

M S Swaminathan, *In Memoriam*

Anindya Sinha, 5 October 2023

It is indeed with a great sense of loss that we, his extended family at the National Institute of Advanced Studies / NIAS, received news of the passing away, on 28 September 2023 in Chennai, of Dr M S Swaminathan, who served as the Chair, Council of Management of NIAS and NIAS Society, from September 2001 to November 2013.

Dr Swaminathan was a true world leader in the fields of agriculture, natural resource management, environmental conservation, and inclusive development, and his life and career have always been a remarkable source of inspiration to us in NIAS, primarily owing to his unwavering dedication to environmental preservation and agricultural advancement. His tenure as the Chair of the Council of Management of NIAS was emblematic of all the values that NIAS has always held dear, including, amongst others, sustainable development policies, removal of inequalities and upliftment of the poor, and the preservation of our planet's biodiversity, which he famously termed, "evergreen revolution". Dr Swaminathan had later taken on crucial roles as a government administrator and an educator, and served in leadership roles at the International Rice Research Institute, International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and the World Wildlife Fund. We still remember, with great pride, the announcement of Mr Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the then United Nations Secretary General, when Dr Swaminathan was awarded the first World Food Prize in 1987; he said: "Dr Swaminathan is a living legend. His contributions to agricultural science have made an indelible mark on food production in India and elsewhere in the developing world. By any standards, he will go into the annals of history as a world scientist of rare distinction."

A wonderfully soft-spoken and gentle individual with a kind word for everyone, Dr Swaminathan was remarkably supportive of NIAS' various research and development initiatives, ranging from strategic studies to social development to wildlife conservation. He warned us, well ahead of his times, how deforestation and climate change could impact food yields, and subsequently socioeconomic development, in countries like India. The not-for-profit that Dr Swaminathan created, the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation, became a pioneering institution in research and development on areas related to agriculture and biodiversity, pursuing what he called, "a pro-poor, pro-women and pro-nature approach", encompassing ideals that our Institute has always held in high esteem.

Dr Swaminathan's remarkable contributions to the growth and development of NIAS as a strategic think-tank during his tenure will never be forgotten. The Institute has indeed lost a loyal supporter and a close, understanding friend. May he rest in eternal peace.