

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

### 56th National Conference of Indian Academy of Pediatrics 5-10 February, 2019, Mumbai

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*“We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but  
Our worst crime is abandoning the children,  
neglecting the fountain of life.*

*Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot.  
Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood  
is being made, and his senses are being developed.  
To him we cannot answer ‘tomorrow’ his name is today.”*

Gabriela Mistral

These are the words of famous Noble Laurette in Literature – Gabriela Mistral from Chile.

**D**istinguished invited guests, faculty members, teachers and seniors; Fellows and members of Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP); Members of the press; Colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen. With immense sense of gratitude for all of you, I hereby dedicate my life to the service of this lovely creation of God, mentioned aptly as “Today” by Gabriela Mistral, and step to the post of President of this prestigious and most academic body of doctors of the country, the Indian Academy of Pediatrics, which is second largest association of pediatricians in the world, with more than 30 000 members.

Friends, from the day I had the opportunity to see from close quarters how the Academy functions, I have stood in awe at the remarkable leadership qualities of our past leaders and their way of making things happen. I stood in admiration at their vision, working and their standing in IAP. Standing here before an audience comprising individuals with such great wisdom, experiences and achievements, to deliver my inaugural speech as President of the IAP, is both the grandest moment in my life, and the moment that I am most aware of the enormity of the responsibility this appointment brings.

Friends, at this juncture, I consider it my paramount duty to thank you all – the members of the Academy – in all humility for the confidence you have placed in me, and for having struck a chord of unanimity in electing me as your president. First of all, I vow to you that I will do my utmost to fulfill my responsibilities to ensure the healthy

life of all children of the nation and further development of the IAP to promote health and well-being of children.

Doctors are considered as Friends, Philosophers and Guides. We do act friendly and guide, but most do not act as philosophers and philanthropist, though we have many opportunities which people cannot have easily in any other profession. We are lucky that we can have experience of both ‘swarth’ and ‘parmaarth’ through same actions.

स्यंदनं परमार्थस्य परार्थो बुधैर्मर्तः ।

योऽन्यान् सुखयते विद्वान् तस्य दुःखं विनश्यति ।।

Meaning – “Our ultimate selfishness lies in public interest. Who organizes the pleasures of others, his griefs are destroyed on their own.”

Friends believe me, if we think beyond treatment of disease, and children coming to us not merely as clients or diseased individuals, surely, we can overcome routine frustrations; it can even improve our practice and income. Thus, we contribute to global peace and prosperity.

Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, who was supposed to be the Chief Guest of today’s function, often used this dialogue in his movies – “अगर अपनी माँ का दूध पिया है तो सामने आ ।” Now it’s real time to change from this fiction dialogue to “जन्म के पहले घंटे से माँ का दूध पिलाओ” – promoting breastmilk, the nectar and foundation of lifelong health.

Friends, there are many gray areas either not taught or not studied but daily we have to deal with them – communication, counseling, behavior modification, parenting *etc.* We do have emerging challenges of this century like the non-communicable diseases – Obesity, malnutrition, substance abuse, suicide, accidents and net addiction. In fact, these are as contagious as communicable diseases but through a different angle. They are contagious through behaviors and lifestyles. We need to address these, and under IAP action plan, we have strategic plans focusing on these problems.

India is a highly populous country, and that is why we have a large volume of clinical work both in public sector as well as in private health sector facilities. We have genius doctors working in both sectors. Unfortunately, still we lack in our own data; we lack in research from Indian context. For an average practitioner, research has been made to look a difficult pasture to graze. I wish to see a paradigm shift in this, and feel that it is time for IAP to come forward for promoting research in our country as research is the lifeline of modern medicine. I would like the pediatricians to develop a mindset of research in daily practice. Let many do it; may it be of any level from observations to interventions to innovations. To foster a research environment amongst the undergraduate medical students, pediatric postgraduate students, young pediatric faculty and private practitioners, under IAP Action Plan 2019-20, the Indian Academy of Pediatrics has initiated IAP Research Awards for the undergraduate medical students, postgraduate students of pediatrics, young faculty and private practitioners.

