

AIR MARSHAL SUBROTO MUKERJEE MEMORIAL ORATION



AIR MARSHAL SUBROTO MUKERJEE OBE

Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee OBE (05 Mar 1911 - 08 Nov 1960) lived a life of determination, dedication and total commitment to the cause of the service that he guided from its inception until its transformation into the Air Arm of independent India. In the early 1930's, when the British government in India could no longer ignore the growing demands of the Indian people for greater representation in the higher ranks of the defence services, it grudgingly began the process of 'Indianisation' of the services. As a result, the Indian Air Force (IAF) came into its existence on 08 October 1932.

While the older services were marked for partial 'Indianisation', the IAF became the first truly Indian service, as only Indians could be granted commission or enrolled in its ranks. In those early days, a career in the Air Force was an uncharted territory for Indians, made all the more difficult by the prevailing discriminatory and obstructive mindset of the majority of the British in India who were extremely skeptical of the ability of the 'natives' to fly military aircrafts. Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee was one of the six Indians selected for training as pilots at the RAF College, Cranwell. The date of commission of this small pioneering band coincided with the date of formation of the Indian Air Force. In July 1938, he was put in command of 'B' Flight of the No.1 IAF Squadron in the rank of Flying Officer. He became the first Indian Officer to command a Squadron when he took over the

squadron on 16 March 1939. After converting to the Hawker Hart, the squadron moved to Miranshah in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). He led the squadron into action against the tribals of the NWFP during this tenure. When World War - II broke out in the East, Mukerjee was at the Air HQ as a Wing Commander. He served in various staff assignments during the war. He was awarded with the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1944 for his distinguished service during the war. At the time of Independence, he was the senior most Air Commodore serving in the IAF. On 15 August 1947, the Armed Forces became independent forces with the formation of an independent nation. Although the Armed Forces were no longer under the British Army, there was a lack of senior officers. It was decided to depute serving British officers as commanders. Air Marshal Sir Thomas Elmhirst became the Air Force Chief. Air Commodore Mukerjee was promoted to Air Vice Marshal and posted as the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff at Air HQ. He served as the Vice Chief for over 6½ years. Working under three different British Chiefs helped him groom himself for the top post. On 01 April 1954, he took over from Air Marshal Gerald Gibbs as the Chief of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force. At that time, he was just about 43 years old. The task and responsibility of re-equipping and restructuring the Air Force with newer aircrafts & equipment fell upon him. During his tenure, IAF inducted a variety of state-of-the-art aircrafts. Dassault Mystere, Hawker Hunter, BAe Canberra and Folland Gnat were inducted during his tenure. Over the next few years, he had to lead the fledgling service through its trials and tribulations, taking it from strength to strength, till it was ready to take its place amongst the leading Air Forces of the world. He took care of the serving personnel and human resources planning too. His task was commendable for the fact that he had to deal with the post-independence non-violence driven defence policy.

Tragically, his brilliant career was cut short in its prime in 1960 at the age of 49. Nevertheless, his legacy lives on, and forms the cornerstone of the hallowed traditions of the service whose very foundations he laid, and whose edifice he built in the early years of its history.

The iconic personality not only laid the foundation of our Air Force but also the Medical Services of IAF. Predominantly due to his unfailing interest and foresight, a well-established medical service, to cater for the needs of the Armed Forces, was formed. The prestigious Institute of Aerospace Medicine, which is the first of its kind in Asia, owes its existence mainly due to his patronage and support.

The Aeromedical Society of India (now Indian Society of Aerospace Medicine) was formed in 1952. Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee was its first patron and remained so till his untimely demise in 1960. He took keen personal interest in the affairs of the society and was the main pillar of support in its formative years.

In 1971, the Aeromedical Society of India instituted an 'oration' to commemorate his name, to be delivered during the inaugural function of the annual meeting of the society as a gesture of the society's gratitude and appreciation for him. A medal is also presented to the eminent personality who delivers the oration.

LIST OF AIR MARSHAL SUBROTO MUKERJEE ORATIONS IN THE PAST

SL No	Year	Orator	Topic
1.	1972	Maj Gen Inder Singh (Director of Military Operations during the Bangladesh Liberation War.)	Rehabilitation of Cases of Ischemic Heart Disease in The Armed Force
2.	1973	Dr Ruston Jal Vakli (Renowned cardiologist)	Electro-Cardiographic Abnormalities in Normal and Apparently Normal Individuals
3.	1974	Gp Capt Peter Howard (Prominent figure in aviation medicine from the Royal Air Force (RAF))	Current Research in Aviation Medicine in The Royal Airforce
4.	1975	AVM MM Srinagesh (The Father of Aviation Medicine in India)	The Values of Aviation Medicine in The Changing World
5.	1976	Dr PN Chuttani (Director of the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh)	Alcohol : The First Drug of Addiction
6.	1977	Lt Gen RS Hoon (Retd) (General Officer Commander in Chief of the Western Army)	Incidence of Cardiovascular Problems Among Flying Personnel and Their Evaluation.
7.	1978	Dr. Raja Rammanna (Indian physicist and pivotal figure in India's nuclear program)	Aviation and Radiation Hazards
8.	1981	Dr. MS Ahuja (Renowned endocrinologist and Dean AIIMS)	The Art and Science of Adaptation
9.	1986	Dr. Madan Mohan (Pioneer of Corneal Transplant in India)	Recent Advances in Ophthalmology and The Development World
10.	1989	Dr. Nagarur Girinath (Founding president of the Indian Association of Cardiovascular Thoracic Surgeons (IACTS))	Role of Coronary Bypass in The Treatment of Ischaemic Heart Diseases
11.	1990	Padmashri Dr S Kameshwaran (Renowned ENT Surgeon)	Vertigo : Recent Advances
12.	1992	Dr. MS Devanandan (Pioneer in research on muscles)	Peripheral Organization of Movements of The Hand
13.	1995	Dr CA Varghese (Venerated Physicist and teacher at IAM)	Perspectives of Aeromedical Research
14.	1996	Air Mshl MS Boparai AVSM (Retd) (Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Air Command)	Horizons of Visual Performance and Aviation
15.	1997	Dr Kenneth N Ackles (Renowned High Altitude Physiology scientist from	Ultimate Air Combat Protection of Pilot

