the chairmen was compared with those of MC secretaries and correlating both with their managerial performance as seen through their audit categorization.

(5) The fifth question posed is why do the rich and the poor cooperate to run the MC successfully? Baviskar and Attwood (1984:85-107) have attempted to explain this in rational economic terms. It has already been pointed out in chapter I, that this explanation is insufficient at village level. According to them, the cost of transportation is high, and to make them pay, the rich need cooperation of the poor. It has already been pointed out that transportation costs are paid for by KDCMPU through a system of contracts; and thus the problem of capacity-utilisation does not worry those who run the MC at the village level. It may be and would be a serious concern for officials of Amul.
The present explanation is different which is that the MC (at village level) benefits not only the rich, but also helps to subdue/mollify any protest against the activities of the MC, through its welfare activities. Thus, it helps the rich to involve the poor in the MC, by giving them a small share of the cake, thereby silencing the poor.

How does this operate? To understand this, the context and the environment in which the MC operates has to be kept in mind. The social environment in Gujarat and in Kheda district is commercial/business oriented. It would not be wrong to state that the overarching ideology in Kheda district is commercial which permeates to lower strata as well. Further, there is lack of organization of peasants on class lines like in Kerala.

Keeping the above in mind, it can be stated that the reasons for collaboration between the poor and the rich can be two-fold. The poor benefit by selling milk to the MC (as already mentioned by Baviskar and Attwood). For those who are not milk producers, there is an additional hope of becoming one as and when a loan scheme is operated by the MC. This is especially the case with a large section who are underemployed or unemployed, owing to the absence of alternative employment opportunities. As for the rich, they benefit not only directly in monetary terms, but also indirectly as well. They find that the MC through its welfare activities, benefits "everyone" in the village thus silencing the critics who say the MC is for the rich (even though the amount that is spent on welfare activities may not be so large). This enables the continuance of the same system.
It has just been mentioned in the previous paragraph that there is hope for those who are not milk producers (amongst the poor) to be one, by getting a loan from a bank (operated by the MC). While administering these loans, the government gives a subsidy to the landless, the marginal and the small peasants. This subsidy is upto 25% for the small, and 33% for the marginal peasants and the landless. Those "without any economic support" like widows, even get 50% subsidy. But there is a catch in this scheme. The landless have to get a guarantor and each stage in the procurement of loan involves greasing the palms of officials, so much so there is a fixed amount for each official. The 'gramsevak' who has to attest the form takes a cut and it is alleged that the bank official also does.¹ So a loan of ₹ 2500/- gets whittled down. Thus there are a lot of hurdles to be crossed for the landless. And if the landless person aspiring for a loan is an illiterate, his plight becomes more pathetic. To begin with, he has to make a payment for filling the form. Inspite of this, there is no guarantee that the person will get a loan, for here local politics starts operating and this is to do with the relationship with the MC secretary (and the managing committee). In Jol, inspire of the fact that the secretary took a loan², the people who were critical of him were fewer than those who praised him.³ Those who were critical were those who did not get a loan; while those who got a loan praised him. Thus, it is noticed that the landless need not always get a loan, but there is hope of getting a loan which is one such incentive that mutes the criticism.

(6) The sixth question posed is how do MCs perform in villages having differential agro-irrigation facilities. It is noticed that irrespective of the nature of agro-irrigation area in which the MC
is located, the proportion of households who are milk producers and those who sell milk to MCs does not show any significant difference in three villages, Joj, Parabiya and Meghaliya. However, in Katol there is a significant drop in the percentage of households who are milk producers (67.44%) and those who sell milk to the MC (31.99%). This drop is more to do with the local structural factors and the availability of alternative private retail outlets for milk. In the other three villages, the milk producers are over 80% and those who sell milk are around 50%. In Parabiya, the figure for those who sell milk goes up to 61%, if the figure of those who sell milk to Vasadra MC is included.

