

The creative genius behind the ‘Amul Girl’

Source: <https://www.socialsamosa.com/2023/06/remembering-sylvester-dacunha-amul-girl/>



Sylvester daCunha, who recently passed away, left an unforgettable mark on the industry, particularly through his association with the iconic Amul campaign. After his untimely demise, his contributions continue to be celebrated and remembered, as his work for Amul remains an enduring testament to his creative genius.

In today's session, we will review his most memorable contribution to the advertising industry – the “Amul Girl”.

The birth of the Amul Girl



In the 1960s, the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), the organisation behind the Amul brand, approached Sylvester daCunha and his team at Advertising and Sales Promotion (ASP) with the challenge of creating a memorable and impactful advertising campaign. It was the time when the success of the Polson Butter Girl, an advertising campaign by a competing dairy company had gained significant popularity.

daCunha envisioned a campaign that would go beyond traditional product promotion and create a lasting connection with the consumers. His vision was to establish a connection between Amul's dairy products and the everyday lives

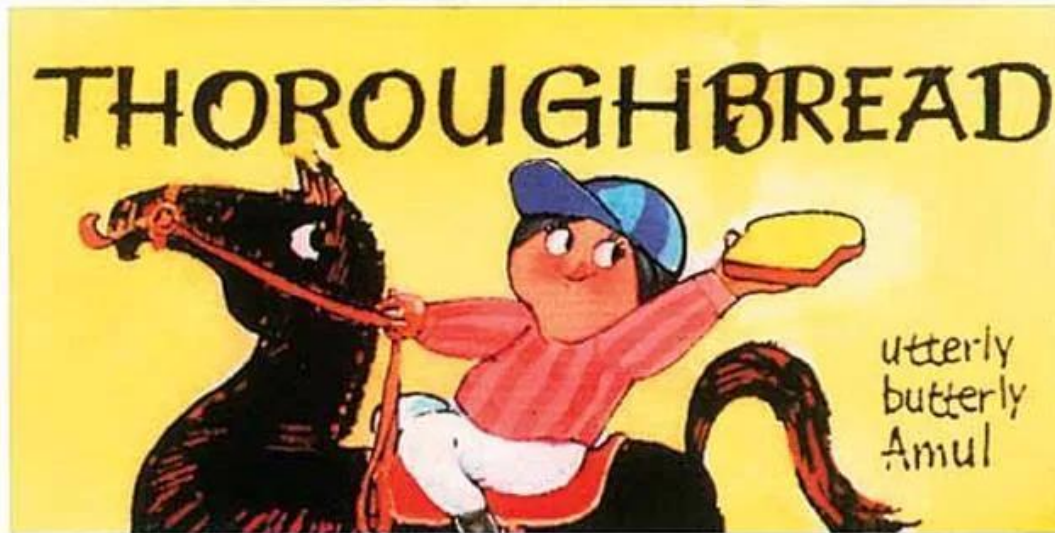
of Indian consumers through witty and relatable advertisements. It was during this brainstorming session that the iconic mascot, Amul Girl was born.

daCunha wanted the Amul Girl to not only make her way into everyone's homes but also into their hearts and soon with her polka-dotted frock and an ever-present butter pack in hand, she became the face of the campaign and brand's endearing mascot.

