

English rendering of PM's address at the M.S. Swaminathan Centenary International Conference in New Delhi

Posted On: 07 AUG 2025 11:09AM by PIB Delhi

My Cabinet colleague, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan; Chairperson of the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Dr Soumya Swaminathan; Member of NITI Aayog, Dr Ramesh Chand; I also see that many members of the Swaminathan family are present here—I extend my respectful greetings to them as well. All scientists, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen!

There are certain personalities whose contributions are not confined to a specific era or a particular geography. Professor M. S. Swaminathan was one such eminent scientist, a devoted son of Maa Bharati. He transformed science into a medium of public service. He dedicated his life to ensuring the nation's food security. He awakened a consciousness that will continue to shape Bharat's policies and priorities for centuries to come.

I extend my greetings to all of you on the occasion of the Swaminathan Centenary Celebrations.

Friends,

Today, 7th August, also marks National Handloom Day. Over the past ten years, the handloom sector has gained new recognition and strength across the country. I convey my greetings to all of you and to those associated with the handloom sector on this National Handloom Day.

Friends,

My association with Dr Swaminathan dates back many years. Many are aware of the earlier conditions in Gujarat—agriculture there often faced severe challenges due to droughts and cyclones, and the desert of Kutch was steadily expanding. During my tenure as Chief Minister, we began work on the Soil Health Card scheme. I vividly recall that Professor Swaminathan had shown immense interest in the initiative. He generously offered his suggestions and guided us. His contributions greatly helped in the success of this effort. It was nearly twenty years ago that I visited the centre of his research foundation in Tamil Nadu. In 2017, I had the opportunity to release his book 'The Quest for a World Without Hunger'. In 2018, when the Regional Centre of the International Rice Research Institute was inaugurated in Varanasi, we once again benefited from his guidance. Every meeting with him was a learning experience for me. He once said, "Science is not just about discovery, but delivery," and he demonstrated this through his actions. He did not limit himself to research; he also inspired farmers to adopt new agricultural practices. Even today, his approach and ideas are visible across Bharat's agriculture sector. He was, in the truest sense, a jewel of Maa Bharati. I consider it my honour that our government had the opportunity to confer upon Dr Swaminathan the Bharat Ratna.

Friends,

Dr Swaminathan launched a mission to make Bharat self-reliant in food production. Yet, his identity extended beyond the Green Revolution. He continuously raised awareness among farmers about the rising use of chemicals in farming and the risks of monoculture farming. In other words, while he worked to increase grain production, he was equally concerned about the environment and Mother Earth. To strike a balance between the two and to address these challenges, he introduced the concept of the Green Revolution. He proposed the idea of 'bio-villages', which could empower rural communities and farmers. He promoted concepts like 'community seed banks' and 'opportunity crops'.

Friends,

Dr Swaminathan believed that the solution to challenges like climate change and nutrition lies in the very crops we have forgotten. His focus was on drought tolerance and salt tolerance. He began work on millets—Shree Anna—at a time when no one gave them much importance. Years ago, Dr Swaminathan had recommended that the genetic traits of mangroves be transferred to rice, so that crops would become more climate-resilient. Today, as we speak of climate adaptation, we realise just how far ahead he was in his thinking.

Friends,

Today, biodiversity is a global concern, and governments around the world are taking numerous measures to protect it. But Dr Swaminathan went a step further and gave us the idea of 'biohappiness'. Today, we are here to celebrate that very concept. Dr Swaminathan used to say that the power of biodiversity could bring about a significant transformation in the lives of local communities; that through the use of local resources, new means of livelihood could be created. True to his nature, he was an expert at implementing his ideas on the ground. Through his research foundation, he consistently strove to bring the benefits of new discoveries to the farmers. Our small-scale farmers, our fishermen, our tribal communities—all have benefitted immensely from his efforts.

Friends,

Today, I am particularly pleased that the 'M. S. Swaminathan Award for Food and Peace' has been instituted to honour Professor Swaminathan's legacy. This international award will be presented to individuals from developing countries who have made significant contributions in the field of food security. Food and peace—the relationship between the two is not only philosophical but also deeply practical. In our Upanishads, it is stated: , That is, one must not disrespect food. Food supports life.

Therefore, friends,

If there is a crisis of food, then there is a crisis of life. And when the lives of lakhs are at risk, global unrest naturally follows. This is why the 'M. S. Swaminathan Award for Food and Peace' is of utmost importance. I heartily congratulate the first recipient of this award, the talented scientist from Nigeria, Professor Ademola Adenle.