But in two aspects there are differences between the wet and the dry areas. These are with reference to (i) nature of landholding, and (ii) Scheduled Castes households which sell milk to MC. As seen from Tables VI.1, VI.2, VII.1 and VII.2, the proportion of landless households in the irrigated area is higher than in the dry area, although in the irrigated area itself there is a huge variation. The second feature to do with Scheduled Castes, stems from the first. It is noticed that more of the Scheduled Castes households in the dry area are milk producers and have sold milk to the MC. It is also seen that Scheduled Castes in this area have been able to find a place on the managing committee of the MC. Here they also take part in the general meetings of the MC, unlike the Scheduled Castes in the irrigated area. The Scheduled Castes in the dry area sell, proportionately, more milk as more of the households are landholders. The explanation for this difference lies in the nature of landholding. Inequity between Scheduled Castes and other castes in the
dry area is not vast as it is in the irrigated area. This absence of vast disparity in the dry area enables Scheduled Castes to hold positions on the managing committee. Thus it is noticed that differences in agro-irrigation areas is reflected in the nature of inequity in landholding in the two areas.

The perspective from below has thrown interesting insight into the differential nature of landholdings seen with reference to Scheduled Castes in the study of four villages located in two different agro-irrigation areas. A study with the perspective from above would be an interesting complement to this aspect to give a complete picture.

(7) The last question posed is how do MCs perform in villages having differential caste domination? One aspect to do with caste has already been pointed out in Chapter VII. Irrespective of caste domination of the village and the location of the village, the Bharvads were discriminated against owing to caste prejudice (by being denied membership in MC) till 1983.

In the analyses made till now, one feature emphasized is that those with land (of over 2.5 acres) are more successful as milk producers and in selling milk to the MC. But another aspect noticed and pointed out in the previous two chapters, is that Patidars sell proportionately more milk than other castes. Their proportion is remarkably much higher than Kshatriyas even in Kshatriya dominated villages. But interestingly enough, a high proportion of Kshatriyas in Patidar dominated villages sell milk to the MC as compared to Kshatriyas in Kshatriya dominated villages as shown in Tables VI.3, VII.3 and VII.4. Perhaps this is owing to the nature of rivalry between the two castes in which the
Kshatriyas do not want to be left behind. But the figures for Kshatriyas are near about or slightly higher than the village average but still lower than the figure for Patidars.

It must also be pointed out that MCs with Patidar secretaries are generally preferred by people from nearby villages to sell milk. There were cases where Patidars were secretaries of MCs in Kshatriya dominated villages, while the opposite, viz., Kshatriyas being secretaries of MCs in Patidar dominated villages was rare. Indeed, Kshatriyas grudgingly at times, admit Patidars to be efficient managers.

The Importance of Caste: Caste Culture and MC

How does one account for Patidars selling more milk to MCs? This can be explained by saying that Patidars are successful milk producers than other castes in Kheda District. But that still does not explain why Patidars are preferred as MC secretaries, and why people prefer such MCs to sell milk. This difference in preference and the performance of Patidars as cooperative milk producers can be explained in terms of 'caste culture' (and its consequent effect on personality of Patidars). In this, Gitel Steed's (1955) study is helpful as it comes nearest in explaining the point being argued, especially the idea of group personality (Steed, 1955: 105-106) as reflecting values of caste. Let us expand on this as to fully appreciate the import of the point being made.

Patidar values include frugality, hardwork and a consideration that money and earning money to be prestigious. In fact this last mentioned value may be considered to be the dominant value,
as the Patidars are involved in commercial enterprises. One scholar, Weiner (1967:75) even says "the Patidar community is characterized by the 'Protestant spirit'...." In contrast, rarely is a Kshatriya found in business. Frugality, it is said, is not the attribute of Kshatriyas. This has been already pointed out in chapter IV in our discussion on the two castes. The Patidars who at one time were ranked Vaishyas, as they practised agriculture, by writers of nineteenth century, viz., Forbes and Dalpatram (A.M. Shah, 1964:77), and were below the Kshatriyas, have now turned the tables. Their successful emergence as a powerful dominant caste during the last hundred years or so, has resulted in their becoming the reference group for others to imitate. Thus it is now found that the big landholding darbar-Kshatriyas pass derogatory remarks against Kshatriyas of the same stratum and/or those of lower level Kshatriyas saying that they "only drink" (implying that they spend hard earned money lavishly) and "do no work" and thus try to be one up on them. (Patidars have a reputation for being teetotallers although some do drink outside the village). Many a Patidar does not smoke, although they grow tobacco and keep beedies (usually made from homegrown tobacco as it is cheaper) to distribute to workers and other visitors. So it is not an uncommon sight to see rich Patidars, even in urban areas, smoking beedies than cigarettes. Now some of the big Kshatriyas seem to do the same, although this is not widespread. Patidars are vegetarians; and perhaps to reinforce their claim that they are no different from Patidars, some of the big Kshatriyas claim that they do not eat meat. The Patidars' attitude to money has been imbibed by a few Kshatriyas, although not to the same extent. But there is a
difference between Patidars and Kshatriyas in their involvement in commercial enterprises, the former being way ahead of the latter. Evidence in support of this can be given from the four villages studied.

