

Brother Pauly : An Experience of Miraculous Healing through Ajibaba

Benny Thettayil

Most of the gifts come to us as surprises. However, there are gifts that we long for and these gifts depending upon their value, material or sentimental, raise the measure of our joy. Brother Pauly has been a Christmas gift to Samanvaya, to his family and to all those countless known and unknown individuals who were praying for his recovery as he was fighting for life in the Intensive Care Unit of a hospital at Raipur, Chattisgarh. Now, Pauly is a healed and fresh man doing theology in Samanvaya at Jagdalpur.

Pauly, who belongs to St. John's Province, Bijnor, took ill a week after a village exposure programme, which is part of the regular academic schedule of the seminary. He had spent three weeks at an interior village substation of the diocese of Jagdalpur along with one of his friends. For about a week he was unwell and the symptoms of his illness, especially the fever, were taken as indicative of the common maladies rampant in this part of the country and he was treated at the health centre next door. Two blood tests showed negative results for malaria and hence it was considered a case of viral fever. Since the symptoms did not subside even after some days, we decided to take him to the hospital. But, before he was moved to the hospital, Pauly slipped into a delirium. In the hospital the fresh tests done on him showed that he was suffering from plasmodium falceparum (cerebral) malaria and jaundice. The attending physician declared his condition critical and suggested that he be taken to a super speciality hospital. But, such a hospital was about 300 km away either in Visakhpatnam or Raipur. Considering the state of the road and the condition of the available ambulance at the time (a Maruti Omni!), Raipur seemed a



better option. In six and a half hours, Pauly reached the hospital at Raipur in the small hours of the 27th of November, 2010, and after the preliminary and frenzied investigations his case was referred to as highly critical and he was put on a ventilator. Later, he also suffered convulsions and so he was sedated too.

On the following day, his condition deteriorated further. The physician spoke of a multi organ failure - kidneys, lungs and liver. Besides, since his brain was affected by cerebral malaria, it caused involuntary tremors in the body repeatedly. Various tubes, pipes, needles and mask became part of him; blood, platelets and plasma were transfused into him. Dialysis was done on a daily basis as both kidneys failed. It was at this juncture, that we took recourse to alternative medicine from Aji Parecattil. In two days, Pauly began to show signs of improvement, and gradually, in stages, he was taken out of the ventilator. Then came the second shock; Pauly's lungs got infected. His condition was perceived by the physician as far more critical than on the previous occasion. The physician informed that Pauly was being administered the strongest antibiotic available and his recovery, and ultimately life, depended upon the response that he would make to this treatment. He was put on the ventilator for a second time and he was once again heavily sedated. And trachetomy was also done to facilitate the passage of air to the lungs.

Pauly spent forty days in the hospital. On the 5th of January, after 40 days of life and lifelessness in the ICU, Pauly left the hospital. During his stay in the hospital, God worked through many hands to bring about the healing of Pauly in a miraculous manner. The most important among them is Aji. Stepping into the picture with his expertise in the field of alternative medicine was Aji, during the critical first phase of Pauly's illness. For us Samanvayaites, he is plain Aji, for he had been a student here. Internationally he is known as Dr Aji Sebastian; the CMI community knows him as Fr. Aji Parecattil and the local residents in the vicinity of his ashram at Faridabad call him Isai Baba. Fr Varghese Vithayathil, Pauly's Provincial superior on his visit, gauging

the seriousness of the condition and the lack of response to the conventional medicine wisely judged that Aji might be of some help to the patient with his alternative medicines. When Fr Varghese aired his view, we were reluctant to back it, because we were not sure of the generosity of the physician in permitting another person to administer non-allopathic types of medicines and concoctions to a patient in their care in a super speciality hospital. But after a discussion with Aji, the physician was convinced that the saffron-clad young man was someone more than his eyes had met, and gave Aji permission to augment whatever was already being done by the hospital.

