



English rendering of PM's speech at the book release of "The Quest for a World Without Hunger" -a two-part book series on the eminent agricultural scientist Dr. M.S. Swaminathan

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Respected Shri Dr. M.S. Swaminathan Ji, my Cabinet colleague Shriman Radha Mohan Singh Ji and all the dignitaries present here today.

When I was taking over in the capacity of the Chief Minister of Gujarat, I had the honour of getting introduced to Dr. Swaminathan Ji. With his support, we had then launched the Soil Health Card Scheme. Incidentally, this idea had met strong bureaucratic resistance then. However, it was one of Dr. Swaminathan's public addresses at Chennai that eventually established the importance of the scheme and changed the mindset of all my colleagues. During this public meet, he had reiterated the importance of Soil Health Card Scheme introduced by the erstwhile Gujarat Government, hailing it as a landmark step which was bound to reap great benefits in the future. While I had been struggling to convince my colleagues since long, this statement of Dr. Swaminathan released in press hammered it down well, and very soon the same colleagues were with me on this decision. They could now believe in the importance of the initiative. This just proves the diligence, dedication and commitment of Dr. Swaminathan, which I have personally experienced. I am honoured to have witnessed the genesis of this visionary scheme which is slated to be implemented nation wide.

Though he is described as "Krishi Vaigyanik" - an Agricultural Scientist, but I believe that he is a true "Kisan Vaigyanik" - a Farmers' Scientist; there is a real farmer in him. His scientific inquiries have not only explored the agricultural productions and quality in the confines of a laboratory, but they are deeply rooted in the Indian agri context. His scientific papers present studies focussing on the farmers, and hence are very contextual, practical and relevant. The findings are useful and hence can be implemented by the farmers to enhance the quality of their produce. This is the speciality and relevance of Dr. Swaminathan's research.

How can Dr. Swaminathan be a role model for today's youth? Ironically, today's youth is more familiar with political leaders but not scientists. While every by lane makes the political faces a household name, huge contributions of the likes of Dr. Swaminathan are rarely brought to light. Unfortunately, this is a systemic issue or idiosyncrasy of few. Paradoxically, today's youth finds a role model in players, famed artistes, political leader or a business tycoon; but, they rarely seek inspiration from renowned scientists. Imagine that time when the world was of the view that India will die of hunger and perish as a nation; here was a young scientist who took to the global belief head on, and pledged to change the scenario. Little do the youth of today know that the curator of Green Revolution was none other than Dr. Swaminathan.

While the country today is highly conducive to the start up culture, the youth has many domains to work on, and malnutrition is one of the concerning challenges they could address. Our pulses and oilseeds also have lower productivity; they also need to suggest measures to increase the protein contained value. Our youth must take up the challenge of eradicating malnutrition and bring about such innovations in agricultural revolutions that help to combat malnutrition. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that for the poor food is their God. It is time to bring in such scientific interventions that will take this mission forward.

Certain things from his personal life have appealed to me greatly. I am aware that you have worked with almost all PMs till date, yet one has never seen any highhandedness reflected in Dr. Swaminathan's personality; he comes out as simplicity personified. I am not saying so on the basis of the book, but it is out of my personal experiences with him. When I was in Gujarat he would often walk in with deep humility. During our interactions one would never realise that he is THE great scientist. It is a great virtue to remain untouched and unfazed by the success in public life. A virtue worth emulating by all of us! As a person his face is always jubilant. Unlikely that one would have ever seen his glum face. Unfortunately, most scientists sitting here (with due apologies), even in this

21st Century choose to live as if they are still in the 18th Century. They look morose and overburdened with the responsibility of the entire world. They look so lost that even their families are worried about their introvert nature. On the contrary, Dr. Swaminathan exudes immense positivity and *joie de vivre*. It is indeed commendable. This is possible not only because of cognitive intelligence but when one internalises some life lessons too. I truly believe that he is been endowed with divine grace and rich family values to have attained this iconic status.

