

## Our Association

(Association of Plastic Surgeons of India)

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THE practice and teaching of plastic surgery in our country is comparatively recent.

It is only in the last decade and half since independence that Surgeons took up this branch as a full time speciality, and in 1950, there were only two centres where Plastic Surgery Units were functioning. Slowly the demand increased throughout the whole country and by 1955 there were about five plastic surgeons who were devoting their full time to it. There was a desire at that time to form an Association of Plastic Surgeons of India, but some felt that it was too early, and premature. But fortunately, Mr. B. K. Rank, F.R.C.S. the doyen of Plastic Surgeons of Australia was in our midst to advise the Govt. of India regarding development of plastic surgery in India. He, being asked his advice in his usual forthright way, advised us to go ahead and form an association. He said that when the Australian Association of Plastic Surgeons was formed they also like us had only five members.

With a view to form an association under the banner of the Association of Surgeons, of which all of us are members, a resolution was moved by Dr R. N. Sinha of Patna, in the annual general body meet-

ing of the Association of Surgeons in December 1956, at Indore. The resolution was accepted and passed in the same meeting, and a sub-committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Dr C. P. V. Menon of Madras, and Convenorship of Dr R.N.Sinha to frame rules and regulations for the Plastic Surgery Section of the Association of Surgeons of India. The relevant portion of the same, are quoted here.

The Plastic Surgery Section was formally inaugurated by the Late Sir Harold Gillies at Nagpur in December, 1957. It was a historic occasion and a red-letter day for the Association to have been addressed by so distinguished a person like Sir Harold. Sir Harold was later admitted to the Honorary Membership of the Association.

Late Dr R. N. Cooper was invited to be the founder President and Dr C. Balakrishnan (Nagpur) was elected to be the first Vice-President and Dr R. N. Sinha (Patna) was elected as founder Secretary and Dr R. N. Sharma (Lucknow), Dr M. Mukherji (Calcutta) and Dr N. H. Antia (Bombay) were elected to be the founder members of the Council.

After the first year, Dr C. Balakrishnan was elected to the Presidentship, Dr R. N. Sharma was elected as the Vice-President,

Dr R. N. Sinha continued as the Secretary; and these office bearers continued for the next 3 years (1958—1960). In 1960, at Poona Dr R. N. Sinha (Patna) was elected as the President with Dr M. Mukherji as the Vice-President, Dr N. H. Antia as the Secretary and Dr Sinha, Dr C. Balakrishnan and Dr C. Pinto, as members of the Council. This term almost unchanged continued for the next 4 years (1961—1965). In 1965 March at Delhi, Dr R. N. Sinha handed over the Presidentship to Dr. M. M. Mukherji (Calcutta) with Dr R. N. Sharma as the Vice-President and Dr R. N. Sinha (Immediate past President) Dr C. Pinto as the Secretary and Dr N. H. Antia, Dr R. Manecksha, Dr R. Manchanda as members of the Council.

In December, 1966, at Manipal Dr Mukherji handed over the Presidentship to Dr R. N. Sharma (Lucknow). In 1967 at Patiala, Dr N. H. Antia (Bombay) was elected our President.

During the last ten years our membership have grown to about 66 members with 37 full members.

Three Regional summer meetings so far have been held and the fourth is going to be held at Poona in July.

The first one was held at Nagpur (both the first go to Nagpur, our hats off to them!) in the summer of 1964. The main feature of the meeting was a notable presentation on classification of congenital clefts of lip and palate by Prof. Balakrishnan. The second one was held at Patiala in September, 1965, and was an unqualified success. The third one at Nainital was a great success and enjoyed by all.

Our Plastic Surgery section, is the only

national organisation of plastic surgeons in our country and as such was admitted as a federating branch (representing India) of the International Confederation of Plastic Surgeons.

Our association was represented by Dr N. H. Antia (Bombay) in the unavoidable absence of the President Dr R. N. Sinha (Patna) in the Washington Session of International Confederation of Plastic Surgeons in 1963. The next session of the International Confederation was held in Rome in October, 1967.

