

## Presidential Speech at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Association of Cutaneous Surgeons (I), 25–27 November 2011, Kaziranga, Assam, India: Role of Association of Cutaneous Surgery - Past, Present and the Future

Dear Members of the Organizing Committee, Members of Executive Committee, Senior Colleagues of ACS (I), Delegates and ACSI Members,

These are interesting times to be a dermatologic surgeon. And these are exciting times to be a member of ACS (I). And these are enchanting, enthralling times to be in this sylvan, idyllic and bountiful Kaziranga. What a place, what a venue, what an event!!

I said interesting times for a dermatologic surgeon – why, because we are reaping the harvest of the seeds sown by our pioneers. And so I begin by raising a toast to these pioneers – to pay tribute to them – after all, if we are able to do more, to see more, it is because we are now standing on their shoulders.

Surely, we have come a long way; much water has flown down the Brahmaputra since those early days. We now live in exciting times – we have our association whose membership has doubled over the last 4 years! We have a community whose members are contributing new techniques and treatments, achieving positions in international associations and organizing international conferences. Be it newer techniques in vitiligo surgery, hair transplantation, lasers, aesthetics – we have our finger in every pie. We have our own indexed journal – the first one from this part of the world, and we have international associations seeking cooperation with the

journal. Very soon, we will have a major textbook, one of the biggest in its subject, authored by as many as 60 authors, each and everyone from India, but released across the globe.

Yes, these are energetic times – a large part of our membership is young, mirroring the demography of our country. And these young people are forging ahead, academically, and in every other way – purposefully, confidently, uninhibitedly. They are emerging as key opinion leaders in their fields. They are establishing facilities not just in large cities, but smaller towns too! I see them but in a few years from now, as flag bearers of a proud community of dermatologic surgeons. It is a privilege for us, and it is the responsibility of us seniors, to leave them a legacy that they can carry aloft.

These are path-breaking times with opportunities abound for training. Gone are the days when we had to go abroad for training, spending money which we did not have; every single technique can be learnt here, right here in India, and what is more, we have seniors and institutes willing to teach! Many institutes have started fellowships and many more will do it everywhere else, and we will receive trainees from around the world. Our conferences are hugely successful – and international associations seek participatory cooperation with us; the International Society for Dermatologic Surgery (ISDS)–ACS (I) joint meeting to be held in Delhi in April is but one example. Sister Society session of ACS (I) at the World Congress of Cosmetic Dermatology is another.

These are visionary times. Our practice is so established, our competence so well known, that patients visit us for aesthetic surgery from around the world. Yes, I mean health tourism – the tide and the cycle are turning, slowly but surely. Procedural dermatology has given us respect,

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recognition, fame and wealth. Dr Narayan Murthy of Infosys said, 'In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Saraswati will lead to Lakshmi', and yes, it has proven so for Dermatologic Surgeons!

All this is heady stuff, but the times also demand from us responsibility, humility, sobriety and introspection. It is up to us to make sure these are responsible times too. The need to practice ethically, cleanly and scientifically is greater than ever before. Medicine is art and science – we should be weary, ever so weary, of commerce creeping in! The need to share and spread knowledge, the need to spread health care to smaller centres and the need to take care of lesser privileged has never been more relevant. We need to plan, we need to engage, we need to innovate. And we are doing it. I am happy we are doing it. ACSI will be on face book – for better camaraderie and communication. We will have mentorship programmes for youngsters. We will soon be part of international leagues. We are discussing the possibilities of settling up research grants, and awards for innovation. We will have a national registry for dermatosurgical procedures – the first ever in India – so that the documentation of surgical procedures can be done systematically. We are planning hands-on workshops. And like before, we will organize and support conferences in every small part and corner of India. Yes, we will do all these and do more! We certainly will!!

Dr. Abdul Kalam had said in his speech delivered at Dermacon, Bangalore, 'A doctor has many facets; as a physician, academician, community man, family man, etc'. So does an association. Is it enough if we organize conferences? No, certainly not – we need to look beyond ourselves. How do we do this in our specialty? To me, there is but one answer – by finding the answer to the riddle of vitiligo and rid the disease of its stigma. Our research activities will concentrate on this–vitiligo surgery will be our USP. We will institute a multicentric trial for stability in vitiligo, to establish the fact and myth about this vexing and puzzling question. We will support activities in every aspect of vitiligo.

These are challenging times too. As patients turn in to

clients, our specialty is being invaded by all and sundry, to cash in on the new found fascination for a beautiful skin in our society. Quacks, members of alternative medicine, are seeking to perform procedures, which are generally perceived to be beyond their competence and outside of their domain. Poor training, exaggerated advertisements, hyped up results and disguised facts are emerging as banes for our speciality. We need to counter these by providing evidence-based information to our patients. Our website already has such patient education information. We also need to take up such issues with proper licensing and accreditation authorities to establish standards. We surely need to do more.

And so my friends, as I come to the end of my talk, I congratulate Team Kaziranga, who have organized this event very efficiently. Hats off to each one of them. You have made this a landmark event – something which will be remembered, cherished and talked about, for a long time.

And I pledge to you, all the members, on behalf of the executive committee, that we will march forward, over the next year, ensuring transparency and establishing systems, with focus and determination, with passion and conviction, to take ACSI to its logical place in the world community, to make its presence felt among the league of nations, to make it an association we can all be proud of!

Let us make dermatosurgery our passion, research our obsession and service our mission. And I invite each and every ACSI member to join us in transforming our Indian mission into a global vision.

To do this, we will either find a way if there is one  
or  
make one if there is none!

Long live ACS (I)

Jai Hind

Venkataram Mysore  
President ACS (I)