



Presidential Address IAGES - 2019

Bhubaneswar
7th - February, 2019



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2018-19

Respected Chief Guest of the Ceremony,
Advisors, Trustees, EC members, Invited Faculty from both India and overseas, and
My dear friends in IAGES,

My Greetings to you and a warm welcome to this inaugural session.

Today, we are honored to have in our midst, several stalwarts from the surgical fraternity of India and the rest of the world. I welcome you all.

One of the most remarkable events of my life happened a year ago. I was asked to lead this association of so many talented and gifted surgeons of the country. Surprisingly, my election to the presidency was unanimous. I shall always consider myself lucky to have won the heart and confidence of our members who elected me uncontested. The role of IAGES President was a big challenge for me. My background was humble; I belonged to the relatively small state of Assam in North-east India, and I was of a quiet disposition. Now, I was to lead this great association that was founded by our legendary forefathers Padmabhusan Dr Udwadia, the father of endoscopy and lasers, Prof B. K. Rau, Padmashree Dr Pradeep Chowbey, and many other stalwarts in the field of Minimal Access Surgery.

In the last quarter of a century our association has indeed traversed a remarkable journey. IAGES is now a vibrant association that is being carried forward with immense vitality and that empowers its many thousands of members. A promising tomorrow is now not a dream but a reality. In my address I would like to share with you our achievements in the recent past and our future missions and goals.

As I started out in my role as president IAGES, I tried to look back upon how my predecessors had gone about their work in leading and improving our association. While it would be impossible and unthinkable on my part to compete with them, I made it my aim to build upon the strong foundation that they had laid down. I tried to put emphasis on membership, teaching and training of young surgeons of the country. My primary objective was to make the association academically stronger, as well as to reach surgeons in even the remotest corners of India and empowering them with knowledge and training in the art and science of Minimal Access Surgery. With this aim, IAGES conducted various varied surgical training programmes during the past year. Apart from megacities, we also spread our wings to smaller Tier II cities like Mathura and Bhagalpur, Guwahati in the east and Coimbatore and Trichy down south.

Our association has a glorious heritage of leadership and achievement in science & technological advances. I believe this is our strength and we should try and dedicate our efforts in this direction. Accordingly, I proposed specific concrete suggestions during my tenure. I must admit even if a president makes a specific, concrete proposal and suggestion, nothing may come out of it unless and until the EC and members accept it wholeheartedly and pursue it with vigour. I am glad that some of my proposals were enthusiastically accepted by the EC and GB and thus I could bring about some changes in the future academics of IAGES. These include, the introduction of the Recent Advances in MAS, the mentorship programme for senior surgeons of IAGES, *the post graduate student membership*, the collaboration with the Royal college of Surgeons of England, the introduction of Advanced Fellowship programme for surgeons in GI endoscopy. Guidelines & Recommendations update in MAS coming out with Guidelines and recommendations in therapeutic endoscopy, and the reformatting of FIAGES programme. I would like make a special note about the IAGES book, the 4th edition of Comprehensive Laparoscopic Surgery that was released and complementary copy made available to all members. The book has also earned us revenue. My thanks to Dr. Ramesh Agarwalla and whole editorial board. In particular, special mention needs to made for Flexible Endoscopy, which is now a main focus of IAGES training programmes, and we are proud to be the torchbearers of this new tool in the surgical domain of the country.

In the past, the proposal for associate membership of IAGES for the postgraduate trainees in medical schools had never really been successful. The new initiative for them to become full members during their training period is likely to give the desired results as they would get the membership in one go and shall be allowed to update their personal data later on the IAGES website once they become full members. A team of expert proctors is going to look into the needs of these aspiring young student members and also shall look into the ones with research mentality and inclination so that they can be groomed further. I am fully aware that while the horizons of MAS are expanding and everyday new tools are being handed over to the younger generation, in all our courses we shall retain emphasis on the values of older and established clinical methods so that these are not underestimated.

Although each senior of IAGES has the potential to become a Mentor but we wanted to identify new faces who can take care of the aspiring mentees irrespective of whether their centers are endorsed by IAGES or not. I am glad we have strong batch of founder mentors and it shall be my honour to felicitate them this evening. This group of mentors shall be involved in all regional academic programmes in our future courses. This year we are also planning on coming out with yet another book, the IAGES Text book of GI endoscopy, with minimal or no cost borne by IAGES.

I must accept the fact that all this could be achieved with the help and support of many extraordinary people who were around me during my tenure supporting me. Although this list is not exhaustive, I would love to mention the names of the course conveners Dr. Easwamoorthy, Dr. H.P. Garg and Dr. Satish Midha for their tireless efforts and dedication through the past year. I take this opportunity to thank my seniors in IAGES, Dr. Abhay Dalvi, Dr. Ramesh Agarwalla, the young Dr. Kanangavel, and of course the Hon. Secretary Dr. Sunil Popat and Hon. Treasurer Dr. Ramen Goel, as well as our next president Dr. Sayandeve DasGupta. All of them helped me in their own way to make this journey a pleasant and fruitful one. Dr. Meenakshi and Dr. Achal Gupta deserve special mention for taking up the tough task of redrafting the FIAGES guidelines under the leadership of Dr. John Thanakumar. I thank both of you from the core of my heart and I see a future leader in each one of you.