Our association during this brief period has been able to put plastic surgery in the academic map of India and is now recognised as a postgraduate discipline by the Medical Council of India. By some misunderstanding inspite of recommendations to the contrary, by the Plastic Surgery section, that it is by its own right a broad speciality. It has been wrongly classified by the Medical Council of India as a 'higher' speciality alongwith strictly regional specialities like neuro, chest and genito-urinary surgery. It is most certainly not a regional speciality.

The Plastic Surgery section empowered its, the then President Dr R. N. Sinha to make an appeal to the President, Medical Council of India and the Union Health Minister. Appeal was made to both of them and our main contentions have been explained fully to them, and they appear to understand and appreciate our stand but expressed their inability to change the status immediately since the recommendations were by a special committee of the Post-graduate Medical Education Conference con-

vened by the Medical Council of India in 1964. Recently they have informed us officially that they have not rejected our appeal and advised us to bring the matter again in the Postgraduate Medical Education Conference of 1969.

It has been felt that dealing with Plastic Surgery Organisations of other countries and the International Confederation of Plastic Surgery the name of the section which is the only national organisation of Plastic Surgeons of India is both a misnomer and a handicap. In view of this increasing difficulty, past President R. N. Sinha moved a resolution, in the annual conference session of 1967 at Patiala recommending that it may be renamed as "Association of Plastic Surgeons of India—a section of the Association of Surgeons of India" which was unanimously accepted by the general body of Plastic Surgeons of India. The idea as explained by past President Sinha was to give our section a national character for purposes of our international relations, but still remaining very much part of the parent Association of Surgeons of India. This healthy concept giving a full autonomy and scope of unfettered growth to maturity as a national body, has already been accepted by the parent body in case of the orthopaedic section. Our President, Dr Antia has recently written to the President of Association of Surgeons of India regarding the change of nomenclature, like the orthopaedic section, and we sincerely hope, the parent body will act with the same understanding and vision, as they did in case of the orthopaedic section. This will prevent any future fissiparous tendencies and will

strengthen our parent Association further.

Regarding providing good plastic surgery and training throughout the length and breadth of our country much remains to be done by our Association.

Till now, not many people, including some of our profession realise the vast scope and potentialities of our speciality. It is perhaps the broadest of the surgical specialities and extends to almost all fields of surgical endeavour. It is really an "attitude" towards surgery and to realise its impact to the fullest, it is necessary to reorient our ideas of teaching surgery to both undergraduate and postgraduate stages and of training surgeons of the future. A surgeon, who wishes to be an orthopaedic surgeon or a general surgeon or a genito-urinary surgeon will do well to learn and practice the lessons of plastic and reconstructive surgery. As the basis of any good postgraduate teaching and training is a sound undergraduate teaching of surgery, basic lessons of plastic and reconstructive surgery need be incorporated. Who can teach these and much more (i.e. about congenital soft tissue deformities, about soft tissue traumas and burns, maxillofacial injuries, principles of reconstructive surgery in leprosy and filaria), better than a plastic surgeon who deals with these conditions more than anybody else in his daily practice.

As regards postgraduate training, a good beginning has been made and the country can be proud of their postgraduate training centre at Patna, Calcutta, Lucknow, Delhi, Patiala, Chandigarh, Madras and Bombay but much more remains to be done. It should be our aim to see that

every medical college incorporates the teaching of principles of plastic surgery in the teaching of undergraduate surgery and that every medical teaching centre in the country be given facilities for postgraduate teaching and training in plastic surgery.

The Association should apply themselves whole heartedly to devise ways and means to spread specialised plastic surgery service upto the district hospital level by the end of the 5th Five-Year Plan to really

reach the suffering masses of our country.

The Union Ministry of Health also consults our association in many matters relating to plastic surgery. It is felt that there should be better liason between our association and the Central and State Governments.

It is only such healthy and constructive liason, that future development of plastic surgery in this country on correct lines will be ensured.