



PAUL HARRISON AWARD 2019

The *Paul Harrison Award* was instituted in 1966 to honour medical graduates or post-graduates of CMC Vellore, who, through their outstanding and selfless contribution in the field of healthcare, have been able to uphold the motto of the Institution, '*Not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*' Drs. Anuradha and David Paul now join this august company.

Dr. David belongs to the MBBS batch of 1979-80. It was as a young first year student that he discerned the call of God to consider mission work in North India. He recalls his initial surprise, given he is from Andhra Pradesh, and linguistic considerations would pose a challenge. Nevertheless, the seed was planted. While serving his sponsorship obligation in the CSI Hospital, Karimnagar, he married Dr. Anuradha. They returned to CMC for their post-graduation in 1988, Dr. David training in Paediatrics and Dr. Anuradha in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. After completing their post-graduation obligation, they were working in a Catholic Hospital in Hyderabad, when Dr. David was reminded of God's call. As he delved into this commitment, he heard of a need for doctors in a mission hospital in Kashmir. The hospital had shut down due to insurgency, and Dr. David prayerfully considered going there. He knew it was not a place one would voluntarily go with a wife and young child. Yet, God's promise to Abraham as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3, a promise of protection and blessing, resonated with Dr. David. So it was in 1996 that Drs. Anuradha and David Paul, along with Miriam moved to the John Bishop Memorial Hospital, Anantnag.

Anantnag is Jammu and Kashmir's third largest city and one of the ten districts that comprise the Kashmir Valley. Located in South Kashmir, it is enveloped by the majestic Pir Panjal, Karakoram and Himalayan ranges. It is a landscape of indescribable beauty and grandeur, of whispering chinar trees, pine forests, and sparkling streams that murmur through sylvan valleys and orchards. An entranced Emperor Jahangir, in a moment of sheer inspiration called it '*firdaus*', paradise, echoing the poet, Amir Khusrau, who declared, '*If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.*'

But this achingly beautiful land has been at the troubled crossroads of history. The complex and multi-nuanced Kashmir problem has left the land scarred by a seemingly unending cycle of conflict and violence. Decades of insurgency have systematically undermined life and the living.

Under these volatile circumstances, Drs. Anuradha and David Paul set about reviving the Hospital. As the only two doctors, they worked long hours, and experienced first-hand the horror and trauma of the violence. Dr. David has had the courage to look down the barrel of a gun pointed at him in the Hospital and unhesitatingly say, *'Shoot me if you want. I am not afraid of you; my life is in my God's hands, not yours'*. In 1999, they set up JASCo, a maternity and children's nursing home. It is a well-equipped 12 bedded medical centre, with an operation theatre, labour room, neonatal unit, pharmacy and other diagnostic services. They are the only two doctors there as well, but are well supported by their staff- all local Kashmiris - whom they have trained. Their work load is heavy, for obstructed labour is frequent and there is a high incidence of foetal distress. Every child born there is prayed for, in the hope that the child and the family will know peace. Theirs is a busy practice, for as their patients gratefully acknowledge *'there is a difference in the way we are treated'*. In a festering, wounded society, their work and presence is a balm for the soul, a haven of blessing.

While the politics seems intractable and the violence, dangerous, there are other challenges too - *'of endless days of cold and conflict that even make the night shiver on quiet trees'*, the bitter winter, curfew, restrictions, erratic power supply, the unending uncertainty, the intense loneliness, and the ache of having to send their daughters, Miriam and Irene, out of the state, from a tender age, for their education. They have chilling stories to narrate of life in the face and in the shadow of the gun. But they chose to focus on God's hand of protection and mercy. Thus, it is with utmost confidence they say, *'Unless God leads us out, we will remain among the Kashmiri people.'*

Through their unwavering commitment to God and the people of Anantnag, Drs. Anuradha and David Paul have lit a lamp of hope and healing in that most beautiful corner of India. Their deep faith is a gift, revealing, not just what they believe in, but what they so courageously do. While Kashmir maybe a metaphor for our troubled times, Drs. Anuradha and David Paul have woven a new narrative of selfless service that we today celebrate and honour. Christian Medical College Vellore rises as one to call them blessed and is proud to confer them with the *Paul Harrison Award* for 2019.

DIRECTOR

PRINCIPAL

Vellore
11.11.2019