

Lt. Gen. Mahmud-ul-Hassan
HI (M) S.BT. SI (M), TI (M)
(1925 - 2019)

Army Medical Core has produced some of the most eminent distinguished medical personalities in different disciplines who have made commendable contributions in their respective area of specialization. Ever since I started my professional career in 1966 and have been attending some of their academic activities including workshops, seminars, symposia and conferences, three names have emerged very prominently who are extremely popular because of their sympathetic attitude, help, guidance and assistance they provided to the young trainees, postgraduates who later themselves achieved very high coveted positions in the AMC. They are still remembered and all those who came in contact with them or had the privilege of being trained by them always remember them with good words. These include late Lt.Gen. Malik Shaukat Hassan, Late Lt. Gen. Mahmud-ul-Hassan and Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmad Akhtar who retired as Surgeon General of AMC.

I had the pleasure of meeting and talking to late Lt. Gen. Mahmud-ul-Hassan at quite a few occasions. More recently when I had gone to conduct a Workshop on Medical Writing and Peer Review at Army Medical College Rawalpindi, I requested his son-in-law Prof. Farid Aslam Minhas an eminent psychiatrist if he could arrange my meeting with him. He was kind enough and informed me that General Sahib will be waiting for me at his clinic at 4.00 PM despite the fact that he was not feeling well. Hence my last meeting with Lt. Gen. Mahmud-ul-Hassan lasted for about forty five minutes on November 10, 2018. He was as usual very kind, greeted me most affectionately and we

did exchange views on matters of mutual interest. A few months later he left this world. That turned out to be my last meeting with a distinguished Surgeon of the AMC whose contributions apart from surgery, to Urdu literature in the form of poetry are praiseworthy. Eminent literary figures which includes Syed Zameer Jafary, Patro Roheela, Sultan Rushk, Saroor Ambalvi, Jamil Malik, Raees Amrohvi, Jamil Yousuf, Shafiqur Rehman and Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi were all full of praise for him.

Eminent poet Saroor Ambalvi described the personality of Lt.Gen.Mahmud-ul-Hassan in the following couplet:

دیئے آندھی میں روشن کر رہا ہے
تبھی تو اونچا اُس کا سر رہا ہے

He perhaps wrote the following couplets after the death of his beloved wife:

تیرا غم ہو تو لطف آتا ہے
آنکھ نم ہو تو لطف آتا ہے
اب مجھے قہقہے پسند نہیں
شور کم ہو تو لطف آتا ہے

Here is another couplet from his poetry:

اب تو دل ہی نہیں ہے پہلو میں
اب یہاں واردات کیا ہوگی

All poets have a very sensitive personality and late Lt.Gen. Mahmud-ul-Hassan was no exception. His poetry always had a message and conveyed lot to those who were keen to learn. The following two couplets from his poetry was a perfect

description of the current state of affairs in Pakistan.

ہمیں خود قتل کرنے کی اذیت کیوں اٹھاتے ہو
ذرا سا کام ہے یہ بھی کوئی جلا دے گا
کبھی جو راہزن کرتے رہے ہیں قافلے والو
وہ کار خیر خود اب قافلہ سالار کرتے ہیں

I requested **Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmad Akhtar** who is always very kind to me and is one of our regular contributors, to oblige me once again. He was kind enough to write the following obituary for which I am extremely grateful to him. I did take the liberty of adding a few things here and there but the credit for this write-up goes to Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmad Akhtar.

“Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ul Hassan passed away on 26th January, 2019, after a brief illness. He was 93 years of age. Mahmud ul Hassan was an institution. He retired from Pakistan Army in July 1988. He was a passionate surgeon, a brilliant teacher, mentor, orator, and poet and prose writer. He had immense command over English language. He had the rare combination of a surgeon’s healing hand and a hand that also held the pen and wrote brilliantly capturing the flow of his poetic and scientific thoughts and ideas. He had deep empathy, humility and compassion for fellow beings.

