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IN LOVE

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FROM MEH  
TO GLAM

**PLUS**  
READING  
MUCH  
INTO  
ROMANCE

SALEKA,  
DAUGHTER OF  
M NIGHT  
SHYAMALAN,  
CARVES HER  
OWN NICHE

**PAYAL  
KADAKIA**

**FLIGHT OF THE UNICORN**

# THE JOURNEY BEGINS AT MANIPAL'S AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ANTIGUA COLLEGE OF MEDICINE (AUA)



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**Saleka,  
daughter of  
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# *Doctors* *in Love*

*When matters of the heart trump cardiac  
and other minor medical issues*

**ABHIJIT MASIH**

**W**hen you write about love, there is never a dearth of words or incredible stories that immediately transport you to that happy place. A place, you wish, you had the ticket for permanent residency. A very few of us are lucky enough to find love at a young age. Finding the love of your life is a popular fantasy in school. That may be possible, but how realistic can it be to expect to meet your soul mate in medical school: romance while negotiating the academic challenges of becoming a physician? To find time during this intellectual endurance marathon is difficult, but not impossible.

Here are some doctors who not only shouldered the weight of their academic medical texts, but also found time to find their romantic interests in medical school. Perhaps the balmy Caribbean shores on which the university is located played a part in making it conducive to let love grow.

**DR. BRIAN ZACHARIAH AND DR. SHERVY XAVIER**

**Met each other at American University of Anitgua College of Medicine (AUA)**  
Between 2009 and 2013

**Specialty**

**Brian:** Psychiatry

**Shervy:** Family medicine

**Current practice**

**Brian:** MindPath Health

**Shervy:** CHI St Joseph’s Health

**First memory of each other.**

**Brian:** My first memory, where I really took notice of her, was during a church service. I had been praying for the right partner. Looking at her then and now, I’m blessed in how that prayer was clearly answered.

**Shervy:** One of my favorite memories is actually the very first time we expressed our feelings for each other and decided to start this journey. We went to watch the sunset and Brian prayed for us and for our future together. It totally caught me off-guard! I knew

back then itself that he was a keeper. Since then, I had always prayed that we’d end up together.

**What made you decide that he/she is the one?**

**Brian:** Every time I saw her or was around her, it felt like a breath of fresh air. Whether it was a conversation, laughter, a brief glance or a simple walk together; it became clear to me that she lent meaning to every moment.

**Shervy:** I loved all the time that we got to spend together, and deeply missed him when we were apart. He always finds a way to make me laugh and always left me feeling like I was the most special person. In big and little ways, he never misses an opportunity to show how much he cares and how much I mean to him. Perhaps above all else, I have always been inspired by his faith in Christ.

**An incident where love took precedence over medicine**

This is a fun memory looking back, but I was late for a residency interview, and Shervy had one of her friends cover for her briefly to give me a ride. At the time we were so panicked because she could have gotten into trouble, but it all worked out, for the sake of love.

**Who proposed and how?**

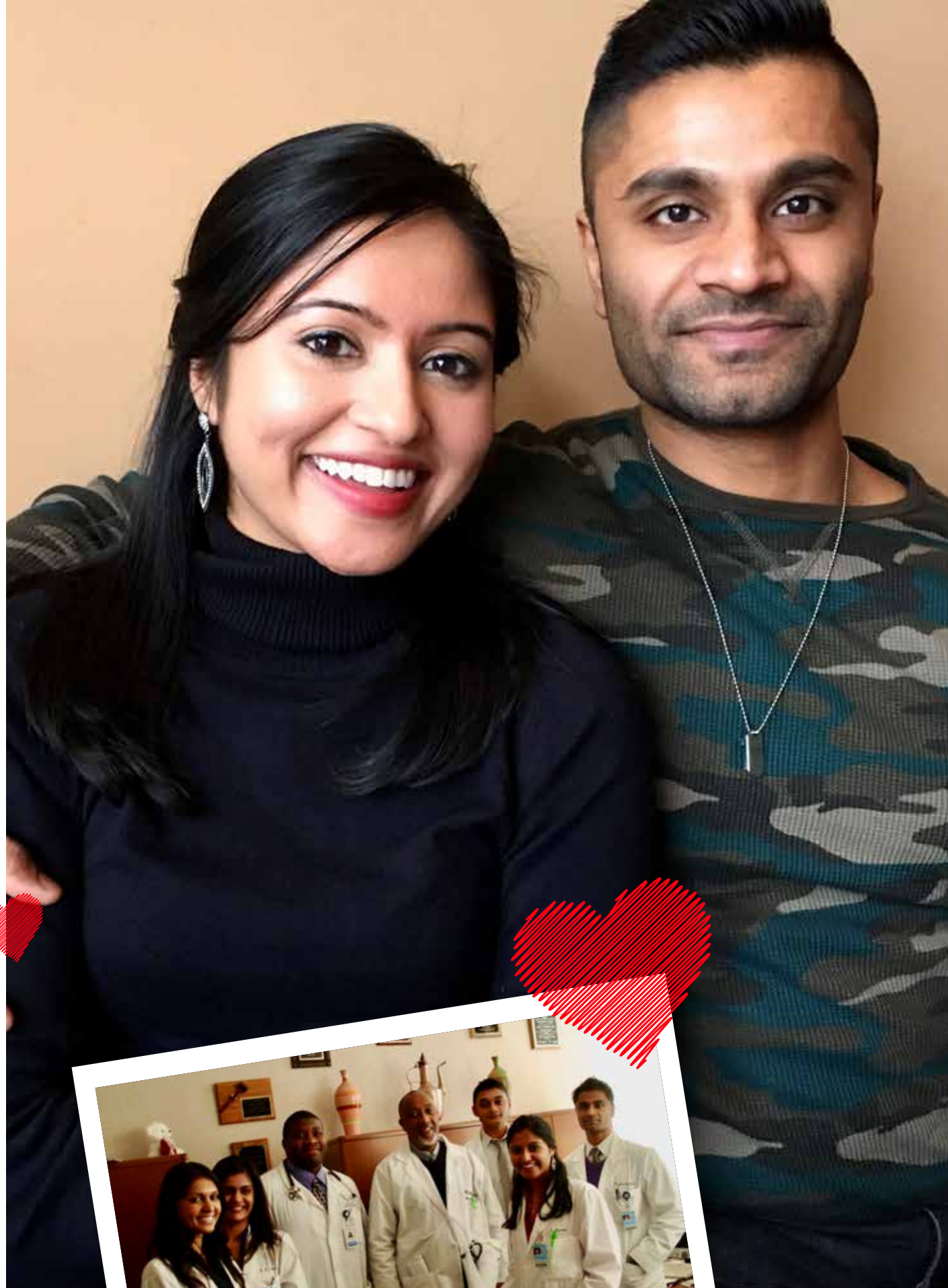
We actually had a non-traditional proposal where we had our parents meet. It was special to have our families meet and share in our joy and commitment to each other.

