



Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon
MBBS, FRCP, FCPS

Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon MBBS, FRCP, FCPS Father of Dermatology in Pakistan

(March 5, 1940-January 6, 2018)

Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon who is known and recognized as Father of Dermatology in Pakistan passed away on January 6, 2018. An eminent dermatologist, he was a very kind hearted God fearing physician, excellent teacher and trainer who practiced ethical medicine. He was a man of principles who always upheld merit and refused to compromise with the result that he was not very popular among some members of the medical profession. It was his sincerity, devotion and dedication that earned him respect. He left this world after playing his innings well in every field he got interested and established his identity.

He was born on March 5, 1940 and graduated from King Edward Medical College in 1961. He served as House Physician in the Dept. of Dermatology and later Medical Officer in charge of Skin Outpatients at Mayo Hospital Lahore from January 1962 to November 1964. He went to England for postgraduate training and worked at RAE Infirmary Lanes, UK, Law Hospital, Carlisle, Lanarks, UK in the Departments of Medicine and Surgery. Later he worked as Senior House Officer Dermatology at Stobhill General Hospital in Glasgow. He was appointed Registrar in Dermatology at Glasgow Royal Infirmary from December 1967 to August 1974 and later as Senior Registrar at the same institution from 1974-1975. He was appointed Consultant Dermatologist in National Health Service at Bradford in July 1975 where he worked till October 1976. It was extremely rare for an Asian and Pakistani to be appointed as Consultant in Dermatology in UK in those days but he earned this due to his keen interest in this specialty.

It was Prof. Naseer B. Sheikh the then Director General of Health in Federal Health Ministry in the Z. A. Bhutto government who invited him to come to Pakistan. He returned in October 1976 and was appointed as Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Dermatology at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre Karachi. He was allotted four beds in a Medical Ward but did not get any co-operation and encouragement from the physician colleagues. He struggled and finally managed to get a separate Ward which helped a great deal not only to improve patient care but teaching and training in dermatology. I was lucky to come in contact with him soon after his return to Pakistan through late Dr. Nusrat Ali Sheikh another renowned skin specialist who was working as Director of Institute of Skin Diseases. Pakistan Association of Dermatologists was formed with Dr. Nusrat Ali Sheikh as President and Dr. Tahir Saeed Haroon as its General Secretary. The rest is history. We became very close and our friendship grew with the every passing day and I learnt a lot from him throughout our association.

Promotion of Dermatology

In order to promote the discipline of dermatology in Pakistan, Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon along with his other colleagues initiated numerous measures. He started organizing skin camps in different cities of Sindh Province, regular clinical meetings where eminent members of the medical profession who usually did not give too much importance to dermatology, were invited as guest speakers. This forced them to read before making presentation. This was an un-ending campaign and during the next couple of months, numerous eminent medical personalities had been guest speakers at clinical meetings organized by Pakistan Association of Dermatologists which helped a lot in creating awareness about the importance of skin diseases and also their treatment on scientific lines by properly trained and qualified skin specialists which was lacking till then. There were a few dermatologists in Pakistan whose number one could count on fingers and they did not have much say and even medical profession did not give them due respect what to talk of public.

Late Dr. Durre Kamil was a consultant skin specialist at Mayo Hospital Lahore in late 50s who was transferred to Peshawar after the break-up of one Unit which resulted in four provinces. I remember once I interviewed him at Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar. He revealed that he had four love affairs in Lahore and every time his would be “In-laws” would come to see him and when they came to know that I see skin patients, the proposal was turned down as skin specialists were not given due respect not only by public but also their own colleagues in medical profession. This highlights the importance of the struggle which Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon made to get due recognition to dermatology and respect for the dermatologists which was their due and now Dermatology has emerged as an important discipline of medicine with full professorial chairs/units in most of the medical colleges in Pakistan.

Training of Postgraduates

He started training postgraduates in dermatology. To begin with, he trained a physician from Lahore who did MD in dermatology from Punjab University. Later he struggled and convinced the College of Physicians & Surgeons Pakistan to start MCPS in Dermatology. He used to take test before allowing enrollment to his postgraduates which was commonly known as “No Entry Test” as a very few would qualify for training. Once I asked him about this entry test to which he replied that he just test the knowledge of candidates to make sure that they know about skin diseases which is taught in the MBBS. This shows their interest and also keeps away those who cannot adjust themselves in other specialties and wish to come to dermatology as a last resort. It is the beginning and I wish to have postgraduates who are committed, devoted and who are interested to make career in dermatology. He was very reluctant to enroll female postgraduates in the beginning saying that they will get married and then they will have children and cannot devote time and concentrate which this specialty requires in its initial stages in Pakistan. Tears come to her eyes when Prof. Zarnaz Wahid even now recalls how she struggled and managed

to attend the classes fearing that any time she may be asked to leave the class and eventually got enrolled as a postgraduate. In the later years he did accept, encouraged and trained many female postgraduates as well who are now serving the country and have proved themselves as an asset.