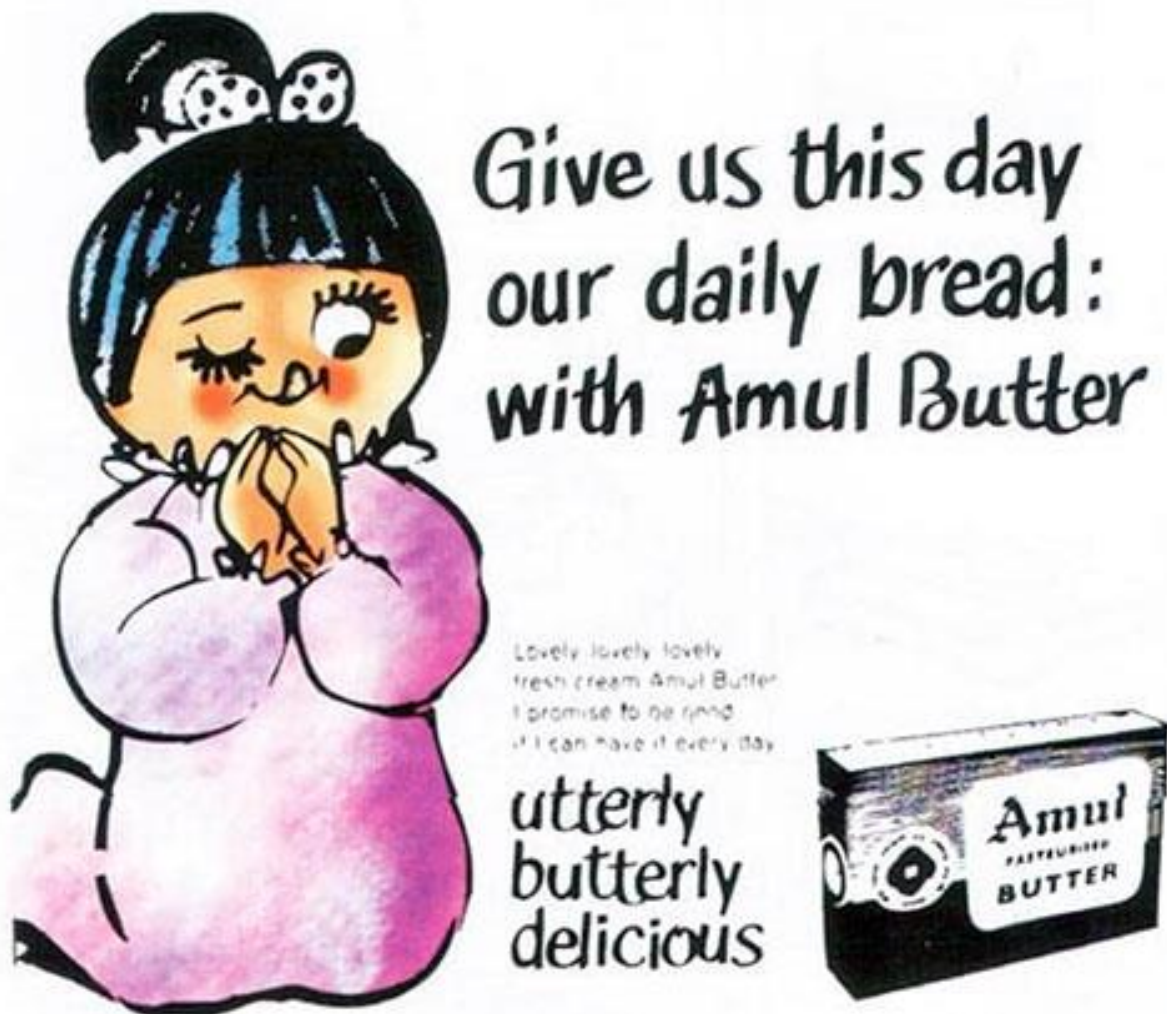


Topical, satirical, and sometimes controversial

The first topical ad came out in March 1966 when horse racing was becoming a trend. It featured the Amul girl riding a horse, with the pun 'Thoroughbread'. Usually, the word "thoroughbred" refers to a purebred horse known for being great at racing and other horse-related activities. But in Amul's 'Thoroughbread,' they cleverly replaced "thoroughbred" with "bread" to make a connection to their butter.



This outdoor hoarding was followed by Amul's iconic tagline, Utterly Butterly Delicious, which was coined by Sylvester daCunha's wife, Nisha daCunha.