**The pros and cons of being in the same profession.**

Being in medicine gives us a unique sense of common ground. We both understand each others’ schedules, how challenging each day can be and can discuss patient care. However, work can be time-consuming and stressful. There are some days where we have very little extra time to spend together.

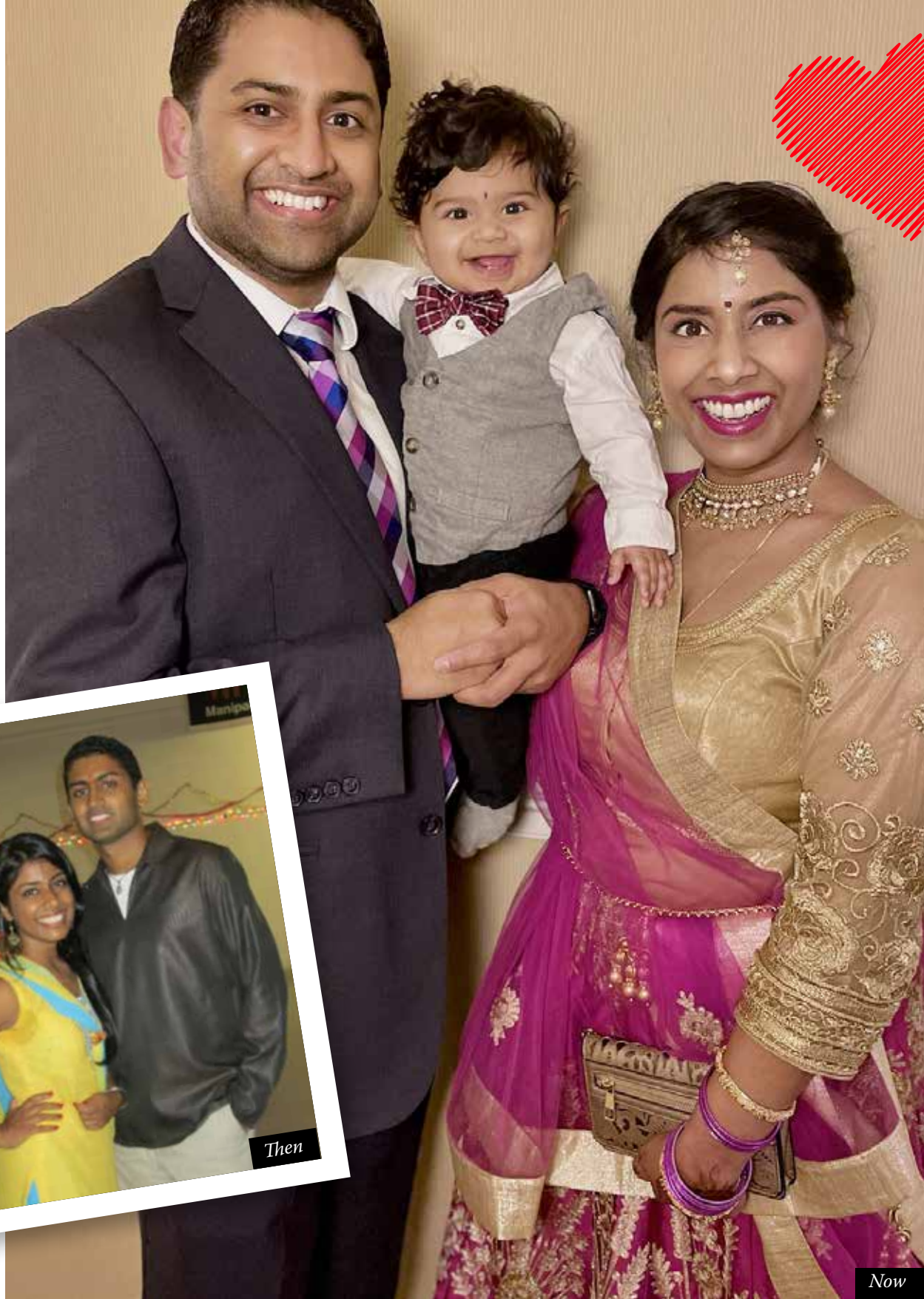
**Favorite thing they like doing together.**

