We have pronounced and acknowledged the efforts of Sikkimese COVID warriors of various departments such as Energy & Power, PHE and even SIMFED so far but let’s not forget the troop of heroes who have been toiling hard to make our morning tea and coffee sessions possible post the imposition of the nationwide 21-day lockdown. It would have been unthinkable to receive our daily dose of protein and nutrition these days had it not been for the efforts of Sikkim Milk Union.

Sikkim Milk Union’s Regional Office and Diary Plant situated at Karfectar, South Sikkim headed by Dr. N.K Pradhan, Deputy General Manager (GM) has been doing a remarkable job in ensuring constant and smooth supply of milk which is listed as an essential commodity, across South and West districts. The Diary Plant which procures its milk from approximately 250 co-operative societies from across West and South districts is producing an impressive volume of 21,000 litres of milk per day even during the lockdown period. Despite a moderate decline in demand for milk post the lockdown due to closure of hotels and restaurants, the Unit has invariably been procuring, processing and distributing milk to Namchi, Jorethang, Melli, Daramdin, Geyzing, Soreng as well as Gangtok. Also, pertinent to add here is the philanthropic deed undertaken by the Diary Cooperative of offering a sizeable amount of their milk and diary products to the nearby orphanages and foster cares in order to meet the protein supplement needs of the children. They have also shouldered the noble responsibility of providing essential dairy services to some quarantine facility set-ups in the state.

What is note-worthy here is that in the wake of COVID-19, the plant is adhering to good hygiene practices and social distancing norms not just in their premises but also in all the 250 milk collection centres where they get their milk from. As you enter Sikkim Milk Union’s regional office at Karfectar, you are greeted with a makeshift hand wash unit which has instilled an involuntary reflex of good hygiene practises among its employees. Besides Sikkim Milk has also mandated the obligatory use of face masks, hand sanitizers and maintaining social distancing during the milk collection hours at the respective collection centres. The drivers of all the operational milk tankers also don PPE suits to reduce their risk of exposure to health hazards while on-the job. In the same manner, periodic health check-ups for all the 50 workers employed under the unit is also being done every 15 days to monitor the health and well-being of its employees. Additionally, the Unit in collaboration with Nayabazar Jorethang Municipal Council (NJMC) is also taking serious measures of disinfecting the premises at regular intervals.

Needless to state, the plant has also been playing a vital role in sustaining rural livelihood by providing a remunerative market for the milk producers more specifically the farmers of remote villages who otherwise cannot market their produce for urban consumption during a pandemic. Thus, it won’t be wrong to adulate the dedication of the workers who are leaving no stone unturned to ensure uninterrupted supply of milk for us even in times of such crisis. Indeed, not all heroes wear capes.