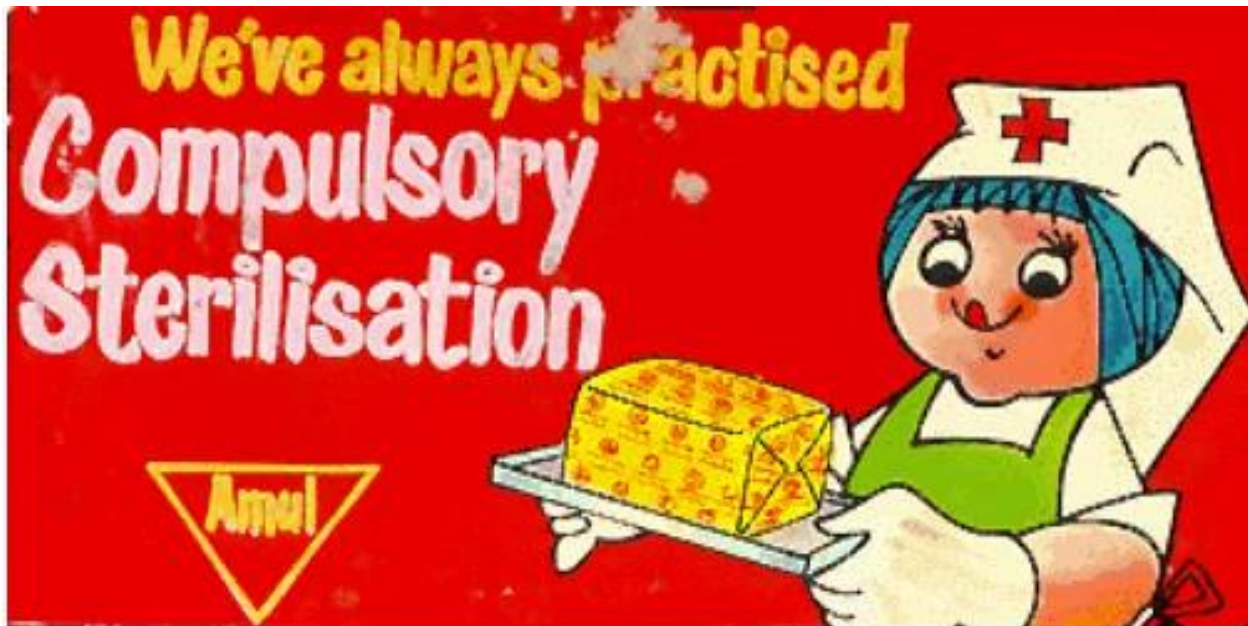
In 1969, with the beginning of the *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* movement, Sylvester daCunha, Mohammad Khan, and Usha Bandarkar, the then creative team working on the Amul account, came up with the slogan 'Hurry Amul, Hurry Hurry Butter! Hurry, Hurry!'



An excerpt edited from an article published by Mini Varma in *The Asian Age* on March 3, 1996, as per Amul's [website](#) said, "That (1969 ad) was the first of the many topical ads that were in the offing. From then on Amul began playing the role of a social observer."

Sylvester daCunha had a keen eye for social issues and trends, which he skillfully incorporated into Amul's advertisements. His creations reflected the collective sentiments of the nation.

During the period of the Emergency, which lasted from 1975 to 1977, the policy of forced sterilisation was implemented by the government. In 1976, daCunha, known for his clever and socially aware advertising, responded to the political climate with a satirical tagline, 'We have always practiced compulsory sterilisation.'



And when the Maintenance of Internal Security Act was introduced during the Emergency in 1976, daCunha reflected that too, in their ad campaign.



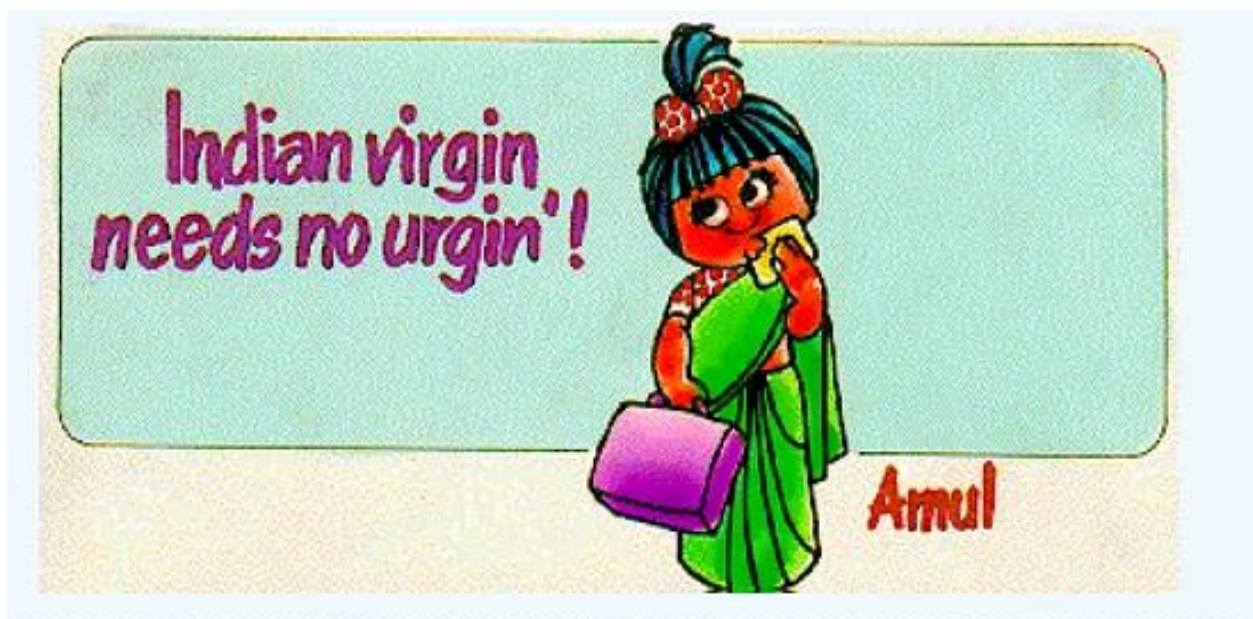
Through subtle and sometimes tongue-in-cheek commentary, he managed to connect Amul's brand messaging with larger societal narratives.