He was born on 17th July 1925, in the town of Aimanabad Gujranwala. His father was a clerk in a civil department. He passed Matriculation with high distinction from Islamia High School, Ferozepur. He did his FSc in 1942 from Islamia College Lahore. He then joined the King Edward Medical College which was the only medical college in Lahore at that time. He graduated in 1947, six months prior to partition. He won the ‘Southerland Memorial Gold Medal’ in Medicine, which was the only medal

being awarded during medical school. He was passionate about Medicine and wanted to join the same for house job, but was strongly advised against it by Prof. Ramzan Ali Syed. Consequently he withdrew his application and reapplied for house job in Surgery, for which he was immediately selected. He worked with eminent surgeons of the time, like Prof Ameer ud din and Prof Riaz e Qadeer. There were train loads of injured and dead arriving from Amritsar at the time of partition. He stayed in the hospital day and night, and worked relentlessly, operating upon the wounded migrants. After house job he was appointed CMO, which he found to be a comparatively relaxed placement. So he sought permission to continue surgery besides performing CMO duties, which he did, imbibing extra skills like anesthesia techniques during the same time.

He then joined the Pak Army Medical Corps (PAMC) later known as AMC. He was posted in Field Ambulance Tararkhel AJK. There was a small Operation Theatre where he operated to his heart's content, even though he was not a classified surgeon. A year later he was posted to CMH Lahore. Seeing his surgical prowess, the ADMS Col. M. N. Mahmud appointed him as a graded surgeon, even though grading was exclusively performed in CMH Rawalpindi. Few months later, he became the Surgeon CMH Lahore, as well as the Director of Artificial Limb Centre. He was soon promoted to the rank of Major, at a very young age and after a short span of service. At that time, there were only five senior surgical specialists in Armed Forces. He was inundated with work, but chose to do more and more; he apprenticed with Prof. Samee who was a visiting gynecologist from KEMC and learnt the art and science of gynecological surgery, and started filling in for the gynecologist when she was on leave. He came to be known as 'Hur fun Maula' (the Omnicompetent).

In 1953 he was posted to CMH Dera Nawab, which was a small hospital. Finding time on his hands, he started devouring his books on Surgery and passed MS Surgery meritoriously. At that time "Master of Surgery" (MS) and "Doctor of Medicine" (MD) Punjab University were the only higher post graduate degrees

available in Pakistan, on the pattern of the British degrees from London and Edinburgh Universities, and were categorized in precedence over the Royal College FRCS/MRCP qualifications. The qualification started in 1914 and till 1947 there were only 14 MDs (Punjab) and about the same number MS Punjab. It was a very comprehensive exam, called MS/MD Golden. His thesis received “High Commendation”.

He was then awarded a deputation in Plastic Surgery in the Army Surgical Center in USA. He was the first surgeon from Pakistan to be trained in plastic surgery. He made use of every opportunity to attend, observe and participate in any and every surgical procedure being conducted in the hospital, and was always either found in the Operation Theatre or in the Library, and never left the hospital premises. After six months of training, he returned home and was posted in PNS Shifa Karachi.

Few years later in 1961, he was sent to the UK for further specialist training. He passed the FRCS exam. He was heard telling his PA, not to forget to print MS qualification on his writing pad, as he had worked much harder for it. He returned in December 1962 and was posted to CMH Lahore, the second largest Military Hospital in Pakistan. He was promoted to the rank of Lt. Col. During the 1965 war he was the only surgeon in the hospital. He held the Fort with dedication, and worked day and night performing surgery on the wounded soldiers. He was later joined by a couple of surgeons from Mayo hospital. During a black out, a trolley carrying a patient ran over his foot, fracturing his metatarsal bones. He never reported sick and continued to work with a hugely swollen and painful foot.

