

## **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 being 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 path 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 aeroplanes. 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 No.1 on 16 March 1939. After converting to the Hawker Hart, the Squadron moved to Miranshah in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). It was here that he led the Squadron into action against the tribals of the NWFP. When the war broke out in the East, Mukerjee was at the Air HQ as a Wing Commander. He served in various staff assignments during the war and for his services, during World War-II, Mukerjee was

given the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1944. At the time of Independence, Mukerjee was the senior most Air Commodore serving with the IAF. On 15 August 1947, when India achieved Independence, the Armed Forces too became independent forces. They were no longer under the British Army or the King. However, as there was a lack of senior officers, it was decided to put serving British Officers as Commanders. Accordingly, 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. Upon him fell the task of re-equipping and restructuring the Air Force with newer aircraft & equipment. Under his tenure, the Air Force inducted a variety of state-of-the-art aircraft. The Dassault Mystere, the Hawker Hunter, the BAe Canberra and even the Folland Gnat was inducted during his tenure. Over the next few years, he was 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. Mukerjee took care to see that even the personnel and human resources planning, and development received much attention. His task was commendable for he had to deal with the post independence non-violence driven defence policy.

Tragically, Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee's brilliant career was cut short in its prime in 1960 at the age of 49. Yet, 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.

Air Marshal Subroto Mukerjee not only laid the foundation of our Air Force but also the Medical Services of IAF. It is largely due to his unfailing interest and foresight that a well-established medical service, to cater to the needs of the Air Force was formed. The well-known 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.

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

## **AIR MARSHAL SUBROTO MUKERJEE MEMORIAL ORATIONS**

**1972-2020**

<b>Sl No.</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Orator</b>	<b>Oration Topic</b>
1.	1972	Mai Gen Inder Singh	Rehabilitation of Cases of Ischemic Heart Disease in The Armed Forces
2.	1973	Dr Rustom Jal Vakil	Electro-Cardiographic Abnormalities in Normal and Apparently Normal Individuals
3.	1974	Gp Capt Peter Howard	Current Research in Aviation Medicine in The Royal Airforce
4.	1975	AVM MM Srinagesh	The Values of Aviation Medicine in The Changing World
5.	1976	Dr PN Chuttani	Alcohol: The First Drug of Addiction
6.	1977	Lt Gen RS Hoon (Retd)	Incidence of Cardiovascular Problems Among Flying Personnel and Their Evaluation
7.	1978	Dr Raja Rammanna	Aviation and Radiation Hazards
8.	1979	Prof B Ramamurti	Utilising the Full Capacity of the Human Brain
9.	1980	Dr C Gopalan	Nutrition and Health
10.	1981	Dr MMS Ahuja	The Art and Science of Adaptation
11.	1986	Dr Madan Mohan	Recent Advances in Ophthalmology and the Developing World
12.	1988	Dr MK Khalilullah	Recent Trends in Diagnosis and Management of Ischaemic Heart Disease
13.	1989	Dr MR Girinath	Role of Coronary Bypass in The Treatment of Ischaemic Heart Diseases
14.	1990	Padmashri Dr S Kameshwaran	Vertigo: Recent Advances
15.	1992	Dr MS Devanandan	Peripheral Organization of Movements of The Hand

16.	1995	Dr CA Varghese	Perspectives of Aeromedical Research
17.	1996	Air Mshl MS Boparai AVSM (Retd)	Horizons of Visual Performance and Aviation
18.	1997	Dr Kenneth N Ackles	Ultimate Air Combat Protection of Pilot
19.	1998	Dr SK Sikka	On Indian Explosions 11-13, 1998
20.	1999	Padmashri Dr Naresh Trehan	New Frontiers in The Management of Cardiac And Cardiovascular Disorders
21.	2000	Dr K Kasturirangan	Space Medicine and Exobiology: Emerging Scenario
22.	2002	Padma Bhushan Dr VK Atre	Aeronautics Technologies – Present and Future <sup>1</sup>
23.	2002	Prof Dougla Weigmann	A Human Factors: Accident Analysis and Prevention
24.	2003	Dr Ulf L Balldin	How Important Is Scientific Research and Testing of Life Support Equipment for High Performance Aircraft?
25.	2004	Mr MB Varma	Ergonomic Design of Cockpit of An Advanced Combat Aircraft
26.	2005	Dr Devi Shetty	Converting Atom into Bytes
27.	2006	Shri G Madhavan	Nair Indian Space Programme
28.	2007	Capt GR Gopinath	Integrating Civil Aviation and India's Economic Growth: A Vision and Perspective
29.	2008	Dr K Radhakrishnan	Human Presence in Solar System Director, VSSC
30.	2009	Dr SNA Zaidi	Challenges & Opportunities in Civil Aviation Sector
31.	2010	Wg Cdr Rakesh Sharma AC (Retd)	Space Exploration: Where Do We Go from Here?
32.	2011	Dr AK Gupta	Role of Interventional Radiology In Present Day Medicine
33.	2012	Bharath Ratna Dr APJ Abdul Kalam	Aerospace System: A Possible Profile
34.	2013	Dr AK Chaturvedi	Aerospace Toxicology: An Emerging Multidisciplinary Field of Medical Sciences
35.	2014	Dr Prabhat Kumar, IAS,	How to Keep Indian Skies Safe Type your text

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| 36. | 2015 | Ms Shika Sharma<br>MD & CEO Axis Bank | Beyond Glass Ceilings: Challenges and Opportunities for Women In 21 <sup>st</sup> Century |
| 37. | 2016 | Dr Soumya Swaminathan                 | The Relevance of Making Data Relevant<br>Translational Research in Medicine               |
| 38. | 2017 | Air Cmde Harish Malik<br>(Retd)       | Civil Aerospace Medicine in India   |
| 39. | 2018 | Air Mshl NB Amaresh<br>VSM (Retd)     | The Pilot Physician – What Has Been and<br>What Can Be!                                   |
| 40. | 2019 | Prof K VijayRaghavan                  | The Role of Science & Technology – From<br>India – For the Future of Our Planet           |
| 41. | 2020 | Dr Scott A Shappell                   | Developing Novel Intervention Strategies Using<br>Human Factors Intervention Matix (HFIX) |