

Medical profession stems out of compassion: Judge



HONOUR: P. Sathasivam (third from right), Judge, Supreme Court, presenting the Dr. G. Venkataswamy Endowment Oration Award to John P. Whitcher of University of California on Saturday.

MADURAI: Medical profession stemmed out of the traits of humanity – compassion, kindness and benevolence, said P. Sathasivam, Supreme Court Judge, on Saturday.

Presenting the Dr. G. Venkataswamy Endowment Oration Award to John P. Whitcher of Francis I. Proctor Foundation, University of California, at a function organised at Dr. G. Venkataswamy Eye Research Institute here, Mr. Sathasivam said that the profession arose out of the very state of being human and reconciled human nature. It had a special characteristic as doctors dealt directly with issues of life and death, health and illness. The patient was heavily dependent upon the technical knowledge and integrity of the doctor. Mutual trust played a vital role in the discourse of doctor-patient relationship. However, the duty of the doctors of truth telling and doing their best to cure the illness were part of philosophical discussions and “not the reality in medical practice,” the Judge observed.

Hailing the Aravind Eye Care System as a “glaring example of an unstoppable success” achieved through the right blend of expertise, modern technology, research and zeal to succeed, Mr. Sathasivam said that it put up a strong case to counter the belief that medical profession was fundamentally about maximising

profits. The Aravind Eye Care System proved the contrary by serving the masses with a spirit of selflessness and charity.

Dr. Whitcher, in his Dr. G. Venkataswamy Endowment Oration, recollected his over two-decade-old relationship with the Aravind Eye Care System and explained how the population of those with vision disability was growing over the years. According to a World Health Organisation estimate, 28 million people were blind in 1978; it rose to 31 million in 1984, 38 million in 1994 and 45 million in 2004. An estimated 76 million people would be blind worldwide by 2020. He said that ocular trauma and corneal ulceration were serious public health problems in South East Asia. Dr. Whitcher also spoke about the results of Aravind/Proctor/WHO corneal ulcer prevention study conducted in Bhutan, Myanmar and India.

Cataract remained the major cause of global blindness. It caused 42.1 per cent of global blindness in 1994 and 47.8 per cent in 2002. While trachoma accounted for 15.5 per cent in 1994, glaucoma (12.2 per cent) emerged as the second largest factor causing blindness in 2002. P. Namperumalsamy, Emeritus Chairman, Aravind Eye Care System, presided. N. Venkatesh Prajna, Chief, Medical Education, welcomed the gathering. R. D. Ravindran, Chairman, proposed a vote of thanks.