In the field of agriculture, our country is continually facing the same challenges since several decades. We talk of advancing from Green Revolution to the Second Green Revolution but situation remains dismal. For a nation like India, the target is Evergreen Revolution. It is about time that we know our potentials and map them. Compared to Western India, we notice economic imbalance in North Eastern India. No country can progress in the long term if two parts of the same nation show varied economic growth. Such a country's economy is bound to collapse. To strengthen the entire nation it is now important to replicate the 1st Agro Revolution; the same way that wheat from Western India had led this, the rice of Eastern India has full potential to spearhead the Evergreen Revolution.

I am of the firm opinion that we have sufficient resources like water, irrigable land, toiling farmers, hence the need of the hour is supporting these resources with scientific methods and technological interventions. The Union Government is leaving no stone unturned to achieve this goal, and Dr. Swaminathan has been our constant source of guidance. A while back when I met him I requested him to guide the team. This morning he very courteously spent a lot of time delving deep into the issue with my team and suggested some key areas to focus on. In the wake of population bomb ticking really fast, and land crunch alarmingly becoming critical, immediate measures of Soil Management takes precedence.

It becomes essential to work out a holistic approach which addresses critical issues on how to enhance productivity and quality of agri products. There are approximately 85% marginal farmers who toil on small pieces of land for maximum produce which barely allows them to meet their basic consumption. Such strategies must be introduced which ensure that these farmers are able to harvest high quality produce and get increased market value apart from just fulfilling their personal needs.

Another global challenge which poses a threat to agri-development in the country is the huge water crisis. The natural resources are depleting at an alarming rate which poses a threat to agricultural development. Though several measures like water recycling and conservation have been undertaken, however, it cannot be ignored that the crisis must be attended to with a fire-fighter's spirit. We must display farsightedness in these matters and take immediate steps. It is not easy to sensitize the society. Haven't we noticed in the case of air pollution how even the highly educated could not preempt the impending crisis. Similarly, it would be a humungous challenge to make the common man realise that water could also soon become scarce. Along with water conservation techniques, we need to invent scientific ways of water consumption too.

Presently, we are promoting the "*Per drop more crop*" philosophy to tackle the global problem of water scarcity in agricultural practices. The campaign to join rivers is a step towards cost effective farming which would ensure that sufficient water is available for irrigation. We must also take effective measures towards soil management by curbing the use of pesticides and chemicals in fertilizers. They ruin the purity of soil and destroy cultivable land. There is a perpetual complain by farmers who have fields alongside river banks that pollution from the industries damage their crops. However, they do not realise that the use of chemicals in the fields precipitate with the rains and inundate into the river making them highly acidic and harmful for irrigation. The launch of "Prime Minister Krishi Sinchayee Yojana" aims to protect the rivers and make optimal usage of river water. This catapulted the importance of research and innovation in the domain of protection of rivers.

It helps to be mindful of the local stories in the villages as they often are a glimpse of the culture and norms. I would like to share one of my experiences of a place in Gujarat called Bhal. It was located along the sea shore in the gulf area of Khambat. Since our childhood we had heard a lot about "*bhaliya*" variety of wheat, and it was primarily consumed by the upper class as it was an expensive variety. I was always intrigued by this story about how the upper class would hoard the special

wheat variety. When I became the Chief Minister of Gujarat I started learning more about the quality of the “*bhaliya*” wheat. The findings revealed that while most wheat varieties are carbon rich, the “*bhaliya*” wheat was Protein Rich and a rare variety.

During one of my visit to Switzerland, I met some people from Nestle and requested them to guide me on how to resolve the issue of nutrition. I had involved a local university to conduct genetic study of the *bhaliya* variety. Like the rice variety *Basmati* is synonymous with high nutrition and quality, we could also find the brand value of other rich varieties of cereals and grains. I can recall today that I was very curious whenever someone affluent wished to buy millet, the most sought after variety came from the Amreli district of Gujarat. Incidentally, the MLA from the district had gifted me a bag full when I was sworn in as the Chief Minister. Then I wasn't aware of the richness of the variety of millet from this district. I immediately asked a few scientists to document the local adages from around the country about high yielding varieties of crops which might have made a certain produce very famous. It would be relevant to identify such varieties and ascertain its genetic value.

