

# IOACON 2005

Ram Prabhoo<sup>1</sup>

## I had a dream!

Ignited by none other than Dr. LN Vora and his team. They were conducting the Silver Jubilee meeting of the Indian Orthopaedic Association (IOA), way back in 1980. I was a resident. All of Bombay Orthopaedic Society (BOS) was spurred into action. They came together as one. Dr. NS Laud and Dr. AJ Thakur among many others who were a part of that team inspired me. That conference was mesmerizing. It was difficult and laborious in those days to pull off such a huge meeting. Mail was sent by India Post. Phones were landlines and it was difficult to get trunk calls across states and more so, across countries. Since the term event manager was unknown, we, the juniors, did all the grunt work. Physically writing everything, packing bags, sticking envelopes, typing addresses on trusted old Brother typewriters. It was consuming. Finally, the Silver Jubilee conference unfolded in the Ballroom of the Taj Mahal Hotel. It was grand and none before was as glittering and informative.

When all the excitement settled, I mentioned to my boss (LNV) that I would also like to conduct the IOACON someday. His reply planted my dream. He asked me why do you want to do a simple annual meeting? Do the Golden Jubilee meeting! He had foreseen the future. He advised me to start my planning 5 years before the actual event.

The rules of the IOA changed over time. BOS no longer could hold the meeting on its own. IOA had state chapters and only these Chapters could bid to conduct the meeting. Our first step was to liaise with Maharashtra Orthopaedic Association (MOA) and request them to bid for the meeting to be conducted in Mumbai, which city, at that time, was the only one capable of handling such a large meeting. The bidding was done at the Chennai Conference. Dr. NS Laud pitched our bid from

the stage. One of our supporters had a flight to catch. He was on his way to the airport when someone called him and pleaded for him to return and vote. He did. We won! By one vote!

The Golden Jubilee meeting was ours. We now had to accommodate not only the WIROC, but also the MOA Conference of that year within the golden Jubilee meeting. That had been decided by the two associations and agreed upon. Imagine handling three associations needs all at once!

Every position in the organizing team would have one member from the BOS and one from MOA. Joint meetings were held halfway to Pune. We car-pooled and drove to the outskirts of Pune. Café Sadanand on the Highway afforded us the venue. Dr. KH Sancheti came with the MOA team. A game of intense chess unfolded. Pawns were forwarded, backed by rooks and horses. Kings were paraded and knights were initiated, while the Queens ruled! Willing teams were created and the two forces retreated to their pavilions! Fourteen such meetings were conducted. Many of these at the Prabhoo residence which conveniently had the large living room divided into three comfortable exclusive areas and left the dining table for the planners of the women's program. It was usual to see Meena Prabhoo in deep discussions with Dr. Meera Joshi, Dr. Noella Antao, Dr. Ela Shah, Dr. Bindu Chaddha, and Dr. Sujatha Warrier at the dinning table. In one of the three alcoves, the scientific team headed by Dr. NS Laud ably assisted by Dr. Tanna, Dr. MN Shahane, CJ Thakkar, GS Kulkarni, and SS Babhulkar were headbanging while in the other Rajesh Gandhi, NR Rathod and PD Shah discussed the gastronomic details. In the third, there would be a heated discussion about security and volunteers headed by PD Samant... and so on. Over 200 senior and prominent members from BOS and MOA were roped in to form a never before team of 26 committees, to put together this

<sup>1</sup>Department of Orthopaedics, Mukund Hospital, Andheri East, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

## Address of Correspondence

Dr. Ram Prabhoo,  
Department of Orthopaedics, Mukund Hospital, Andheri East, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.  
E-mail: aprabhoo@gmail.com

Submitted Date: 06 Oct 2025, Review Date: 02 Nov 2025, Accepted Date: 11 Nov 2025 & Published Date: 10 Dec 2025

magnum opus.

The venue had to be large. The Renaissance Hotel (now Westin, Powai) was the only place capable of handling anything of that magnitude. And even that was falling short. Across from it, behind the vendors entrance to the Renaissance was the modest Residence Hotel. Together now, we had the space to host almost 10000 guests. We also had eight halls. But the problem was the distance. By road, it would be a kilometer between the two venues. After discussions and parleying, it was decided to approach the Municipal Commissioner, Johny Joseph to allow a temporary bridge across the two main overland water supply pipes that separated our venues. Despite 20 permissions being sought, it did not seem to be happening. Dr. Laud's good offices and the intervention of Mr. Josephs brother-in-law, PS John, an orthopaedic surgeon from Kerala, saw this otherwise impossible bridge materialize! Now, the walking distance between the two venues was less than two minutes!

The response from the IOA members was fantastic, the industry began reciprocating this response with the same enthusiasm. We were in a good place, until the skies opened up and it rained. Our nerve center was an office in the basement of the compound of Mukund Hospital. On July 26th, it began raining. And, it did not stop until the whole of Mumbai was flooded. The water got into our office and we watched helplessly as the computers and all they contained remained submerged, as did the city, for 3 full days. Our event manager, Makarand Desai and his right hand man, Sachin, were very thorough. I had insisted that they keep back-ups for everything on the computers. It was this meticulousness that saved us from the wrath of the clouds. Today, cloud computing has taken on a new meaning!

We re-grouped with renewed vigor. Sudhir Warrier and Sangeet Gawhale "volunteered" to help. They came to Mukund Hospital after their days work. Byte by byte, each bit of information was restored onto new computers. They toiled until 3 am each day. The final program began taking shape. They weeded out duplicates and overlapping sessions. We were back on track.

