

Shri Rao Birendra Singh,  
Minister for Agriculture &  
Rural Reconstruction.

Ministry of Agriculture  
Krishi Bhavan,  
New Delhi.

November 13, 1980.

Dear Dr. Bhai Mahavir,

I thank you for your letter of 16th May, 1980 addressed to the Prime Minister. The factual position relating to most of the points contained in your letter has been explained on several occasions in Parliament. However, I would like to summarise again the position.

1. Protein and lysine content in the dwarf wheat variety, Sharbati Sonora.

In 1962-63 the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) had launched an intensive programme of breeding of management responsive and disease-resistant dwarf wheat varieties, using the 'Norin' dwarfing genes which had already been transferred to a spring wheat background in Mexico by Dr. N.E. Borlaug and his colleagues. The Ministry of Agriculture invited Dr. Borlaug to visit India and to send a wide range of wheat breeding material containing genes for dwarfing. On receipt of the Mexican wheat material in 1973, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan the then Director of IARI got a breeding programme started along the following 4 lines:

- (a) Test the best Mexican dwarf wheats under our conditions and select those which give good yields.
- (b) Select from the advanced generation material received from Mexico lines combining good yield potential, resistance to rusts and desirable grain quality.
- (c) Cross the Mexican varieties with our own varieties and select new hybrid strains.
- (d) Correct the deficiency in grain colour of Lema Rojo x 64-A and Sonora 64 through mutation breeding.

The programme for changing the colour of grain through induced mutations led to the development of Sharbati Sonora with amber grains from the red grain variety.

From the mid-fifties, IARI has been getting the chapathi making and nutritive qualities of new wheat varieties tested at its Grain Quality Laboratory, headed by Dr. A. Austin. At this laboratory, an estimate of lysine content in wheat varieties conducted in 1967 showed a value of 4.61 gm/100 gms in a sample of Sharbati Sonora. In a popular lecture on "Protein hunger and threat of intellectual stagnation", Dr. Austin's findings were quoted by Dr. Swaminathan. Later estimates, however, showed values of 3 gms or below and have been accorded

reported from time to time. Excepting the single high value, all the other published values, including the one quoted in the citation for the Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, are below the value of 3.17 gm/100 gms protein recorded in a sample of Sharbati Sonora got analysed by the ICAR Inquiry Committee. Dr. Austin has also subsequently explained in a paper the probable reason for the higher value observed in one sample. Dr. Swaminathan has never claimed that he has himself estimated lysine or protein content in wheat. At the same time, he has also clearly stated that he has absolutely no reason to doubt the ~~int~~ integrity of the scientists of the IARI, whose data he had quoted now and then during his tenure as Director of the Institute. Sharbati Sonora was also neither developed nor released for its lysine content. The Indian Journal of Genetics in an editorial entitled "Whither Scientific ethics- apartheid in Science" has pointed out how similar variations in lysine values have been common in the papers published from leading laboratories in the United States during the 1960's (copy enclosed).

2. Article by Mr. Ian St. James-Roberts, Lecturer in Psychology at the University of London in the 1979 Year Book published by Encyclopedia Britannica Organisation.

Mr. Roberts has not made any value judgement. He has mentioned that Gregor-Mendel, father of the science of genetics, and Dr. Swaminathan might have quoted wrong data. He has based his statement on the New Scientists' report quoting detractors and supporters. Mr. Roberts has also stated that the work of Mendel and Dr. Swaminathan has resulted in benefits to humanity. In this connection, it will be pertinent to point out that the ultimate value of a scientist's worth can be judged only through assessment of such work by scientific academies. Dr. Swaminathan's work has not only been assessed and recognised by the Indian National Science Academy, Indian Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Sciences of India but also by the Royal Society of London, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the USSR All Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. It will also be appropriate to quote the acknowledgement of Dr. N.E. Borlaug who stated as follows on the occasion of his receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for 1970:

"The green revolution has been a team effort and much of the credit for its spectacular development must go to Indian officials, organizations, scientists and farmers. However, to you, Dr. Swaminathan, a great deal of the credit must go for first recognizing the potential value of the Mexican dwarfs. Had this not occurred, it is quite possible that there would not have been a green revolution in Asia".

3. The Judgment of the Delhi High Court and the grievances of Dr. Y.P. Gupta and Dr. T.S. Raman.

You have taken exception to the reply given to the Lok Sabha unstarred Question No.7054 on 16.4.1979. In this

Since Dr. Y.P. Gupta has not opted for the A.P.S. of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, his case could not be considered for career advancement and apparently, he did not avail of the opportunity for any higher post advertised for direct recruitment, because of which he has remained at the maximum of his pay scale since 1978. I am sure, you would appreciate that appropriate action was taken to see that the grievances of Dr. Y.P. Gupta and Dr. T.S. Raman were considered at the highest level in such a manner that there was no ground for suspicion of bias or unfairness.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-  
(Sd Birendra Singh)

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connection I would like you to refer to the questions framed by the High Court and the conclusion given on questions 3 and 4 in the full Bench Judgment of the Delhi High Court which are reproduced below:-

- "1. Do the petitioners have a legal right to challenge the appointment of Respondent 6?
2. Has the Director General of the ICAR acted in contravention of any legal obligation in making the appointment of Respondent 6?
3. Was the said appointment vitiated by the mala fides of Dr. Swaminathan and /or of Dr. Naik?
4. Was it had because of the want of qualifications of Dr. Mehta or non-compliance with the prescribed procedure in making it?

After detailed discussion of the material placed ~~before~~ before the full Bench, the High Court have observed -

"On the third and the fourth questions, therefore, we are of the view that there is neither a full pleading nor proof of facts constituting mala fides against Dr. Swaminathan and Dr. Naik. It was not, therefore, necessary to file affidavits for them in Dr. Gupta's petition, though they filed such affidavits in Dr. Raman's petition. Further, there is absolutely no material to show that either Dr. Swaminathan or Dr. Naik were prejudiced against the petitioners. Lastly, the procedure in making the appointment according to the bye-laws and the advertisement was followed as far as possible by the second Selection Committee. The selection of Dr. Mehta was, therefore, not vitiated either by mala fides or by non-compliance with the procedure."

It cannot, therefore, be said that the High Court did not go into these complaints.

The Director, Indian Agricultural Research Institute had constituted a committee to go into the representation that was filed by Dr. Y.P. Gupta and Dr. T.S. Raman in pursuance of the directive of the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding excesses committed before, during and after the Emergency in 1975 but when these two scientists did not cooperate with the Committee, the President ICAR constituted a committee under Dr. G.P. Talwar to go into the working of the Biochemistry Division of the IARI and the grievances of Dr. Gupta and Dr. Raman. Dr. Gupta and Dr. Raman had met the members of the Talwar Committee and had placed their grievances before them. The report of the Committee has just been received and is receiving our consideration. The Committee have clearly stated that they have not found any evidence of bias on the part of Dr. Swaminathan against Dr. Gupta and Dr. Gupta had not submitted to them any such evidence. On the contrary they have stated that they firmly and unanimously believe that Dr. Swaminathan's contribution to the development of the IARI, the ICAR and to agriculture in the country are outstanding.