		USA)	
16.	1998	Dr SK Sikka (Indian Nuclear Condensed Matter Physicist)	On Indian Explosions 11-13, 1998
17	1999	Padmashri Dr Naresh Trehan (Indian cardiovascular and cardiothoracic surgeon)	New Frontiers in The Management of Cardiac and Cardiovascular Disorders
18	2000	Dr K Kasturirangan (Chairman ISRO)	Space Medicine and Exobiology: Emerging Scenario
19	2001	Padma Bhushan Dr VK Aatre (Indian scientist and former head of DRDO)	Aeronautics Technologies – Present and Future
20.	2002	Prof Douglas Weigmann (Pioneer of Human Factors Analysis and Classification System)	A Human Factors: Accident Analysis and prevention
21.	2003	Dr Ulf L Baldin (Eminent acceleration physiologist from Sweden)	How important is scientific research and testing of life support equipment for high performance aircraft?
22.	2004	Shri Manas Bihari Verma (Director Aeronautical Development Agency)	Ergonomic Design of Cockpit of An Advanced Combat Aircraft
23.	2005	Dr. Devi Shetty (Indian cardiac surgeon and founder of Narayana Hrudayalaya)	Converting Atom into Bytes
24.	2006	Shri G Madhavan (Indian space scientist and former ISRO Chairman)	Indian Space Programme
25.	2007	Capt GR Gopinath Nair (Founder of Air Deccan , India's first low-cost airline)	Integrating Civil Aviation and Indian's Economic Growth: A Vision and Perspective
26.	2008	Dr K Radhakrishnan (Former Chairman ISRO)	Human presence in solar system director
27.	2009	Dr SNA Zaidi (20th Chief Election Commissioner of India)	Challenges and opportunities in civil aviation sector
28.	2010	Wg Cdr Rakesh Sharma AC (Retd) (Former Indian Air Force pilot and the first Indian citizen in space)	Space Exploration: Where Do We Go From Here?
29.	2011	Dr. AK Gupta (Eminent Radiologist)	Role of interventional Radiology in present Day Medicine
30.	2012	Bharat Ratna Dr APJ Abdul Kalam (11th President of India)	Aerospace System: A Possible Profile
31.	2013	Dr. AK Chaturvedi (Chair of the Department of Radiology and Interventional Oncology at the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute & Research Centre (RGCIRC))	Aerospace Toxicology: An Emerging Multidisciplinary Field of Medical Sciences
32.	2014	Dr. Prabhat Kumar, IAS (Director General of Civil Aviation)	How to keep Indian Skies safe DGCA
33.	2015	Ms Shikha Sharma (MD & CEO Axis Bank)	Beyond glass ceilings : Challenges and Opportunities For Women in 21 st Century

34.	2016	Dr Soumya Swaminathan (Indian paediatrician and Deputy Director General of Programmes (DDP) at the World Health Organization)	The Relevance of Making Data Relevant Translational Research in Medicine
35.	2017	Air Cmde Harish Malik (Retd) (Former Comdt AFCME and eminent Aerosp Med Spl)	Civil Aerospace Medicine in India
36.	2018	Air Mshl NB Amaresh VSM (Retd) (Pilot Physician and eminent Surgeon)	The Pilot Physician- What Has Been and What Can Be!
37	2019	Prof K Vijay Raghavan (Indian biologist and the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India)	The Role of Science & Technology from India-For the Future of Our Planet
38.	2020	Dr Scott Shappell (Professor and Chair of the Department of Human Factors and Behavioral Neurobiology at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University)	Developing novel intervention strategies Using human factors intervention matrix (HFIX)
39.	2021	Dr Quay Snyder (President and CEO of the Aviation Medicine Advisory Service)	Pilot physicians evolution to human intervention motivational study (HIMS)
40.	2022	Dr. Gary G Kay, Phd (Associate Professor of Neurology at Georgetown University Hospital)	Analysis and evaluation of the Cognitive Demands of Flying
41.	2023	Dr Syed Mujtaba Hussain Kirmani (Indian cricketer and wicket-keeper during World cup 1983)	Playing International Sports for Two Decades- What it takes!
42.	2024	Dr VR Lalithambika (Professor of Practice, IIT Madras, Distinguished Scientist, Former Director DHSP, ISRO)	The Next Giant Leap: My Reflections on India's Human Spaceflight Programme