From the Director’s Desk

The golden yellow heap of Marigold garlands had an extra glow set against the dull grey table. Everything else merged with the environment. Only the movement of a hand made me notice the woman sitting amidst the garbage heap behind the flower kiosk.

I was in a bus. Sitting at a height I had the advantage of a better view. The woman was waving to a child, possibly her son. As I looked on I sensed an excitement in the child’s face. Something useful was found and passed from mother to son. A few minutes later another exciting wave of the hands and something else was passed on to her son. It was obvious. The glow on the child’s face was the reason for her whole being.

Hope, in the midst of everything that represented hopelessness.

Christmas is here. New year is around the corner. Symbols of hope. Hope, amidst all that happens in this world. And all that must never happen. Must never ever see the light of the day or the darkness of the night.

Hope for all. This Christmas season.

Dr Mathew Varghese
Director

Dr Lucy Oommen - A tribute

The Honourable President of India, Dr A P J Abdul Kalam dedicated the Mother and Child Block to Dr Lucy Oommen at a special function held at St Stephen’s Hospital on the 27th of October, 2005.

Dr Oommen was the first Indian Director of the hospital and played a vital role in the expansion of its services. In recognition of her services the government of India honoured her by awarding the Padma Shree in 1977. Under her leadership the hospital grew from a 140-bed maternity hospital to a 425-bed general hospital.

Dr Lucy Oommen was convinced that compassion should be the cornerstone of a hospital’s philosophy. She nurtured the poor by starting a community outreach programme that today benefits more than one hundred thousand people. Dr Kalam paid rich tributes to Dr Lucy Oommen affirming that she was a role model for the medical fraternity.

The President emphasised doctor-patient relationship and called for a greater interaction between doctors, patients and their families. He said ‘In the wards what you hear is pain and pain. The nurses go around to provide consolation and relief to the patients. At that time they appear like angels.’

The medical, nursing and allied health students had a special audience. He urged them to dream and dream. For without dreams there would be no higher thoughts or action. Learning, he said, will lead to creativity and with creativity there would be knowledge. Knowledge makes one great.

The President called for the establishment of a grid connecting various health care institutions with regard to super specialities and general medicine areas so that the fruits of progress in medicine could be made available to the common man. Dr Kalam proposed that the health grid be connected to health care research and training institutes for nurses, allied health staff and doctors.

While congratulating St Stephen’s Hospital for its comprehensive health care in the city of Delhi, he challenged St Stephen’s Hospital to be the leader in introducing a suitable health insurance scheme which will benefit the poor to avail the medical facilities. He believes that people can be educated to opt for the right life style which can eliminate the heart ailments. Among other suggestions he proposed that the hospital should take a lead in research and start stem cell therapy.

The President was presented a 25 year old banyan tree as a memento for his visit to our hospital. The visitor’s book proudly bears the imprints of the Presidential visit in the following words “Delighted to visit and discuss with members of St Stephen’s Hospital. Excellent Institution! My Best Wishes”.

On this auspicious occasion the Director, Dr Mathew Varghese announced the institution of an award in memory of Dr Lucy Oommen. It will be given for an outstanding contribution in medicine, especially obstetrics or paediatrics. The award to be given once in two years carries a citation and citation and a cash prize of a hundred thousand rupees.
Once Upon A Time

There came a lady in 1864 to an alien land, working alone but with an indomitable spirit to serve people out of sheer love. She became the inspiration that began this glorious chapter of love called St Stephen’s Hospital. Her name was Priscilla Winter.

In her footsteps followed others - Dr Helen Franklin, Medical Superintendent 1891 - 1920 at St Stephen’s Hospital was also the Vice Principal of Lady Hardinge Medical College.

Ms Alice Wilkinson who established the first School of Nursing at St Stephen’s in 1908 which became the first school of nursing in the country.

Dr Charlotte Houton, Medical Superintendent 1927 - 1933 at St Stephen’s Hospital was also the Principal of Lady Hardinge Medical College.

Dr Eileen Morris, Medical Superintendent 1933 - 1961 at St Stephen’s Hospital was also involved in the planning of AIIMS in early 50’s.

Over the years they built a hospital for the care of the suffering people. The Indian postal department honoured the hospital by releasing a postage stamp in 1985, the centenary year.

This labour of love is today the largest non-governmental hospital of Delhi.

In 1961, the reigns of this hospital were handed over to its first Indian Director, Padmashree Dr Lucy Oommen. She handed over the reigns to Dr J Jacob who was the driving force behind the new Dr Lucy Oommen Mother and Child Block. He was succeeded by our present Director.

St Stephen’s Hospital has earned three ISO certifications which is a rare feat amongst hospitals in India. It has its own Patient Welfare Society to aid the poor and needy. It has not lagged behind in its urban and rural mission either. The outreach programme at Sunder Nagar and in ten villages of Gurgaon addresses the health needs of over 1,00,000 people.

The hospital, aside from the School of Nursing, trains young students in 6 disciplines of Allied Health. Postgraduate courses are now offered in 12 disciplines of medical and surgical specialties. It has also become a post-graduate examination centre in some of these specialties.

With two-discos to its credit the 60 member St Stephen’s choir is now famous in the city of Delhi.

The horticulture department has been winning prizes for several years in a row at various flower shows in the city.

The younger generation now attempts to keep the flame of love alive in the hospital. Several of the doctors trained here are now working abroad. In some ways paying back what was received almost a century back!

Doctors of St Stephen’s now in UK, all wearing the hospital T-Shirt

The visit of the President of India added further prestige to the rich heritage of dignitaries visiting the St Stephen’s Hospital. This visit will always be cherished as a very special one. We had a glimpse of a scientist who is not only humble and humane but also compassionate. He challenged us to continue to focus on the care of the poor. This has encouraged us to re-affirm our faith in our goals. He was a gracious guest of honour who made us feel completely at ease enjoying his visit with us. We felt rewarded and honoured with the extra hour he spent with us.

God give me work; till my life shall end;
And life; till my work is done.

― Thinking should become your capital asset, no matter whatever ups and downs you come across in your life."

Dr A P J Abdul Kalam

― One factor common to all who have pioneered medical, social or scientific work, is that they have been sensitive to a need. Their eyes are wide open, they listen to people, to the world, to nature. Not content to see a need, they take steps to meet the need."

Dr Lucy Oommen

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