Talking to the press, daCunha's son Rahul daCunha was quoted saying that there were also a couple of advertisements that were not taken pleasantly by the public. For instance, the campaign in the 1980s during the Ganpati Festival, which said, 'Ganpati Bappa More Ghya' (Ganpati Bappa take more) received flak.

Members of a political party threatened to vandalise the agency's Mumbai office after they produced a billboard during Ganesh Chaturthi.



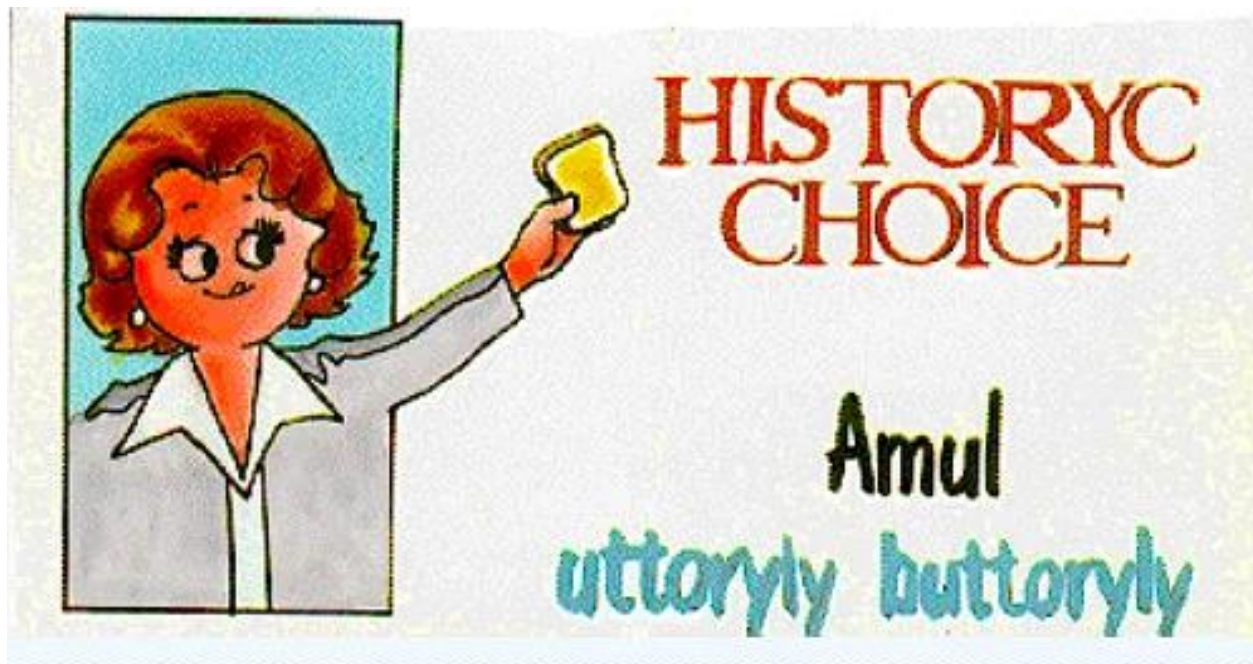
In 1982, disturbing news emerged regarding the alleged practice of virginity tests conducted by UK authorities on Indian women arriving at London's airports. daCunha responded to the news with a dig that read 'Indian virgin needs no urgin'.



