Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, a complete human being who had the lifestyle of a common man, had dreams for the country that he translated into actions by motivating the Indian youth to enable India become a global leader.

Dr. Abdul Kalam was a compassionate professor who had ungrudging attitude for students vis-a-vis the country’s development, as he quoted futuristically that ‘students are the pillars of the nation’. Yes, Dr. Kalam dreamt of a young India – a strong India.

At the same time, Dr. Kalam’s intent of ‘farmers to have a long life’ gave a call for policies to be farmer-centric, and he always opined ‘agriculture to play a key role not only for food security, but also for reducing poverty’ in the country.

While remembering his unconditional service to the nation, I and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research also had opportunities to be with this distinguished scientist on several occasions – the World Conference on ‘Animal Nutrition’ on 16th February, 2009; Visit to Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), Port Blair on 3rd September 2009; 84th Foundation Day of ICAR in New Delhi on 16th July 2012 and the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) in Thiruvananthapuram on 28th January 2013.

While addressing the 84th Foundation Day of ICAR, Dr. Kalam appreciated the leadership role of the Council for ‘Science-led Development’ transforming the country into a self-sufficient nation. He envisioned 350 million tonnes of food by 2020 – the country today has achieved about 250 mt. I am sure with further concerted efforts and complementary policies, the target set by the great scientist would be achieved by enhancing the productivity of the bottom of the pyramid farmers. During brief discussions, I could feel his wisdom and determination for the country, no doubt Dr. Kalam was the ‘People’s President’.

We, in the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, pledge to realize the dreams of Dr. Kalam by meticulous efforts and systematic actions to translate agricultural science for societal development in letter and spirit. The ICAR family deeply mourns the sudden demise of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the 11th President of India. A scientist, teacher, philosopher and a true leader of India, Dr. Kalam would always be remembered for his endearing personality and his futuristic vision will always be in our minds.

May his great soul rest in peace, and continue inspiring the billions.

Jai Hind.

Dr. S. Ayyappan is the Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) & Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). A Fellow of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the Society of Nature Conservators, Dr. Ayyappan has chaired numerous committees, working groups, and task forces in India’s Ministry of Agriculture. This includes the Expert Committee for Development of Freshwater Aquaculture (2000-2001), the Working Group to formulate the Model Bill for Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture (2004), and the Task Force on Aquaculture and Marine Biotechnology (2006-2009).