Other key areas where I feel we need to work is strengthening image of IAP in community by conducting various community-oriented activities like: Adopting Anganwadi (Project AANGAN – Anganwadi Approach to Nutrition, Growth and Nurturing); Adopting Village; Developing Child safety modules such as Medical Emergency Management in Schools (MEMS); Child sexual abuse prevention modules; and Newborn hearing screening program. I am happy to inform to the house that we have entered into a Memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) for a large program on creating awareness regarding ‘Child sexual abuse’ and we have already conducted three sensitization and awareness programs for doctors at Bangalore, Noida and Patna.

IAP is expanding its presence and area of working beyond the boundaries of our country. We have entered into an MOU with Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) for two years fellowship courses in pediatric subspecialties to be carried out in UK, and the first batch academic term will start by August 2019. We will be sharing our modules with various South Asian countries, and we will extend training to healthcare workers of Maldives and Brunie for Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP). We shall have joint programs of IAP with American Academy of Pediatrics in Middle-East – East meets West.

Under digital IAP project, we are happy to come out with mobile app for immunization (based on IAP Advisory Committee on Vaccines and Immunization Practices

recommendations) for doctors and parents; we will have smart IAPAADHAR Card – an identity card that will have QR code; and we will have e-learning platform and e-reporting platform for reporting of IAP activities.

IAP needs to act as advocate of children, and has to put strong representation to the Government on few very important agendas such as: to extend discount in examinations to children with dyslexia, to make pre-primary and primary education burden-free, and to represent to the Government to take measures to restrict access of children to pornographic content on internet.

Friends, IAP for IAPians – how does it sound to you? I feel IAP should plan members’ welfare schemes such as Group insurance, Professional indemnity plan, and corporate tie-ups. Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers have agreed to offer 30% discount for IAP members on all of their publications.

We wish to work collaboratively with other organizations like National Neonatology Forum, Federation of Obstetrics & Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI), Indian Association of Preventive and Social Medicine, National Institute of Nutrition, and Indian Council of Medical Research. Today, we are to release a joint statement with FOGSI about early initiation of breastfeeding in caesarian delivery. IAP is fully committed to complementing government efforts of reducing the child mortality and morbidity rates, and furthermore, control the spread of preventable diseases.

Ladies and Gentleman, before I conclude, I have given you a broad overview of how I will put my priorities. We shall continue with our academic activities for members through various training modules and publications. I feel proud to inform you that we have successfully conducted training of trainers (ToT) workshops for nine new modules where more than 300 pediatricians were trained as national trainers.

I am overjoyed indeed, and feel really proud and greatly honored that with unprecedented support and cooperation from Dr Santosh Soans (IAP President, 2018) and Dr Bakul Parekh (IAP President Elect) and you all, as a team we will achieve our goals.

There is much to be done and resources are scarce. However, the greatest asset we have is our knowledge, creativity, rich network of IAP branches and dedicated members. If we can give direction through teamwork in a spirit of commitment and camaraderie, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a dream. I earnestly request my colleagues to dream with me. Dr. APJ Abdul

Kalam, the former President of India, said: "Dream! It will transform into thoughts and that in turn would result in action." I am confident that I will have the support of our members, my team and the great minds that adorn our Academy in implementing programs that we will be developing. It is my fond hope that my term should be remembered with warmth and appreciation for delivering more than what has been promised, and making us all proud to say that "We are IAPians."

Last but not the least, I will take opportunity to remember my late parents who always encouraged and supported me, my wife Dr Mona and my daughters Mruga and Dipsa, who stood behind me in my hard time as well as tolerated my regular absence at home.

I conclude by quoting a favourite chant of mine that has its roots in the Hindu Sanskrit Vedic Chants.

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः  
सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु  
मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् ।

I regard this as the essence of my profession as a doctor.

Jai Hind.  
Jai IAP.