In 1971 Col. Mahmud ul Hassan was posted to CMH Rawalpindi and the Armed Forces Medical College, now the Armed Forces Post Graduate Medical institute (AFGMI). When FCPS courses were started at the AFM College, besides teaching Surgery he was made in charge of teaching clinical Anatomy to the FCPS Part-1 students. At that time I (Lt. Gen. Mahmud Ahmed Akhtar) was also posted at AFM College/MH Rawalpindi and was the in Charge of the FCPS Part 1 course. During the FCPS courses, the

officers (students) were asked to fill feedback forms regarding the assessment/performance of the teachers, and Col. Mahmud ul Hassan was voted the best teacher in clinical/surgical Anatomy. He excelled in teaching, building clear concepts, and incorporating poetry into his lessons to illustrate and enhance understanding. He was an orator par excellence and mesmerized his audience.

During the 1971 war he again remained busy day and night, performing emergency surgeries on injured soldiers evacuated from the front lines. Even in 1971, there were not many surgical specialists in the Armed Forces. In 1976, when the Army Medical College was established, he taught clinical Anatomy and Surgery. He later on became the Head of Department of Surgery. Even when he attained the higher ranks of Major General and Lt. General, he continued as Head of the undergraduate surgical courses in addition to the post graduate teaching. After his retirement, he remained on the honorary teaching panel. Lt. Gen Ayub Khan was the Principal of the Army Medical College. He ordered that Lt. Gen Mahmud ul Hassan will remain the de facto Head of the Surgical Departments, even though there were others on papers as the Head of Surgery.

Lt. Gen Shaukat Hassan the legendary chest surgeon, not only in Pakistan but also in the region and Middle East was the Director General of Surgery. He was the first to do close heart valve vulvotomy and kidney transplant surgery in the country. Gen. Shaukat Hassan had immense liking for Major Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan and Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan had immense respect for General Shaukat Hassan. Under the leadership of Gen. Shaukat Hassan, the duo enjoyed immense reputation and took surgery to great heights, not only in the Armed Forces but also in the country. In those days civilian non entitled patients not only from Pakistan but also from the Middle East and other countries sought treatment at CMH/MH Rawalpindi.

He was a man of letters. He published several books in Urdu poetry. He excelled in Urdu calligraphy. In his nineties, his hand was absolutely steady, excelling in writing Urdu with traditional

pen and ink, and equally steady while performing surgery. He used to reply to my letters in traditional Urdu writing. He wrote his autobiography in Urdu. A comprehensive review on his autobiography was published by Mr. Shaukat Ali Jawaid the Chief Editor of fortnightly PULSE International in August 15, 2016 issue.

He was honest to a fault. On his retirement, President General Zia ul Haq offered him the job of the “Principal of the Army Medical College”. Lt. Gen Peer Dad, the Military Secretary met Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan to convey the President’s offer. Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan replied that it would be disastrous for the college as he had no experience in administration. Even his ward and operation theatre administration had always been done by his subordinates, and he wrote on the file and declined the offer.

Gen. Zia ul Haq was very fond of Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan, and would often request him to recite naats and listened intently. When Gen Zia needed surgery, he opted for Gen Mahmud ul Hassan to do his operation, even though he had the resource and entitlement to proceed abroad.

He lost his wife due to complications of diabetes mellitus ten years ago. He remained in emotional turmoil, and became a recluse, not attending gatherings of his interest like Mushaira. He suffered from cancer of larynx and after a brief illness passed away. He leaves behind three children. His son former Professor of Surgery at Rawalpindi Medical University is currently working at Dubai, UAE. His daughter is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at RMU, and her husband Professor Fareed Minhas, an eminent Psychiatrist retired as head of the Institute of Psychiatry at the Rawalpindi Medial University. The department progressed a lot under his leadership. Another daughter Col. Sabahat retired from the Army Medical Corps and runs a Cosmetology clinic. May his soul rest in peace. “

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