

Following is the full text of the speech –

“I am delighted to be part of this inaugural program and the launch of the Society of Coronary Surgeons (SCS). I am given to understand that the vision of this Society is fundamentally to collate the data and undertake original research in the field of cardiovascular diseases, particularly on coronary artery surgery. Promoting research in medical field is extremely crucial and such initiatives, I am sure, will help in providing authentic data.

In the past few decades, we have made huge progress in the medical field. Today, India has emerged as a world class player in the delivery of heart care with the second largest number of CABG (Coronary Artery Bypass Graft) surgeries being done in this country.

Our capabilities in the health care were also clearly established during this COVID-19 pandemic. The number of casualties is much lower when compared to some of the advanced countries in the world.

I commend the selfless and remarkable service being rendered by the medical, paramedical and other healthcare personnel ever since the pandemic has broken out.

I am happy to note that we are on the verge of releasing our own indigenous COVID VACCINE soon.

As a matter-of-fact, India has emerged as a medical tourism destination recent years. In the past, patients from India used to go abroad for treatment. But patients from different countries, including developed ones, are coming to India for affordable and quality healthcare. Also, Indian doctors serving in other countries have earned high reputation for their skills and knowledge. It is said that one in every four top doctors in the USA is from India.

Let me share my observations with all of you on this occasion today.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

According to the World Health Organization, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) encompass a vast group of illnesses such as cardiovascular, chronic respiratory diseases, cancer and diabetes. NCDs contribute to around 41 million (71%) of all the deaths globally and to about 5.87 million (60%) of all deaths in India, or in other words 1 in 4 Indians is at the risk of dying from an NCD. Almost three quarters of all NCD deaths, and 82% of the 16 million people who died prematurely or before reaching 70 years of age, occur in low- and middle-income countries.

The rise of NCDs is mainly due to lifestyle changes such as sedentary jobs, improvement in socioeconomic status leading to unhealthy and irregular dietary habits, high stress, smoking and tobacco chewing. Diseases like hypertension and diabetes strongly contribute to NCDs, particularly cardiovascular diseases.

Sadly, the epidemic of NCDs poses devastating consequences for individuals, families and communities.

With the majority of cardiovascular disease related deaths occurring in the age group of 40-70 years, the socio-economic costs associated with NCDs make it imperative to prevent and control them.

I am told that India has one of the highest burdens of CVDs in the world and the annual number of deaths from CVDs in India is projected to rise to 4.77 million in 2020 from 2.26

million in 1990. Our country has more than three crore heart patients and close to two lakh heart surgeries are being performed every year.

With the rising incidence of cardiovascular diseases, it is good to know that a few heart surgeons have come together to form the Society of Coronary Surgeons with a mission to prevent CVDs and the immense the loss caused by them in terms of affecting productive people.

I am happy to know that our cardiac surgeons have understood the need to pool the data and do consistent research to check the rising incidence of cardiovascular diseases and improve the lives of patients suffering from CVDs.

I hope that the Society, in tune with its motto, would delve deep into the research on CVDs and try to bring down the increasing number of cardiac patients by identifying the causes and providing the right diagnosis and quality treatment.

Dear sisters and brothers,

It is a matter of concern that the spread of healthcare infrastructure is lopsided with most of the rural areas lacking in modern and advanced facilities. This situation has to be rectified on a war footing. The private sector must join hands with the government in bringing the latest healthcare diagnostic and treatment facilities to the rural areas at affordable cost through public-private partnerships.

It is estimated that nearly 86% of all the medical visits in India are by people from rural areas. With majority of the people meeting the medical costs through out-of-pocket expenses, there is a huge need to step up insurance coverage.

Ayushman Bharat, the flagship programme of the government of India, is truly a praiseworthy initiative and seeks to provide health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to over 10.74 crores poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population.

I would also urge the members of this society to focus on the disease burden in the rural areas. As you all know, a majority of the people live in the rural areas and are equally exposed to the risk factors of cardio-vascular disease.

It is also disheartening to know that in the aspect of doctor patient ratio, India is not matching with the norm set by the WHO. There is one doctor for every 1,445 Indians as per the country's current population estimate of 135 crore, which is lower than the WHO's prescribed norm of one doctor for 1,000 people. This aspect too has to be addressed urgently and the private sector must complement the efforts of the government in providing affordable medical education.

Finally, before concluding, I would urge everyone to regularly practice Yoga and meditation and return to our traditional food habits to beat the stress caused by modern lifestyle and prevent cardiovascular disease. The scientific community has concluded that inappropriate life style is the major cause for the raise in the CVD incidence.

Yoga and meditation are perfect tools to connect with one's inner self. Thanks to the efforts of our Prime Minister, Shri Narendrabhai Modi ji, the UN has declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga to inculcate the habit of practicing it every day and enjoy its benefits. Yoga relieves one of stress and keeps diseases at bay. Hence, Yoga must become part of everyone's daily routine.

My best wishes to the Society of Coronary Surgeons!

Jai Hind!