Many a Patidar has graduated to be a tobacco merchant from just being a tobacco cultivator. It is generally believed and widely accepted that tobacco trade in Kheda district is controlled by Patidars. In Jol, there is a rich tobacco cultivator-cum-merchant with his own car and a retinue of servants. There are other Patidars who act as middlemen in this trade, in both Jol and Parabiya. In Katol, a few Kshatriyas have entered into this business recently.

Besides being tobacco merchants, a few Patidars in Jol and Parabiya are agents of insurance companies, most of them belonging to Peerless Insurance. They are usually school teachers or big landholders who have at one time worked in urban areas. It is found that only the Patidars are such commission agents besides being landholders in all the four villages studied.

The Kshatriyas in Katol and Meghaliya have not made the transition to become tobacco merchants. Only in Katol did a tiny few become sub-brokers. But no Kshatriya in the four villages studied is an Insurance agent.

Big Patidar landholders have also invested in life insurance policies, and are paying regular premiums. There are Patidars from other villages in Kheda district, who buy and sell shares.
The attempt has been to identify, by citing evidences, certain hallmarks of Patidar culture vis-a-vis Kshatriya culture. It has been pointed out that caste culture of Patidars provides the clue to understand the high proportion of Patidars being successful cooperative milk producers. A systematic analysis of values has not been presented here as that was not on our agenda, but only their importance has been pointed out. To present a systematic analysis of the role of values in MC would need a separate research study, and would be beyond the scope of the present study.

As a logical corollary of this study, one would like to know how Patidars acquired these values. Secondly, whether these values are capitalistic in nature. This leads to a further question, that is, if these values are capitalistic in nature, should such cooperative ventures be considered a 'cooperative'. One of our peasant informants did argue that MC is characterised by "self-interest" and not by "altruistic" motive. Lastly, this leads us to ask another question, that is, if people in other areas have to be successful cooperative milk producers like the Patidars, whether they have to acquire such values. Answers to all these questions will have to await another study.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VIII

1. In Jol, the amount was said to be about Rs.100/- per official taken by the gramsevak and the bank official. In one case, the gramsevak in Jol took Rs.2/- for just making a five line copy of a land record. In all the four villages, people informed that this was the practice. The payment that is to be made to the gramsevak and/or talati depends upon the job.

2. The secretary had taken a loan for a buffalo and a hybrid high yielding cow (called Shanker cow, locally). The loans were taken in the names of his father and brother, all of whom resided together.

3. 93 persons got loans to buy buffaloes in Jol in late 1982. Of them only 4 were persons who had 'no economic support', three of whom were widows. The voices of protest are too individualistic to matter.

4. The case of Vasadra MC has been pointed out in chapter III. Two other instances as also mentioned earlier, are Sakariya MC and Sutariya MC in Balasinor taluka.

5. Another writer, Narmadashankar, said that Patidars were Shudras (cf. A.M. Shah, 1964:78).

6. Whenever they have a guest to whom they want to show respect, they give the guest a cigarette (Bristol brand).
7. The Patidar control of tobacco trade extends beyond Kheda district into rest of Gujarat and into other states like Madhya Pradesh, etc. This control is primarily on tobacco used for "beedi". It may also be pointed out here that tobacco grown in Kheda district has a reputation of being one of the finest in India.