Organizing a conference was instinctive. We had all done it over the years. This one was different! There were 2000 spouses and 800 children to be catered too! That was much larger than the garden variety of entire conferences that we used to conduct! Vehicles were scrambled, venues organized. Even Mr. Amitabh Bachchan pitched in. He agreed to my request to have the audience and participants from our group for 7 days in Kaun Banega Crorepati. It's unfortunate that this did not materialize as he fell ill and the shooting had to be postponed. The response to everything planned was overwhelming. We had to make 12 trips to Elephanta Caves, innumerable trips to famous retail outlets and malls, including Amarasons, thanks to Taral Nagda. Sanjeev Kapoor, the celebrity chef and a dear friend, was planning every meal with our team and the hotel chef. He also conducted a houseful, live cooking program. A make-over

program for women, children's programs for over 800 children, and many more activities were very well received. Closer to the date, the venue preparations began. Ram Chaddha and Manhar Shah oversaw this aspect. They teamed up with the contractor's managers whom we nicknamed Bunty and Bubbly!

Come Christmas Day 2005, we ran 13 Pre-conference Workshops. This was followed on the 26 December, by 30 Instructional Course Lectures, spread out in 8 halls. The Continuing Medical Education (CME) program, presently named the KT Dholakia CME, followed the next day. The theme chosen was "The Impact of Recent Advances in Orthopaedic Technology in the Indian Context.

The festive mood of the welcome ceremony was captured by the Police band, replete with tutari's and the traditional Lezhim dance. A Postal 1st Day Cover was released to commemorate the occasion. The sessions began and continued in full swing over the next 3 days. No hitches. Over 200 medical students and interns volunteered to ensure that each hall was well looked after. The Reliance CDMA phones with 30 of the core organizers ensured perfect co-ordination. A brief computer shut down was easily countered by a smooth transition to the old paper-and-chart fall back prepared by Sangeet and Sudhir. Thakur Complex, as we fondly called the audio-visual preview room was strictly monitored by AJ Thakur and his team. The Women's Wing of the IOA was inaugurated by Margareta Berg-Perrier from Sweden and Dr. KV Chaubal. Cleverly woven into the framework of scientific deliberations were important and educative non-orthopedic sessions by well-known celebrities including Baman Irani, Harsha Bhogle, Shiv Khera, and others.

To balance the intense scientific interaction and knowledge transfer within the halls, we had planned a fantastic entertainment program. There were on-site and off-site programs. We organized the first Orthopaedic Indian Idol program which was headed by DD Shah and his team. Eight Marathi plays and a Kishore Kumar Nite were staged at a nearby auditorium. An excellent performance by children from the Spastic Society highlighted one evening. One night, there was minor issue of some delegates objecting to Night Club style rubber stamping on the wrist for controlling entry into the night program. This was effectively handled by NS Laud. The final blockbuster was the Sonu Nigam Bollywood Night. Tight security and tense anxious and eager waiting suddenly exploded with Sonu's band breaking into a popular number... Sonu delighted the swaying crowds late into the night. PD Samant and his team kept a strict vigil on gate crashers and trouble makers. Some young delegates made color xerox copies of the invitations and tried to enter. They were stopped effectively by Samir Dalvie, Sangeet Gawhale, and Anant Joshi. Bollywood Night was an unqualified success!

Usually, on the last day, less than a third of the delegates remain for lunch. Most would travel back home. This is the trend we

noted from previous organizers of IOACON. Accordingly, we had organized lesser food on the 30<sup>th</sup>. To our utter surprise, only a third of our delegates had returned home. We had more delegates than there was food! Anant Joshi and Rajesh Gandhi stemmed the restless crowds while Sudhir Warrier and Gagan, the banquet manager, rushed to the kitchen to rustle up simple but abundant fare from whatever was available. The shelves of the confectionary were swept onto trolleys and rushed out as sweet-dishes! Some delegates were transported to Hotel Residence where Manhar Shah had espied large reserves of food, ready to be served. The day was saved.

The IOA Anthem was penned and directed by VT Ingalkar. A clutch of members had auditioned and practiced to join him on stage. It was warmly appreciated. During the course of the meeting, over 60000 dishes were eventually served to the satisfaction of all. Alcohol worth 48 lakhs were consumed. This aspect had to be under the charge of Rajvir Chinoy. Gifts and

Crystal mementoes worth 25 lakhs were organized by Lakshman Kamath. Over 50,000 photographs were taken and archived. Despite all the seeming extravagance, we were proud to present the IOA a profit of a crore of rupees. Partnering with the industry and involving them in our mission has strengthened our ties.

It was a conference like none before. It needed for all of us to come together with a united purpose and a strong will to make it a special one. I am extremely happy to report that the combined and unstinted efforts of every member of the Bombay Orthopaedic Society, this meeting is still recalled as a landmark one. Just like my mind was ignited in 1980, I do hope we managed to stimulate some young orthopod to dream. The Platinum Jubilee is just around the bend!

**This is joint compilation of  
Dr. Ram Prabhoo and Dr. Sudhir Warrior**

Conflict of Interest: NIL

Source of Support: NIL

#### How to Cite this Article

Prabhoo R. IOACON 2005. Journal of Clinical Orthopaedics. July-December 2025;10(2):18-20.