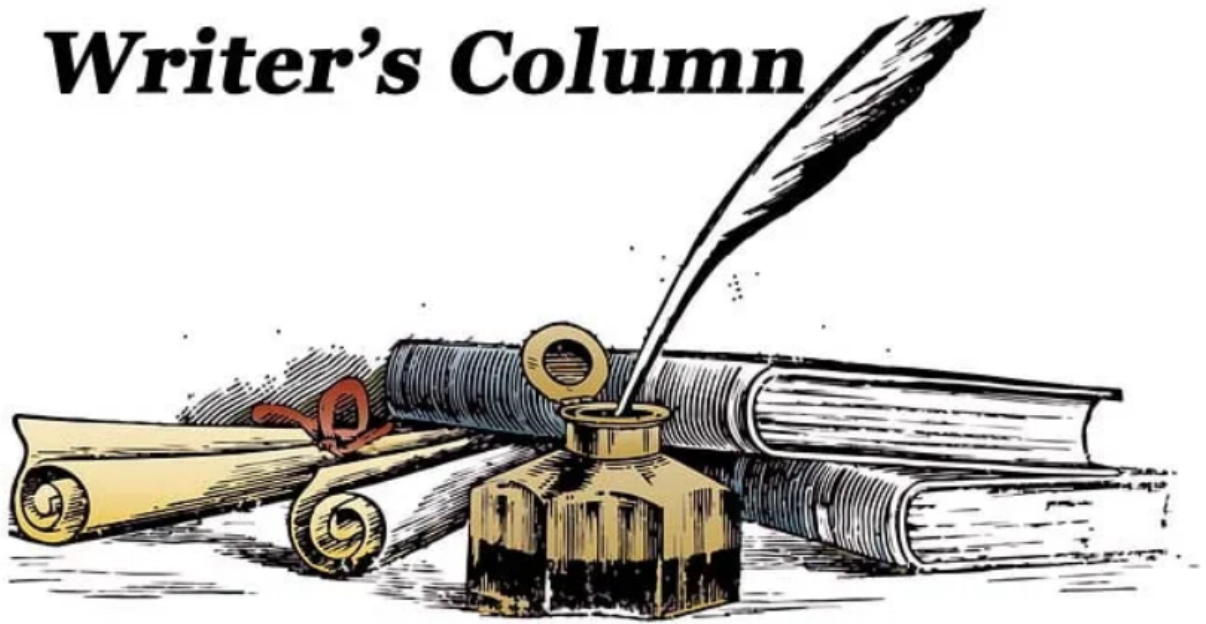


From Rural Roots to Agricultural Leadership: The Raj S. Paroda Journey

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Writer's Column



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By Prof. Ram Singh

India's agricultural journey from food scarcity to self-reliance did not happen overnight. It was shaped by visionary scientists, dedicated farmers, and transformative institutions. Among the architects of this agricultural revolution stands Rajendra Singh Paroda, a scientist whose work fundamentally changed the landscape of Indian agriculture. Born in Rajasthan in 1942, Dr. Paroda emerged from humble rural roots to become one of India's most respected agricultural scientists. His deep understanding of farmers' struggles and his commitment to scientific innovation helped bridge the gap between laboratories and agricultural fields. Throughout his career, he believed that science must directly serve the farming community and strengthen national food security.

Dr. Paroda served as the Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Secretary of the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Government of India. During his tenure, India's National Agricultural Research System underwent major reforms and modernization. More than thirty new institutions related to horticulture, fisheries, livestock, and advanced agricultural sciences were established or strengthened under his leadership. One of his most remarkable achievements was the establishment of India's National Gene Bank, now considered one of the largest and most advanced repositories of crop genetic resources in the world. This visionary step helped preserve valuable plant diversity for future generations and strengthened India's preparedness against climate change and food insecurity.

Dr. Paroda also played a crucial role in expanding agricultural research beyond traditional cereal crops. His initiatives encouraged diversification into maize, cotton, fruits, vegetables, forage crops, and sustainable farming systems. His scientific contributions in plant breeding and genetics led to the development of several improved crop varieties, benefiting millions of farmers across the country. Beyond India, Dr. Paroda earned global recognition for promoting international cooperation in agricultural research. He served as the Founder Chairman of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and contributed significantly to agricultural innovation across Asia and developing countries. His leadership strengthened partnerships among scientists, institutions, and governments worldwide.

The story of his life and achievements has recently been published in the book entitled "**The Visionary Architect of Modern Agriculture**" which is authored by **Dr. Sanjay Kumar and Arun Tiwari**. The publication enlightens how Dr. Paroda's visionary leadership transformed India's agricultural institutions and inspired generations of scientists and researchers.

For his immense contribution to science and agriculture, Dr. Paroda received numerous prestigious honours, including the Padma Bhushan and the Norman Borlaug Award. Yet, despite his international recognition, he remained closely connected to farmers and rural communities throughout his life. At a time when agriculture faces challenges from climate change, declining biodiversity, and resource constraints, the legacy of Dr. Raj S. Paroda remains more relevant than ever. His life is a reminder that scientific innovation, when guided by compassion and national commitment, can sow the seeds of transformation for generations to come.

(The writer is the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Central Agricultural University(I), Kyrdemkulai, Meghalaya)