I must again emphasize here that any proposed project in science or administration can come to fruition only when there is a critical mass of support and a robust individual helped by a team to direct it. I fully agree that a leader has to go with the members but the members have to act on policies and mission proposed by the president. Some of these suggestions by my past presidents has changed the course of IAGES history. At the outset in my address I have suggested that Association's history is a better guide to our future course than a series of conclusions drawn from my address.

Let me once again make it clear that the major achievements and main purpose of our association is scientific and it is the moral duty of the whole EC and each member to make all efforts to achieve this goal rather than spending more time in other non-scientific concerns which would distract our members and weaken our association. We have progressed in size and various other ways due to the sincere efforts of all our leaders coming up with various proposals of different academic programmes and implementing it. At this juncture I would request you all to be careful as many others are envious of our success and our camaraderie. I wish we pass a resolution to the effect that any member taking a legal course against IAGES should be debarred from primary membership temporarily.

Tomorrow, I shall have the privilege to welcome and honour the new Fellows of the Association. Of all my presidential duties, welcoming the future fellows is something that I cherish. Many of them are likely to be future game changers in their own capacity. They are the jewel on the crown of our association and I am sure each of them has the imaginative and productive power to advance the scientific frontiers in their pursuit of excellence in caring for the patient. I offer my sincere wishes and blessings to all of them. My dear Fellows, I have no idea what obstacles you may face in your careers as you are all from different

geographical parts of the country and have various diverse working conditions. However, I assure you that in your times of need the IAGES shall always be there as your professional anchor. At this juncture I also express my gratitude to all the new non-fellow members who have chosen to be with us to be a part of this vibrant society and to journey with IAGES in the pursuit of excellence. Let us all vow to make the goal of this association advancement of scientific principles rather a numbers game.

25 years ago, from this very lectern, Prof T E Udwadia, while expressing his gratitude told me that he would like to see me as the first President representative from Northeast India. Today, I echo his sentiments; my dream, as well as that of Prof Udwadia, and of all the past presidents is to see each one of you members as President one day. By coming up with innovative ideas, you all hold the power to change the future of our association.

Napoleon once commented that every French soldier carries in his knapsack the Marshall's baton. Ladies and gentleman, I have been immensely privileged to have carried that baton for a short distance and for your support & kindness I offer my gratitude to you all.

Ladies and gentleman, I know I have earned this position after dedicating 25 years of my life to my association and this is akin to a 15 second performance by an athlete who trains for 15 years. Please also pardon me for harboring a degree of pride as this Chair was and has been held by many of the pioneers in surgery in India. During the course of discharging my duties if there has been any lapse on my part, I apologize and accept full responsibility. I reiterate that our achievements during my tenure were never down to individual performance but rather through concerted team. There are many gifted people whom I encountered during my journey in the past year, the Todkars, the Maheswaris the Ashwins, the Elbert's and the Dutta's and many more who are all rising stars and will take our association to its zenith.

Finally, I must appreciate the two heroes, the men of the hour Dr. Sreejoy Patnaik and Dr. C. R. Das, whose integrity, dedication and sheer zeal to perform surpasses everything else. Their enthusiasm is infectious and energy is praiseworthy and unparalleled. Sincere thanks to you and your team for making our conference a memorable one.

It is fulfilling to see the enormous value that we have created. However, I always believe that the best is yet to come. The foundations are all in place. We must traverse the journey ahead with faith in our conviction and constitution and resilience in the face of any adversity and continue to innovate to reach even higher horizons of excellence.

Before I conclude I want to thank each one of our members for the honour that they conferred on me. The confidence and trust imposed on me shall always remain an incentive to me to work towards a higher purpose and cause for the association and for the society till I live.

Finally, I on behalf of all the surgeons of East and Northeast India invite you all to the next Annual Conference, the first ever to be hosted in the beautiful Northeast, in Guwahati. Do come with your family and colleagues and enjoy the beauty and love of our people and give us a chance to be your host. I assure you it would yet again be an academic feast.

Once again my deepest appreciation towards the untiring efforts of each one of you who helped us achieve so many memorable milestones. Please allow me to express my love and a big thank you to my wife Prof Swagata and to my children Dr Angshuman, Dr Ayushman and Dr Chaitra, for making this journey more pleasurable and a life worth living.

I wish happiness, success and glory to each one of you.
Thank you very much for being with us this evening.

Long Live IAGES.

JAI Hind.