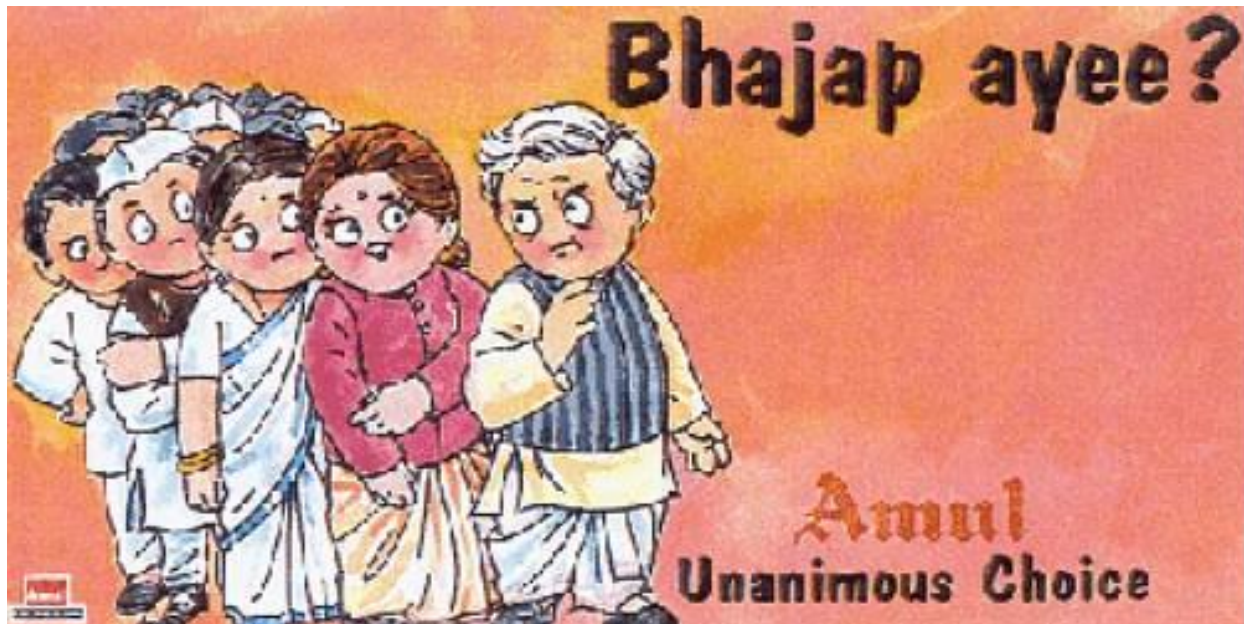
Massive protests followed this billboard. The agency issued another ad in apology saying, 'Urgin' our virgin; accept our peace offerin'



A lot happened in 1982. The year marked a significant milestone in history as Margaret Thatcher, representing the Tory party, became the first woman Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. daCunha and Amul, known for their timely and witty advertisements, also created an ad that captured this momentous event.



In 1997, daCunha talked about the uncertainty of the BJP forming a government through the campaign.



His observations on sports extended beyond the game itself. daCunha understood that sports and athletes had the ability to unite people. And people were keen to know about the happenings of the sports world.

So in 2012, when Sachin Tendulkar retired from One Day International cricket, daCunha's creation reflected the sentiments of India.



Amul's advertisements are known for their ability to reflect current events and capture the public's attention with their wit and humour.

In 2021, Amul created an advertisement that commemorated Air India's return to the Tata Group after a span of 68 years. The ad highlighted the significance of this return, showcasing the connection between two iconic Indian brands and the nostalgia associated with their reunion. Addressing the historic reunion of Air India and the Tata Group, the tagline said, 'Tata Good Buy!'



His legacy will live on

Throughout his career, daCunha demonstrated a deep understanding of political nuances and social issues, which he cleverly infused into Amul's ad campaigns. He seamlessly incorporated the political landscape into Amul's advertisements and played a significant role in the brand's success and relevance. He also understood the importance of moment-marketing before it was recognised by the industry.

Sylvester daCunha's contributions to Amul's advertising legacy are undeniable. His early recognition of the power of humour, wit, and relatability laid the foundation for the brand's continued success in the digital age.

The ethos he instilled in the brand's campaigns will continue to shape Amul's creative endeavors and the Amul Girl, with her timeless appeal, will continue to win hearts!