In the evening of the same day Aji arrived in the hospital, Pauly was administered the additional medicine prepared by him. Having instructed Pauly's attendants to continue with the new medicines in various measures and mixes and at various times, he left for his ashram in Delhi. In two days, Pauly's kidneys and liver began to recover and he was weaned off the ventilator. The functions of the brain too began to look almost normal except the occasional involuntary twitches in his arms and legs. Aji kept inquiring of the progress in Pauly's health from Delhi and continued to instruct the attendants. He expressed his satisfaction regarding the effect of the medicine and advised us to continue with the medicine adding one or discontinuing another.

But, as I mentioned above, Pauly had a relapse with lung infection. Aji again flew down from the south where he was on rounds. The physician admitted frankly to Aji that the ultimate in medicine available to them was being pumped into Pauly and there was nothing else that his profession could do. So, for a second time, he permitted Aji to do whatever he could. Aji bought the necessary ingredients for a new mix of medicines and having instructed how to prepare and administer them to Pauly, he left for Delhi. Into the third day of Aji's treatment, Pauly began once again to recover. Even while on travels abroad, Aji kept enquiring about Pauly's health and instructing us regarding various doses of the medicines. He was glad to hear of the patient's progress as we kept him informed of it even after his return home.

Pauly's illness has brought us closer to Aji and his *sheetal chikitsa*, as his alternative therapy is known and we can vouch for its medical effectiveness as well as the impact of his healing ministry. We were also much impressed and inspired by the concern Aji had for the patient in his care not only during his visit but also while he was away, which he showed through remote consultation, distant diagnosis and tele-treatment! Had it not been for Aji's alternative medicines, Pauly would not be enjoying his life now.

Dr Abbas Naqvi, the principal physician, who was in charge of Pauly's treatment in the hospital, is a gentleman to the core. He kept us informed of the progress or deterioration that Pauly's health was making on a daily basis. Most of the days, he had very bad news for us. However, whatever slight turn that Pauly took either way was intimated to us in time. The diagnosis, prognosis and every other little detail regarding the treatment was communicated. Even during his busy hours in the hospital he was very sympathetic towards the reluctant but inevitable questions that we posed before him in the counseling room, in his private chamber or in his own clinic in the city. Dr Naqvi took great risk in allowing a man like Aji with unknown credentials to treat a patient in his charge. Perhaps he thought that a critical case like Pauly's should grab any little ray of hope that could come from any branch of medical science. Or perhaps he was so generous in Pauly's case that in spite of the possible risks he gave Aji a go-ahead. More than once, when our bus to Jagdalpur was due and still in panic, when we wanted to catch an update on Pauly's health, the doctor would condescendingly break his rounds and patiently brief to us the current status before he resumed his rounds.

Fr (Dr.) Jose Padayatty CMI gave us medical directions and suggestions whenever we were in need of them. At our request, Sr. Merly DBS, MD kindly visited Pauly and studied the test reports and assessed the case history. She made an appointment with Dr. Naqvi and met him in his private clinic. During a very satisfying conversation about the nature of the malady and the course of medical action taken,



the doctor politely informed her that there was no information that was kept away from the patient’s attendants. After the meeting, Merly surmised that everything that could be done for Pauly medically was being done there and, besides, physically he was not in a position to be moved to elsewhere with the ventilator and scores of tubes.

Various religious communities of the area heard the alarming state of Pauly’s health and regularly paid visits and comforted us. They often brought us also food and clean water, and above all, encouragement and solace. The small community of CMC sisters at Raipur went out of their way not only to visit Pauly but also to bring us breakfast and clean linen. No amount of gentle dissuasion would keep them from bringing these things. There were four different concoctions to be prepared and administered to Pauly on a given day at various intervals in various measures. Due to the absence of any artificial preservatives, these concoctions would go either stale or become downright bad in the room temperature in one day. This meant fresh preparation each day. The CMC sisters rose to every pharmaceutical challenge that Aji set for them and saw to it that these compounds for Pauly and breakfast for his attendants were ready early in the morning before they went to school and before the attendants arrived to fetch them. When Pauly left the hospital, the doctor suggested that it might be better if he stayed at Raipur until a review of his health took place. Pauly was naturally put up with the sisters who continued to care for him for another week. When Pauly’s companions who attended to him in the hospital had to return to their courses after the Christmas break, Pauly’s province sent one of his junior friends as a replacement. No sooner had he arrived at Raipur than he was taken ill with viral fever and the sisters ended up with two to care for instead of one!