While on one hand he was training the postgraduates at the same time he urged the federal and provincial governments to create posts of skin specialists so that they can be absorbed which was not at all an easy task. He then made a team and convinced the CPSP administration to start Fellowship in Dermatology in which he succeeded. His clinic was next to my office in Al-Haroon Chambers in Sadder and I often saw Prof. Ghulam Shabbir, Brig. Jaffer and other skin specialists waiting for him so that he could finish his clinic and then they will work on preparing the curriculum for FCPS in dermatology. It was their hard work and encouragement from CPSP that FCPS in dermatology was started. He himself alone has trained over one hundred dermatologists who earned MD, MCPS and FCPS in dermatology. He along with late Dr. Aleem Saeed Qureshi, Dr. Khursheed H.Alvi and CDR Rashid used to organize clinical meetings on rotation at JPMC, PNS Shifa, K.V.Social Site Security Hospital and Skin Centre which not only created awareness about this discipline but also provided an opportunity for the postgraduates in training.

Despite all this, he neither got any help, assistance and encouragement at JPMC nor was he promoted as Professor. Hence, when the post of Professor of Dermatology became vacant at King Edward Medical College, he applied and was selected to head the Dept.of Dermatology at KEMC. It was a great gain for KEMC but a tremendous loss for JPMC as well as the postgraduates who now had to go to Lahore for training. It was also a great honour for him to be heading the department of dermatology at KEMC where he did his house job and to be on the faculty of his Alma matter. He trained a large number of postgraduates at KEMC/Mayo Hospital where he established a state of the art Department, fully equipped with a good departmental library.

He used all his contacts in corporate sector and the government to enhance expand existing teaching, training and treatment facilities and also started many new facilities for skin patients at Mayo Hospital Lahore which also became a Research hub in dermatology. He retired from KEMC in March 2000 which he joined in August 1989 and was appointed on two years contract after retirement so that the postgraduates under training could continue to benefit from his knowledge and expertise. He finally retired in 2002.

Interest in Research

Late Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon had developed interest in research in 1969 on varied subjects some of which included:

1. Effect of eicosa tetrayonic acid on sebum excretion.
2. Drugs causing fixed eruptions in Pakistan.
3. Dermatomycosis prevalent in Pakistan.
4. Efficacy of naftifine and Terbinafine in the treatment of various Dermatomycosis.

He has to his credit over one hundred papers published in peer reviewed national and international medical journals which are quite frequently cited by other investigators. He published eight books on dermatology. His first book ABC of Dermatology became very popular and its eight edition was published a few years ago. His other books include the following:

- Skin and Systemic Diseases
- Imraz-e-Jild (Urdu)
- Common Skin Diseases
- Chamri Jon Bmaryun (Sindhi)
- MCQ in Dermatology

He was the Guest Editor of three issues of “Specialist” later renamed as Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences which were devoted to Skin Diseases. He guided and helped his postgraduates to contribute in these issues on various skin diseases. He contributed chapter on Skin Diseases in the

Textbook of Paediatric and the book published by Pakistan Medical Journalists Association titled “Medical Writing”. His contribution was on “How to plan a scientific study”. He also contributed a chapter in Textbook of Gynaecology edited by Prof. Saad Rana.

Contribution of Medical Journalism

He helped and promoted the Journal which was started by Pakistan Association of Dermatologists. In view of his keen interest, he was honoured and elected as President of Pakistan Association of Medical Journalists (PMJA) from 2004-2007. It was under his President ship that the First ever conference on Medical Editing in Pakistan was organized by PMJA at Army Medical College Rawalpindi from April 23-25,2007 which laid the solid foundation for the promotion of the discipline of Medical Journalism in Pakistan. He also served as Editor of Journal of College of Physicians & Surgeons Pakistan from 1998-2002.

Other Honours, Awards

He was elected Councilor of College of Physicians & Surgeons Pakistan where he served from 1998-2002. He served as Examiner in Dermatology of Bangladesh College of Physicians & Surgeons, Examiner in dermatology Sudan Medical Specialization Board Sudan. He was elected President of Pakistan Association of Dermatologists twice first from 1984-1988 and then again from 2002-2004. He became Executive Committee Member of South Asian Regional Association of Dermatology, Member British Association of Dermatologists since 1976. He was founder member of National Academy of Medical Sciences Pakistan. He was presented Life Time Achievement Award twice in November 2000 and November 2012. He also served as Honorary Consultant Dermatologist to Pakistan Army.