It will be really great if we amalgamate such traditional knowledge with the scientific inquiry if the produce of any region is known for productivity, high yielding variety with extraordinary nutritional values. If they are found to be of great value to humankind in terms of both quality and nutrients, then certainly some research should be taken up promptly.

Keeping this in mind, I instructed the people from my department to become more vigilant about the crop varieties of the districts they enter. Each district has its agricultural identity; whether it is recognised from a rice variety it produces or isabgol or cumin. One should create awareness among the farmers and residents of that village about how a certain produce can give them their identity.

During one of my visit to Himachal Pradesh when Shri Dhumal ji was Chief Minister, I was thrilled to visit the Solan district where mushroom farming is being done on a large scale. I used to reside in Himachal then. I was surprised that no one capitalised on this strength of the state. There was immense potential of branding through this agricultural identity. Today the entry board to Solan reads “Welcome to the Mushroom City”. One can now also see boards highlighting Kiwi fruit and apple productions. The district and the farmers of that region get their identity and are well known in the market due to their crop variety. During business such identity really helps. On the lines of Industrial Cluster, Agricultural Clusters will also emerge when, for example, there are 16 districts are known for a rice variety and there are 20 others famous for their oil seeds. Such concepts need to be developed to market the product well. This opens up the potential for the business of processing which brings immense value addition. With unique packaging required for a specific variety of fruit or storage redesigned for a new rice variety, the discipline of Supply Chain Management gains advantage. The more specialised a product, the more customised would be its packaging and transportation. the sooner we bring it into the DNA of our country, the closer we are to our target of “double income” for the farmers by the 75th year of our Independence in 2022.

A while back when I met Dr. Swaminathan, I requested him to connect me to leading agro economists to discuss the agenda of “double income” by 2022. He simply handed over a note to me which listed things which require immediate action. I am making efforts to work on those lines. We need to be target oriented and work on three crucial things i.e., cost effectiveness, enhanced productivity and value addition. We all know that Neem Coated Urea was not here out of the blue. It was never given importance earlier. However now, it is seen how it has helped in the curbing theft and corruption. In fact, it came to light that despite heavy reduction in the consumption of urea, the production of rice and wheat has increased effectively. These are some of the subtle ways of popularising best practices in the regions and gaining long term benefit.

The Indian Government is ensuring THAT at every level with the support of Dr. Swaminathan and his scientific research fraternity. We are moving towards Evergreen Revolution and making all attempts to reinstate a sustainable agriculture system in the country.

Right efforts are being made in that direction by encouraging experimentations and technological advancements which has been one of our major challenges. “Lab to land” should be our target. Scientists dedicate their entire lives in developing something for us but sadly these are never implemented in the fields. It is cause of concern as farmers are not ready to take risks unlike the businessmen. To encourage them to accept new inventions in their farming practices, we have introduced Prime Ministers Crop Insurance Scheme. This has developed a lot of trust among the

farmer community. Now farmers covered under this scheme are seven times more compared to the previous scheme. There would be many ifs and buts when a new scheme is launched primarily due to lack of awareness. However, seven times hike in the acceptance of the scheme in the launch year is indeed laudable. It clearly indicates that our farmers are feeling more secure. The feeling of security is certainly going to enhance their risk taking capacity. They are open minded to the scientific experimentations and excited to implement latest interventions in farming. The Prime Minister Crop Insurance Scheme is a strong catalyst in strengthening the “lab to land” process.

I once again congratulate Dr. Swaminathan from the core of my heart for serving the nation and the farmers, as well as, for dedicating himself like an ascetic for the cause of hunger.

Hearty Congratulations!

Thank You!

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