The Medical Sisters of St Francis of Assisi also paid visits to Pauly. They also accommodated Pauly’s brother, uncle and a cousin who spent more than a week with him, and later his mother also. When we found the Missionaries of Charity accidentally at Pauly’s bedside praying, they were on their third visit to him. The one who



appeared to be the superior had her large crucifix placed on the forehead of an unconscious Pauly. They prayed for him and as they were leaving, they invited us to their place. On her following visit, when we were with Pauly, she was rather perturbed at the bedside because the medal with the image of Mother Teresa that she had secretly planted under Pauly’s pillow had vanished when Pauly was moved to another location. They came, prayed, comforted him, wished him speedy recovery and disappeared.

Pauly’s mother was a brave lady who met her son almost at his death-bed. A sensible woman, she knew that she was called because her son was critical. For a widow from a rural background, her demeanors were highly dignified when she tried to encourage her youngest son to hang on to life. Once out of the ICU and his sight, she almost collapsed and had to be attended to. By the time she left Raipur, Pauly’s condition was better and she had the comfort of hope that her son would survive.

Innumerable are the individuals and communities that helped Pauly with their prayers. His ailment caused a network of prayer-web that literally held him down. Somebody rushed in a little dust from St. Alphonsa’s grave to be applied to the patient! Special prayers made through the intercession of Bl. Chavara were relentless. In brief, Pauly’s was perhaps one of those cases in which the heavens were stormed by the prayers of those who believed that prayer still worked. And it did; how, we know not.

Pauly’s friends did a commendable job not only with him, but also with the people from his home front. They went in and out of the hospital with what had to be procured for him from various shops – Aji’s roots and barks and pods, various soups at different times of the day, sundries that were not available at the hospital. They also kept an eye on the physician’s movements to get the report of the latest development in the patient’s health. Above all, when Pauly came round, they were there beside him keeping him company, occupying his mind

and massaging his feeble limbs that ached due to fatigue. Strange ways of consolidating friendships!

Celebrations of such great events as Christmas in a hospital make you put everything they signify in a new and unprecedented perspective. The whole focus of your celebration becomes neither the crib you create, nor the tree you illuminate nor even the liturgy that you painstakingly prepare for and participate, rather, a person. Was not it the first Christmas all about? Pauly for us, indeed, was a Christmas gift wrapped up tight in a strange way.

Pioneers in CMI Education

St. Ephrem's H. S. School
The First CMI School That Celebrated 125th Anniversary



Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, away from the din and tumult of noisy streets, in the quiet retirement of a sacred environment, on the top of a hill which commands beautiful landscapes, and which seems to be peculiarly adapted to be a centre of intellectual and moral enlightenment, St. Ephrem's School, the first formal school in the Catholic community in Kerala, was started in the year 1885. It had a very humble beginning. Perhaps it could not have been humbler. Rev. Fr. Gerard started the school with one teacher and one pupil, in the porch of a farm house in the St. Joseph's Monastery precincts.



The year 1888 is memorable in the history of the St. Ephrem's. In May of that year, Bishop Charles Levigne SJ, the newly appointed Vicar Apostolic of Kottayam, came to his Vicariate and took up his residence in the monastery at Mannanam. The bishop's secretary was Rev. Fr. Ricard SJ. The fame of the Jesuits as educationists has been worldwide; and the good Fr. Gerard entrusted the little school to the fostering care of that Jesuit educationist. Fr. Ricard gladly took up the management of the school. He transferred the classes first to the