

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS *

Today, is a very memorable day for me, a day on which I have the singular honour of addressing this august body of the eminent Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists of the country as their president. For this I am beholden to you all, who have been so kind to elect me to this exalted and prestigious office last year.

Friends, there have been many thoughts about this association which I have been toying with for the last many years, many ideas and many notions that have been coming to my mind persistently, and varied experience that I have gathered during the past 20 years. All of these flood my mind today, and I will like to avail this opportunity to the fullest extent to transform them into words and communicate them to you.

Our Association, today, is nearly 33 years old. Its seed was sown by a dedicated soul, Dr. U. B. Narayana Rao, in July 1947. Though it started as an association of the Specialists of Bombay, it soon grew into an all-India body. Its Ist conference was held in Bombay, and it was indeed in fitness of the circumstances that, the same was presided over by such a pioneer in the field at that time as Dr. R. V. Rajam, who was and is still held in great esteem not only in the country but also abroad.

Our next three conferences were held in 1952, 1956 and 1962. If I may say that it was only in 1962 that the real life was enthused into the association, I shall be speaking nothing but truth. This indeed was possible because of the bold and ceaseless efforts and dedicated stewardship of

Dr. S. C. Desai. After 1962 conference, this function of ours became an annual affair and it was held conjointly with the Association of Physicians of India upto the year 1974. During this period it was served by many stalwarts, the outstanding one of whom I would like particularly to mention here and whose contribution to the speciality is second to none, is Dr. K. C. Kandhari. Not only that, he also happens to be my mentor and my Guru. It is he who laid down the foundation of my career, and it is to him I owe my success, in whatever measure I have been able to achieve. They all not only nurtured it with tender care but succeeded in instilling into it a spirit of comradeship and team-work. It would, indeed, have been difficult for the association to cross its earlier vital milestones but for their conscientious efforts.

Next important landmark in the history of the association was the amalgamation of the two erstwhile rival associations - namely, Indian Association of Dermatologists and Venereologists, and Dermatological Society - an amalgamation which perhaps would not have been possible but for the blessing and sincere efforts of senior colleagues like Dr. B.N. Banerji, Dr. K. C. Kandhari and Dr. S. C. Desai. The resultant growth in membership because of the merger enabled us to take a bold decision to hold our conferences separately of the Association of the Physicians of India. The first independent conference was held in Trivandrum in 1975 under the chairmanship of Dr. B. M. Ambady and which was a great success. From then onward, we never looked back. Today this organisation has established itself and has blossomed into full maturity. There have been some

* Delivered at the IX Annual Conference of IADVL-1981 at Indore.

teething problems but we have practically overcome them all. This, however, is natural with an organisation, as big as ours. Today, the membership of the association stands at the figure of 1094 and we have branches in 12 States besides direct membership.

Our Speciality

Our speciality, too, has made vast strides. It is no longer an appendage of General Medicine or Surgery, but has an independent existence in almost all the Medical Colleges as well as in the country with the specialists practising in the discipline in almost every district, tehsil and town. The advances made in the last two or three decades have also been remarkable. A whole new sturdy dermatologic discipline has sprung up. The study of basic sciences and application of modern techniques like histochemistry, biochemistry, enzymology, microbiology, genetics, electron-microscopy, fluorescent microscopy etc. have not only extended the horizon of our knowledge but have also contributed considerably in our understanding of its various aspects. Some of our colleagues in this country, also have not lagged behind in this respect. Their contribution to the world literature is also sizable with break throughs in quite a few fields, and which has been acclaimed duly by our contemporaries in the country as well as abroad. For instance, recently, adoption of a bioengineering technique in the management of dermatological problems at A.I.I.M.S. has resulted in development of the mechanical advice called - "Nasalfilter". Another important research of which all of us could rightly be proud of is the development of anti-leprosy vaccine at Cancer Research Institute, Bombay which has seeds of a promising result in future. In the same stride there have been advanced studies in the immunology of Leprosy, Syphilis and chronic and fatal dermatologic disorders, like pem-

phigus and Systemic Lupus Erythematosus. There has been significant work on photobiology and roll of porphyrines at some centres. Studies were also conducted on effect of psoralens in Vitiligo as well as in treatment of psoriasis, though with variable results. The trend has no doubt been set and I am sure more and more of our workers will devote themselves in the comprehensive studies of various cutaneous maladies.