Working out is something we both enjoy. We both try to make time to do buddy workouts and challenge each other. Now that we also have a child, we try to catch up on shows or movies in our downtime together.



*Then and Now: Brian and Shervy back in the day at AUA and in a recent happy moment.*

PHOTOS COURTESY: DR BRIAN ZACHARIAH AND DR SHERVY XAVIER



**What would you collectively prescribe for a healthy love life?**

1) Emotional and physical affection — it's key in a

relationship. No matter how busy, we try to do even the most mundane activities together. We start each day with a hug and end every night the same.

2) It's important to prioritize your relationship; it takes



real effort to weather the storms and still keep your relationship strong.

- 3) Be patient—with each other and yourself.
- 4) Focus on your strengths together. Don't compare yourselves to others
- 5) As busy & challenging as medicine may be, we appreciate it as a blessing, but also realize that it's transient. Our bond and desire to grow old together, however, is permanent.

**HARITHSA ASURI AND APARNA BHAT**  
**Met each other at American University of Antigua**  
**College of Medicine**

Between 2011 and 2016

**Specialty**

**Harithsa Asuri:** Completed internal medicine residency at Trinity Health Saint Joseph Mercy Health System (2016-2019)

Completed a fellowship on addiction medicine at Trinity Health Saint Joseph Mercy Health System (2019-2020)

**Aparna Bhat:** Completed internal medicine residency at Trinity Health Saint Joseph Mercy Health System (2016-2019)

Completed a fellowship on sleep medicine at Cleveland Clinic (2019-2020)

**Current**

**Harithsa Asuri:** Pursuing a residency in general public health and preventive medicine while also working on a master's degree in Public Health at University Hospitals Cleveland-Case Western Reserve University (2021-2023)

**Aparna Bhat :** Pursuing a fellowship in pulmonary and critical care at Cleveland Clinic (2020-2023)

**First memory of each other**

We were introduced at a mutual friend's house in Antigua.

**Harithsa:** The striking feature that I noticed about Aparna was her eyes.

**Aparna:** The striking feature that I noticed about Harithsa was his smile.

**What made you decide that he/she is the one?**

Our relationship evolved organically. We started off as good friends and had shared interests in music, movies, and trying new cuisines. This friendship evolved, really without much realization, and we noticed many similarities in our upbringing and cultures. Our parents are from Karnataka, India, and we had the same mother

tongue. We were really on the same wavelength in how we envisioned our future, raising children, and even professional interests.

**An incident where love took precedence over medicine**

We can't think of any major incident when we've had love take precedence over medicine. Of course, we are always mindful of the fine balance of our relationship, family commitments and the responsibilities of being a physician. We can think of many small acts of love that we do to ensure that we are supporting each other and spending time together.

**Who proposed and how?**

Harithsa and his family came to visit us in Montreal, Canada. We all went to visit some tourist sites together. When we got to Mount Royal, which is a small mountain in Montreal known for its fall colors, Harithsa got down on one knee and proposed at the top of the mountain, with our families around. It was a small, intimate and impromptu affair.

**What are the pros and cons of both being in the same profession?**

Being a physician, our work hours can be long and the commitments to your profession can often seep into your personal life. Since we are both in medicine, we understand when the other needs extra support and often take that extra step to support each other.

This is especially true when we have a stressful and overwhelming day at work.

Being a physician couple in training and having our son has provided us the most challenging but rewarding balance. The days are long, and there are times where we barely get to spend time together. We really wouldn't have it any other way, but it takes a lot of clear communication and nuanced coordination.

**Favorite thing they like doing together**

We both love cooking and trying new cuisines! We love taking long walks and exploring new walking trails in local parks. We love to binge-watch action and sci-fi television shows and movies.

**What would you collectively prescribe for a healthy love life?**

1. Listen carefully and communicate freely.
2. Support your spouse in their endeavors and encourage them to pursue their dreams.
3. Make time for one another...even after a busy and long day at work.

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