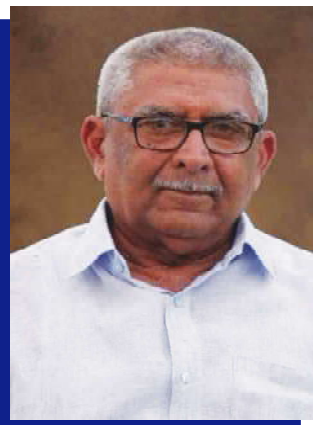


In Memoriam: **Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi**



1948-2026

The Indian Dairy Association (IDA) is deeply grieved on the demise of Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi, who left for his heavenly abode on 29th July 2026. He was a 'Dr. Kurien Awardee'.

The Indian dairy cooperative fraternity mourns the passing of Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi, an institution builder, visionary cooperative leader, and an unwavering champion of tribal and rural development. His demise marks the end of a remarkable chapter in the history of cooperative dairying in South Gujarat, but the values he nurtured and the institutions he strengthened will continue to inspire generations of dairy professionals, development practitioners, and farmer leaders.

Born into a farming family, Narendra Vashi firmly believed that "*a farmer can produce anything, provided there is a reliable market for it.*" This simple yet profound philosophy became the cornerstone of his life's work. After beginning his professional career with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), he chose to dedicate himself to the development of the then nascent **Valsad District Co-operative Milk Producers' Union Ltd. (Vasudhara Dairy)**, foregoing a promising career elsewhere in order to serve the tribal communities of his native region.

When Narendra Vashi assumed leadership, the tribal districts of Valsad, Navsari, and Dang were characterized by low livestock productivity, fragmented agriculture, seasonal migration, and limited livelihood opportunities. He envisioned dairying not merely as an economic activity, but as a powerful instrument for social transformation. By integrating scientific animal husbandry, cooperative organization, women's empowerment, and market access, he established a development model that addressed the root causes of rural poverty while preserving the dignity of farming communities.

His contributions extended far beyond milk procurement. He pioneered interventions in artificial insemination, calf rearing, women's dairy cooperatives, self-help groups, household biogas, modern cattle housing, fodder development, and farmer education, creating a holistic ecosystem for sustainable rural development. Under his leadership, Vasudhara Dairy evolved into a nationally respected cooperative institution, while thousands of tribal families found sustainable livelihoods through dairying.

The transformation achieved under Shri Vashi's stewardship is reflected in remarkable institutional milestones. Milk procurement increased from approximately **8,000 litres per day in 1981 to nearly 9,00,000 litres per day**, supported by a network of **over 1,100 village dairy cooperative societies**, including an unparalleled number of women-led cooperatives. The Union expanded its processing infrastructure, strengthened veterinary and extension services, facilitated thousands of self-help groups, introduced **over 60,000 crossbred cattle**, and implemented extensive rural development initiatives that improved the socio-economic fabric of South Gujarat.

Yet, statistics alone cannot define Shri Narendra Vashi's legacy. His greatest achievement was restoring confidence among communities that had long remained on the margins of development. He believed that cooperative institutions should not merely procure milk but should empower people. Through his compassionate leadership, countless rural women attained financial independence, tribal families secured dignified livelihoods, children gained access to better education, and entire villages experienced renewed hope and self-reliance.

Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi's distinguished service earned him numerous honours, including the **Dr. Kurien Award (2020)** by the Indian Dairy Association (IDA) for Outstanding Contribution to the Dairy Industry, while the institutions he nurtured received national and international recognition for quality, innovation, and rural development. However, those who worked alongside him will remember him not for the accolades he received, but for his humility, accessibility, unwavering commitment to farmers, and his

extraordinary ability to convert vision into lasting institutions.

As the Indian dairy sector bids farewell to one of its most respected cooperative leaders, it also celebrates a life lived in the service of farmers. Shri Narendra Vashi leaves behind a legacy that transcends infrastructure, production figures, and organizational achievements. His enduring contribution lies in demonstrating that cooperative dairying, when guided by compassion, scientific thinking, and integrity, can become a powerful vehicle for social justice and inclusive rural development.

The Board of Directors of Valsad District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Ltd joins the dairy fraternity in paying heartfelt tribute to Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi. His vision, values, and lifelong service will remain a guiding light for the cooperative movement and for all those committed to building a more prosperous and equitable rural India.

The Indian Dairy Association pays its rich tribute to Late Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi and prays for his noble soul to attain eternal peace.

Remembering

Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi – A Dr. Kurien Awardee

Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi passed away on 29 July 2026, leaving behind a remarkable legacy in India's dairy cooperative movement. Dr M.L. Naware's recollection of Shri Vashi is not merely a tribute to a colleague; it is a portrait of a man who made service to farmers the central mission of his life.

Shri Vashi began his career at the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) in February 1972 as one of 16 young apprentices selected to support Operation Flood. Training at Amul under Dr. Chothani, followed by field experience in Rohtak, shaped his disciplined and farmer-centred approach. Dr. Naware recalls that he and Shri Vashi were posted together at Kalanaur Kalan, where the rigour of fieldwork laid the foundation for a lifelong commitment to rural development.

Their most important collaboration came in Jalgaon. In late 1973, Shri Vashi joined Dr. Naware's NDDB Spearhead Team to organise dairy cooperative societies on the Amul model. For more than two years, they worked intensely with farmers, introducing systematic milk collection, quality testing, transparent payment and better hygiene. Shri Vashi's sharp eye for irregularities made him an invaluable field colleague. By the time he left, more than 200 primary societies had been organised, and Jalgaon dairy was receiving over 90,000 litres of milk a day in its first year.

In 1976, Shri Vashi chose a more challenging path. He joined the Gujarat Dairy Development Corporation and was posted to Valsad, an area considered unsuitable for a large dairy project. He refused to accept that limitation. With perseverance and the support of trusted colleagues, including Rasik Patel, Cheha Rabari and later V. G. Patil, he built the Valsad Milk Union into what became Vasudhara Dairy.

The scale of that achievement is extraordinary. Today, Vasudhara has several dairy plants and chilling centres, collects more than 9 lakh litres of milk daily. Yet Shri Vashi himself remained indifferent to publicity. He avoided seminars, conferences and the limelight, preferring to work directly with farmers. The Dr. Verghese Kurien Award, presented to him at the 2020 Dairy Industry Conference, was therefore a particularly fitting recognition.

Dr. Naware's final memories reveal another defining quality: Shri Vashi's generosity. In discussions over possible business arrangements between dairy unions, he was willing to accept terms that ensured mutual benefit, believing that gains for one group of farmers should not come unfairly at the expense of another.

Shri Vashi was, in Dr. Naware's words, "magnanimous" — a leader whose achievements spoke louder than his presence. His life demonstrates that patience, discipline, integrity and faith in farmers can transform seemingly unviable projects into enduring institutions.

His passing is a loss to the cooperative movement. But the spirit with which Shri Narendra Balvantrai Vashi served rural India can continue to inspire generations. For rural development to succeed, we need more people like him. Let that spirit live forever.

Courtesy: Excerpt from the tribute of Dr. M.L. Naware, Former Senior GM, NDDB, published on Vrikshamandir.com