

Annual Conference of AOI— It's Past and Present

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It is difficult to write a comprehensive evolution of our annual conferences of the Association of Otolaryngologists of India. Today's young otolaryngologists would find it difficult to comprehend how our founders structured the subject of otorhino laryngology from the wide and all embracing general medical science to organize and put on scientific basis the subject of otorhinolaryngology, the precursor of today's speciality with an independent status. Through the foresights of our illustrious predecessors and the efforts of the subsequent otolaryngologists, ORL and Head-Neck surgery have emerged as a regional speciality.

It was a Herculean job for the stalwarts like Prof. R. N. Mishra of Lucknow, Prof. V. S. Subramaniam of erstwhile Madras, Prof. (Maj.) K. K. Ghosh of Calcutta, to mention a few and we owe profound gratitude to them for what we have today in the form of well-organized national and state conferences held annually and also the internationally recognized Indian Journal of Otolaryngology and Head-Neck Surgery. The latter is due to the untiring efforts of our editors starting from Prof. R. N. Mishra to Prof. Santanu Banerjee. The first few conferences in essence were for the purpose of 'get together' of and interactions between the otolaryngologists from all parts of the country interspersed with scientific programmes. They were sincere and precise in their scientific expression. They did not try to create a verbal imivese. Those days there was no place for trumpeting, not even self trumpeting. Modesty was their hallmark. I remember Dr. Subramaniam declare with all humility in a meeting held about three decades ago "I do not

promise even today that I would not give facial paralysis while doing mastoidectomy". I gained tremendous confidence then in the light of a recent facial paralysis that had been caused by me a few weeks before. Those days we used to have small number of people attending the conferences and so we had closer relations with one another in contradistinction to today's large gathering with largely impersonal relationship. Now we have more varieties of scientific papers in keeping with the recent advances in science; but earlier the discussions used to be closer, more educative and so more penetrative exchanges ensued. Those days there were hardly any advertisements at the conferences (of today's) giving a commercial image to a non-commercial highly scientific meeting that are attended by academicians of all ages from all over the country. It is like the unwanted frequent interpositions of advertisements in television shows, that we watch today, which mercilessly kill the pleasure inherent in the continuity of the artistic and intellectual interludes in the shows. It is paradoxical that inspite of the huge incomes from the advertisers and sponsoring of lunches, dinners and banquets the participants are charged heavy registration fees, banquet charges etc. I have pointed out in my presidential address in 1994 that the trend of change from 'fasting' to 'feasting' makes the participants drowsy in the afternoon sessions and the sceintific sessions become dull and ineffective. In order to avoid this recent trend of commercializaion I suggested that our colleagues would perhaps prefer the intellectual morsels to choke us and offer us no or small morsel of lavish food thereby maintaining the intellectual receptivity and interactive potential. Let us go

from the table of 'feasting' to the pulpit of 'fasting' for acquiring knowledge and academic excellence. We must improve our journal and conference activities, since these are the cornucopia of knowledge, by adapting

gastronomic fasting for academic feasting. Many of our colleagues, senior and junior, I have discussed with regarding the above, are broadly in agreement with my views. The readers views will be highly appreciated.

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