Our Conferences

The annual conferences do and should provide an opportunity for a social get-together and also promote establishment of the rapport at a personal level between colleagues from different parts of the country. Not only this, the conference, I feel, should also provide ample relaxation for the members so that they can get away from the drudgery of their daily routine for a few days at least. Nevertheless, the prime objective of the conference, remains as that of an exchange of scientific thought. And when members return home after the conference they should feel that they have gone back enriched with newer knowledge and equipped with latest information about the speciality all the world over. This is my vision about this annual function of ours. I am confident that many of my colleagues think like-wise.

Some of our members feel that the Scientific deliberations at our Annual conferences are not upto the desired high academic standard, and need to be improved. This created an upsurge in my mind to find remedial measures, and this led me to write to a number of colleagues. The suggestions received from them are summarised below :

- (a) better organisation of the Scientific programme.
- (b) Screening and presentation of better quality papers only.

- (c) Providing enough time for discussion at the end of the papers. And finally,
- (d) Proper organisation, and planning of the Scientific Programme, well in advance, especially of panel discussions, seminars, symposia, and workshops.

From the above it was apparent that this really required a good deal of hard work. But more important than that was the realization by me as well as by a few other members that there was a great necessity for proper and adequate planning of the programme. It is this desire which has prompted me to propose to the Central Council to further enlarge the scope of the Scientific Committee to include Planning of Programmes as a vital function and stressing the importance of this dire need on the members of that Committee. I have also proposed to the Central Council to extend the term of this committee to two, or preferably three years. The latter is not only to give the members enough time for the above mentioned purpose but also to enable it to start planning for the next 2 or 3 conferences as well, especially for such programmes as seminars and workshops. This, however, I leave to the council as well as to the general body to decide.

Similarly for free communications, the above mentioned committee should first categorise subject-wise different papers received for presentation at the Conference, and then appoint appropriate experts to screen them. Only such paper should be recommended to be read in the conference which are of quality, perfect in statistics and of high scientific standard. The remaining papers should be Poster presentations with sufficient time, however, being earmarked in the Scientific Programme for discussion on them.

Medical Education in the Speciality

With our Speciality having an independent status in most of the Medical Colleges today, the present situation regarding education in the speciality, both at under-graduate and post-graduate level, has definitely improved but it still needs a lot of streamlining and improvement on many points.

Under-graduate Education

Skin disorders, leprosy, and sexually transmitted diseases are widely prevalent in the country. Yet, our teaching to the undergraduates to tackle them, is far from adequate and also widely divorced from the actual requirements of the people. The emphasis in the present curriculum for whole of General Medicine is on those aspects which have traditionally been considered important. Our working conditions such as economical, environmental, climatic etc., however, have been taken into consideration and which are widely different from those prevalent in countries of temperate climate. Therefore there is a dire need of reorientation of Medical Education, calling forth a change in the curriculum with allocation of more time for teaching of the speciality which bears a significant work load in the out-patients, so that it becomes relevant to and in tune with the increased needs of the dermatologic care of the people. Further, when we are teaching our speciality, we also should lay more stress, and as a matter of fact, give good grounding in those ailments which afflict the community most e.g., infectious dermatoses such as scabies, pyoderma, fungus infections, allergic disorders, Sexually transmitted diseases and leprosy, of course laying emphasis on their preventive aspect as well. This alone will enable the outgoing graduate to tackle the diseases pertaining to our speciality more efficiently and effectively.

Rural areas house a big section of our population. These people have an equal right to medical attention as have the people in Urban areas. Their problems are similar though they have acquired recently massive proportions because of more and more use of pesticides, insecticides, and chemical fertilizers. We all, including our political leaders, evince much interest in them. But the actual fact is that this is just an overt concern of ours. The practical remedy for this problem too, lies in turning out properly-trained graduates, well-trained in above-mentioned diseases which afflict them and which effect their efficiency. This coupled with a good referral system, would certainly be of help and is a solution to their problems.

Post-graduation Education

It is gratifying to note that large number of medical Colleges have post-graduate degree or diploma courses, and others are also thinking of introducing them. But I feel sorry to say that our post-graduate education, too, has its shortcomings.

