

1998 PAUL HARRISON AWARD

DR. BAHA HEMBROM

Today we honour Dr. Baha Hembrom with the Paul Harrison Award, who has followed the footsteps of the late Dr. Paul Harrison, and our Founder, Dr. Ida S. Scudder, in her outstanding, devoted and selfless service to others over a period of 40 years.

After Dr. Baha Hembrom graduated from the Christian Medical College, Vellore, she worked for two years at the Methodist Mission Hospital, the E.C.T.M. Hospital, at Kolar, Karnataka State, to gain clinical experience.

The call to go back to her people in the state of Bihar was so strong that she left a relatively modern and well-established Hospital at Kolar and took up responsibilities in remote places, among tribal people, in two different Hospitals in Bihar – at Pakur and Mohalpahari, and then at another remote hospital at Nagra, Uttarpradesh. At each place Dr. Baha Hembrom worked, there was a challenge of its own, apart from the health needs of hundreds and thousands of sick people.

In her first Hospital at Pakur, no one was willing to clean the Hospital. Dr. Baha Hembrom herself took on the most lowly of all responsibilities – of cleaning and maintaining the cleanliness of the Hospital. Her humanity inspired nurses to join in this elementary but important task, and ultimately a sweeper was found.

Her professional responsibilities included the 'home delivery' of maternity patients involving walking miles to remote places without any roads for any form of vehicular traffic. Also travel by boat to cross rivers was a part of her routine.

Dr. Baha Hembrom, in addition to her great care of women and children, was interested in the care of large numbers of leprosy patients and those with tuberculosis. She introduced the use of Dapsone, the 'miracle' drug for leprosy, and modern methods of treatment for leprosy and tuberculosis.

She was her own accountant, and architect, and under her efficient management the income from patients and gifts from donors and friends was sufficient for the medical work and putting up hospital buildings, staff

quarters, a Chapel and a Church, and other structures. Her commitment to her work was summed up in a remark of a civil engineer “Who can stay here, where even animals cannot survive?” But Dr. Baha Himbrom’s response to this rhetoric is very simple, yet beautiful and moving “My commitment to my Lord is so intense, I never asked for anything, nor comforts. But the Lord has given me His Blessings, His abundant Grace”.

This, in brief, is the life-story of one we are honouring today – a simple person, quiet, unobtrusive, unnoticed by the rest of the world – but most effective where she was needed most. Her commitment to the Lord, her devotion to patients, her hard work all these and more are a source of inspiration and an example to us gathered here today and others elsewhere.

We are privileged to give the Paul Harrison Award to Dr. Baha Hembrom, a true missionary doctor of the Christian Medical College, Vellore, and a worthy follower of Dr. Ida Scudder and Dr. Paul Harrison. But a greater reward awaits her one day, when our Lord will greet her, as she enters His Kingdom “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of your Lord”.

Vellore
5 October 1998.

Director

Principal