



DR PARARAJASEGARAM

In Remembrance



**NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EYE HEALTH
PAKISTAN**

Dr Ramachandra Pararajasegaram – In remembrance

We mourn the loss of Dr Ramachandra Pararajasegaram, or Dr Para as he was affectionately called, who passed away on 5th May 2020. He was an icon of eye health globally whose passion was to alleviate needless blindness in the world. Dr Para was foremost a humanitarian whose work in eye health transcended all racial, social and religious boundaries. For us in Pakistan, he leaves behind a legacy of the numerous eye health professionals who were fortunate to be trained and mentored by him and his many contributions to development of ophthalmic institutions in the country.

Dr Para was born in Sri Lanka where he graduated as a physician. He later pursued his professional specialisation in ophthalmology in United Kingdom where he obtained FRCS Edinburgh, FRCS London and MRCP. He was later admitted as a Fellow of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, United Kingdom and FRCP. He was conferred the DSc (Honoris causa) in Sri Lanka.

Dr Para worked with the World Health Organization as their technical advisor in prevention of blindness. He was a founder member and later President of the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) from 1994 to 1999. He was a founder member of the Global Working Group on Low Vision. He was also the founder member and Honorary President of Impact Switzerland.

As a close friend and associate in Al-Shifa Eye Hospital, Pakistan recently stated: *“Dr Para, one of the architects of the global initiative VISION 2020 – The Right to Sight, strived tirelessly to give 20/20 vision to millions around the world, sadly left us all in the year 2020”*.

Dr Para was always held in the highest esteem by professional and international organisations whether it was as a member of their Advisory Committee (International Council of Ophthalmology), Board (Sightsavers) or Technical Advisor (LIONS SightFirst Advisory Committee).

Through his work in teaching community ophthalmology and epidemiological research on blindness, or his professional contributions to ophthalmology and prevention of blindness, Dr Para leaves behind an indelible footprint across all continents and the warmth and humility of his demeanour forever embedded in the hearts of thousands of people who were privileged to have met him.

For us in Pakistan, Dr Para will be remembered with great reverence and pride for a long time to come. He spread his wings of guidance to Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital in Rawalpindi as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Prevention of Blindness; Pakistan Institute of Community Ophthalmology (PICO) in Peshawar; Comprehensive Health and Education Foundation (CHEF) International in Peshawar; Al-Ibrahim Eye Hospital in Karachi; Layton Rahmatulla Benevolent

Trust (LRBT) in Karachi; College of Ophthalmology and Allied Vision Sciences (COAVS) in Lahore; the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Blindness in Pakistan; and the numerous LIONS SightFirst supported projects across Pakistan. With each of these, he continued to have a close and personal relationship right to the very end.

Across the miles, the members of the National Committee for Eye Health in Pakistan share this moment of grief with his family and loved ones. We mourn the loss of a compassionate and decent human being, a professional extraordinaire, a great humanist, a genuine friend, a mentor and sage.

The true giants of prevention of blindness are rapidly becoming extinct. Dr Para was one of the last few remaining giants. Goodbye Dr Para - may your soul rest in eternal peace.

*“Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn
And broils roots out the work of masonry,
Nor mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till judgement that yourself arise,
You in this, and dwell in lovers eyes.” - Shakespeare*

Prof Asad Aslam Khan, Dr Haroon Awan, Mr Hasan Minto, Prof Tayyab Afghani and members of the National Committee for Eye Health, Pakistan