Imagine, a budding doctor, jubilant with his just acquired M.B.B.S. degree, garnished by a year of housemanship stepping into our post-graduate department like a new sponge, ready to soak in all that he sees and all that he hears. But what have we to offer him when he has not been tuned to receive it. Further, no sooner he gets registered he becomes aware of the lack of uniformity in all the spheres of our post-graduate education. To name a few, varying pre-requisites for admission into post-graduate courses in Medical Colleges, varying criteria for their selection, varying duration of the courses in different institutions, and then varying standard of examinations. Further more, some colleges give M.D. in dermatology only, a few dole out M.D. in Venereology only, others in Dermatology and Venereology, and

still others in Dermatology and Venereology, and Leprology.

The remedy for this, of course, lies with Medical Council of India, which is our statutory body. It is high time that it evolves, in cooperation with respective representative bodies, a unified pattern for post-graduate teaching as well as for its examination in the country. It should enforce this strictly and unhindered, and ensure that only those institutions or colleges which fulfil the norms laid down by it, are allowed to conduct such courses.

Further, methodology of post-graduate teaching and training is not only evolving, but evolving fast. We have, therefore, to continuously adjust and modify our teaching methods in the light of these new developments. For instance, the students should not be made to spend too much time on 'Just listening'. They should, on the other hand, be encouraged for increased participation through tutorials or discussions based upon prepared material already supplied to them. We should also make increased use of symposia, seminars and workshops, in which they should be encouraged to take more active part. These will not only enable them to solve their individual difficulties but also sharpen their intellect and help them to develop a critical approach as well as a habit of in-depth study. I, therefore, agree with the colleague, who in one of his articles, has recommended setting-up of the Dermatology Libraries in each and every institution, in which the facilities are provided for the students to learn, on their own, with the help of slides, models, specimens, Cine-films, taped records, closed-circuit television, programme instructions, etc.

It will not be out of place for me here, to add that post-graduate teaching does not imply that the candidate

is to acquire knowledge about scientific facts only. We should see that he learns medical ethics, develops character, and also a sense of responsibility.

Research

Research and Medical Education are inter-linked. As a matter of fact, research is its very core. Progress in any branch of medicine is inconceivable without it. Sometimes it gets spin-off benefits from fields as remote as space and nuclear science, what to say of related basic sciences and other fields. The scientist has only to be vigilant to assimilate these gains properly. Research, therefore, should form an essential part of any scheme or planning of a post-graduate activity or a departmental adventure. As I am on this subject, I would like to recall six essentials enunciated and advocated on an earlier occasion which are : (a) inherent ability (b) curiosity (c) rapport with other colleagues (d) critique (e) tenacity and (f) honesty. It can hardly be denied that each one of these essentials is an important requirement for a good research worker. But I would like to lay special stress on 'honesty' on the part of the research worker. As it is this, as well as authenticity of his work, which is going to weigh at international forums.

Research has to be conducted in all aspects of our speciality. But it would certainly be more useful if it is directed to those spheres which have a bearing on our community health programmes e.g. Infections, Zoonosis, fungus-infections, Leprosy and Sexually transmitted diseases.

I do not know what visions you have about the association. But I lay before you what I see. You may be hearing the sounds of closing doors, but I do of doors which open. You

perhaps may be feeling that doors that were open, have been closed. I, on the other hand, see that the doors that were locked have now opened, introducing new vistas. We have advanced, we have made progress, and then we are marching along the right path. I have, no doubts, that we will not lag behind the rest of the world in Scientific pursuits.

Before I conclude, I have one observation to make i.e. despite the fact that Indore is not as picturesque a place as Srinagar or Goa, though it has an importance of its own, and also the fact that approach to it is not so easy, it is heartening to note that the attendance at the conference is very encouraging, if not the largest. This, in itself, is enough evidence for its growing popularity, and its acceptance by our contemporaries in the country.

I also seize this opportunity to extend a hearty welcome to our foreign guests. When I reflect at the distance that they had to traverse and also considerable inconvenience they had to undergo, I feel I should be all the more grateful to them. Nevertheless, it is indeed a privilege for us to have them amidst us as it boosts our morale considerably. I am confident their participation in our conference will enrich us.

Before I conclude my address, I would like to convey my grateful thanks to the chairman of the reception committee and all its members, who are playing host to the association in this largest and historic city of temple and parks, and which have produced personalities like Ahilya Ben Holkar. I also offer my sincere thanks to volunteers and others who have worked behind the scene, and without whose efforts and help, this function perhaps could not have been held.

— S. R. Sadana, M.D.,
Amritsar
(President IADVL 1980,