

Ladies and Gentleman,

I deem it my genuine pleasure to address this gathering of my learned and esteemed colleagues with great degree of serenity and sensitivity. Today the term of the present President and Secretary of the Indian Medical Association would be ending and the change of baton would take place. Although this sounds to be the ritualistic rhetoric but then it has its own meaning, relevance and significance as well. It is not just a changeover but is a transfer of responsibility and accountability in a continuum.

I with great sense of reverence acknowledge the 'yeomen services' rendered by my esteemed colleague Dr. K. K. Aggarwal as the Honorary General Secretary of the Indian Medical Association for a period of two years. 'Digitization', which is an ongoing 'hallmark' in various aspects across the country, had been picked up very effectively by him for the larger benefit of Indian Medical Association as its Secretary General. The trend, the pace that he has set in has been not only been efficiently effective, but also has been mindboggling, as well. It is really fortunate that the trend so set in by him as the Secretary General now would be under his own purview as he takes over the prestigious National Presidentship of the Indian Medical Association.

On this occasion, I deem it imperative to flag certain important issues, which we need to ponder seriously and with a sense of deft determination evolve subtle strategies by diligent initiatives to tide over the same. It is no secret that the image of medical profession has suffered a serious dent and severe beating as well. This is primarily because of the rampant practice of kick-backs, cuts and commissions amongst the fraternity. No amount of excuses would be in a position to defy the reality that these black spots do exist and are now to the common knowledge and information of the people and the society at large. This has definitely eroded the credit of the profession and the credibility of the professionals. The respect that the profession used to command amongst the society turns out to be an event of remote past.

The assault on Doctors which has become a matter of routinity is definitely a matter of great concern. But then it also should compel us to ponder and introspect within ourselves to understand as to what has gone wrong. Has the society gone wrong? Or the

perception has gone erroneous? If we look at the entire situation neutrally and without any bias, we will come to an inevitable conclusion that we have lost our image and credibility and the sole cause attributable to this loss of image is the acceptance of the dirty tricks in the name of cuts, commissions and kick-backs.

Indian Medical Association in my opinion needs to take a positive, pragmatic and a tough stand on this malice that has plagued the profession and is eating away into the vitals of its ethicality and nobility to the extent that things stand at cross-roads inviting ridicule.

It is loud and clear that credibility of the profession and the respect that it deserves cannot be achieved until and unless its purity is brought back into the public gaze. Let us make it amply loud and clear that IMA stands for nobility and purity of the profession and restoring credit and credibility of its professionals. This to my understanding cannot be just achieved by enacting laws and even enforcing them with deft and stringent hands. Laws are there, were there and would always be there, but then laws alone have not been in a position to establish nobility and purity. The real effective modality is that of 'Self-Regulation'.

To my mind self-regulation needs greater commitment to the clarity of purpose and purity of its operation. It is not just the 'ends', which matter, it is also the 'means', which do count in order to establish their joint purity.

I sincerely feel that it would be imperative on part of the Indian Medical Association to make all their members individually commit themselves through an 'Oath' of practicing their profession with purity of intent, sanctity of purpose and clarity of indulgence. This oath should be a condition precedent for the membership of IMA. The oath so taken be depicted by the members of the IMA in their clinics or place of work indicating their conscious commitment and adherence to the same. Deviation thereof by the members of the IMA should be dealt in a deterrent manner including cancellation of their membership of the IMA and also ensuring its wide publicity thereof, so that the deterrent impact gets credited.

It would also be prudent to put a system into place by the IMA in regard to issuing a 'Good Standing Certificate' to its members depicting their adherence to the oath so undertaken and testimonizing their practicing the profession in the desired manner in consonance with the principles of ethicality, morality and value based contours and connotations.

This also necessitates Indian Medical Association to have a meaningful dialogue with all the speciality associations in the country, so as to bring all of them on to a common plank of understanding in the interest of ensuring that the face and facets of profession gain due credit and desired credibility.

I know for certain that the path is tough and difficult. It would be resisted as well but then I would always remind you of the dictum that 'when going gets tough, tough get going'. I am sure that the leadership of the IMA would take these concerns and challenges seriously and grapple with them in an exemplary manner, which would definitely bring success. This would amount to scripting a story not for any single person or for the Indian Medical Association as an organization but for the purposes of establishing the credentials of the medical profession, which would evoke respect, admiration, adoration and adulation and thereby restoring back its days of pristine glory of the past. Let us dedicate ourselves to this noble and notable venture in the interest of profession, which only Indian Medical Association can dare to venture and it shall, is my humble expectation.

Thank you

Jai Hind