Friends,

Today, Indian agriculture has reached great heights, and I am certain that wherever Dr Swaminathan is, he would be proud. Today, Bharat ranks first in the production of milk, pulses, and jute. Bharat is second in the production of rice, wheat, cotton, fruits, and vegetables. Bharat is also the world's second-largest producer of fish. Last year, Bharat recorded its highest-ever food grain production. We are also setting new records in oilseeds. The production of soybean, mustard, and groundnut has risen to record levels.

Friends,

For us, the welfare of our farmers is of the highest priority. Bharat will never compromise on the interests of its farmers, livestock rearers, and fishermen. And I am fully aware that I may have to pay a very heavy price personally, but I am prepared for it. For the farmers of my country, for the fishermen of my country, for the livestock rearers of my country, Bharat stands ready today. We are continuously working towards increasing farmers' incomes, reducing their agricultural expenditure, and creating new sources of income.

Friends,

Our government has regarded the strength of farmers as the foundation of the nation's progress. That is why the policies framed in recent years have not merely extended assistance, but have also sought to build trust among farmers. The direct financial support provided through the PM-KISAN Samman Nidhi has empowered small farmers with self-confidence. The PM Fasal Bima Yojana has given them protection from risk. Issues related to irrigation have been addressed through the PM Krishi Sinchai Yojana. The creation of 10,000 FPOs has enhanced the collective strength of small farmers. Financial support to cooperatives and self-help groups has given fresh momentum to the rural economy. Thanks to e-NAM, it has become easier for farmers to sell their produce. The PM Kisan Sampada Yojana has accelerated the establishment of new food processing units

and storage infrastructure. Recently, the PM Dhan Dhanya Yojana has also been approved. Under this scheme, 100 districts where agriculture has remained backward have been selected. By providing infrastructure and financial assistance to farmers in these districts, a new sense of confidence is being instilled in farming.

Friends,

21st-century Bharat is working with full dedication to become a developed nation. And this goal will be achieved only through the contribution of every class, every profession. Taking inspiration from Dr Swaminathan, our scientists now have yet another opportunity to create history. The scientists of the previous generation ensured food security—now there is a need to focus on nutritional security. We must promote bio-fortified and nutrition-rich crops on a large scale to improve people's health. We must also demonstrate greater urgency in reducing the use of chemicals and promoting natural farming.

Friends,

You are well aware of the challenges related to climate change. We must develop as many varieties of climate-resilient crops as possible. The focus must be on drought-tolerant, heat-resistant, and flood-adaptive crops. More research is required on crop rotation, and on identifying which crops are best suited to which soil types. Alongside this, we must also develop affordable soil testing tools and effective methods of nutrient management.

Friends,

We need to do much more in the field of solar-powered micro-irrigation. We must make drip systems and precision irrigation more widespread and effective. Can we integrate satellite data, AI, and machine learning? Can we develop a system that can forecast crop yields, monitor pests, and guide sowing? Can such a real-time decision support system be made available in every district? All of you must continue guiding agri-tech startups. Today, a large number of innovative young people are working to solve the problems faced in agriculture. If you, with your experience, continue to mentor them, the products they develop will be more impactful and more user-friendly.

Friends,

Our farmers and farming communities possess a treasure trove of traditional knowledge. By integrating traditional Indian agricultural practices with modern science, a holistic knowledge base can be created. Crop diversification is today a national priority. We must explain to our farmers its significance. We must convey what the benefits are, and also what the consequences of not adopting it might be. And in this task, you are best placed to make a real impact.

Friends,

Last year, when I visited the Pusa campus on 11th August, I had urged that efforts be increased to take agricultural technology from the 'lab to the land'. I am pleased that the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan was launched during May–June. For the first time, scientists' teams—around 2,200 in number—participated across more than 700 districts in the country. Over 60,000 programmes were conducted, and, more importantly, direct engagement was established with around 1.25 crore aware and informed farmers. This effort by our scientists to reach more and more farmers is truly commendable.

Friends,

Dr M. S. Swaminathan taught us that agriculture is not just about crops—agriculture is life itself. The dignity of every individual connected to the field, the well-being of every farming community, and the protection of nature—these form the very strength of our government's agricultural policy. We must weave together science and society, place the interests of the small farmer at the heart of our efforts, and empower the women who work in the fields. Let us move ahead with this very goal in mind, with the inspiration of Dr Swaminathan guiding us all.

Once again, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all of you on this special occasion.

Thank you very much.

MJPS/VJ/IG

(Release ID: 2153424)