Contribution to Urdu Poetry

He was also interested in Urdu poetry and published his first book of *Nazm and Ghazals* entitled “*Rifat-e-Anjum*” which he dedicated to his wife. His other books on Nazm and

Ghazal included “*Nai Ruton Ka Suragh*” and “*Sehar ki Pahl*
Kiran”. Later he got interested in *Doha* a unique segment of Urdu poetry and has the credit of publishing the following fifteen compilations and enjoys the unique distinction who has said the largest number of Dohas. He earned yet another rare distinction when a full book was published on him in India highlighting his academic, literary qualities which had contributions by a large number of eminent medical personalities, literary figures and medical journalist. Given below is a list of his books on Doha:

1. Neela Chandarman
2. Pareet Sagar
3. Man Bani
4. Megh Malhar
5. Bhor Nagar
6. Parem Ras
7. Kook
8. Man Deepak
9. Naina Darpan
10. Roop Kiran
11. Jeoti
12. Doha Kulliat
13. Tarang/Jaltarang(Salasian)
14. Baarish Mein Dhoop (Tirveni)
15. Mahia Re Mahia

I was lucky as I always got a signed complimentary copy of his every book soon after publication. He was a very dear friend, well-wisher who always gave me sound advice whenever I asked him for his opinion. He always encouraged me and when I established my new office at Panorama Center in Sadder Karachi, he along with late Dr.Aleem Saeed Qureshi and Dr. Khursheed H.Alvi came to congratulate me and we had lunch together. He was extremely happy that at last I have managed to buy space for office and equip, furnish it. He was kind to

accept my invitation to be the Chief Guest at the Conference Dinner on April 1st during third National Conference of Pakistan Association of Medical Editors (PAME) which I helped organize at University of Health Sciences Lahore on April 1-2, 2016. Prof. Ijaz Ahsan former President of CPSP and Principal of KEMC was the Guest of Honour at this occasion. The dinner was also attended by a large number of postgraduates and students of Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon who are now occupying coveted positions as Heads of Department of Dermatology at various medical institutions in Pakistan.

Befitting Farewell

Pakistan Association of Dermatologists also honoured him by inviting him as the Chief Guest at 10th SAARAC Regional Conference on Dermatology held at Lahore from November 17-19th 2017. It was organized by Prof. Ijaz Hussain and his team from Pakistan Association of Dermatologists. The SAARC Conference was, held in Pakistan for the second time. He was also presented a Life Time Achievement Award by the organizers on this occasion for the third time in recognition of his contribution to promote the discipline of dermatology in Pakistan. This also provided an opportunity to a large number of his students to meet him, little did they realize that it might be their last meeting with their mentor. This also happened to be his last professional engagement and his address on this occasion as parting advice to his colleagues in dermatology was to “Create proper balance between Clinical Dermatology and Aesthetic Dermatology.” One hopes they will remember it and also practice it.

I was in Lahore when I heard the news that he had suffered from Myocardial Infarction again and was hospitalized. I rang him up but there was no response. I rang up his wife who informed me that today he has been discharged, we are at home but he has been advised not to see visitors. Despite my request, she suggested to me that I should not come to see him and he may be able to receive visitors in a few days. I promised to see him and pay my respect in my next visit to Lahore but

little did I realize that it will never happen. He breathed last on January 6, 2018 and left this world forever.

After his death, condolence meetings were held at JPMC Karachi and at King Edward Medical University/Mayo Hospital Lahore where speakers recalled his services and paid him rich tributes. Late Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon belonged to a distinct tribe of healthcare professionals who are honest; uphold merit and professional ethics which is now a very rare commodity in Pakistan. May God Almighty rest the departed soul in eternal Peace. Ameen.

Dr. S. Anwaar Ahmed Bugvi, Chief Executive/ Medical Superintendent Mansoura Hospital, Lahore in an obituary note which was published in Pulse International soon after his death has also paid him rich tributes. He writes that the sudden demise of Prof. T.S Haroon (b.1950) is a big loss to the medical profession, teaching faculty and to the Urdu literature. Apart from his professional status he was indeed a classical poet in *Duhaa* (دوہا) writing a fine and touching branch of Urdu Poetry. There are hardly few doctor in the country who can fluently read & write in Urdu what to say of reading and understanding Urdu Poetry. He was a prolific & versatile *Duhaa* writer not only in Pakistan but also in Indo Pak subcontinent. Prof. Tahir Saeed Haroon has about 15 collections of *Duhaa* verses to the credit, printed beautifully. *Duhaa* is a unique art of Urdu Poetry expressing inner feelings and keen observation in two lines like famous Punjab *Mahyaa*. (ماہیا). By nature he was very simple and soft spoken person. He was a good listener and was always speaking in adorable tone. He was very considerate and sympathetic towards patients and students. He was one of the last clinicians who extended regard and assistance to doctors as patients. As a clinicians, teacher, researcher supervisor and a consultant he was certainly unique & exemplary. He wrote standard books and articles on dermatology and guided his pupil in FCPS, MD. He has the credit of expanding Dermatology Dept. at Mayo Hospital Lahore to the benefit of common patient.

He had Cardiac Surgery sometimes back for his bad heart. But the problem was not solved so he left so soon and so abruptly. He has been very helpful to me in upgrading provincial vocabulary of drugs and equipment concerning his discipline for MSD/ Institutions of Health Department. Few weeks before he left to last abode, I had a word with him about his poetry collection نیناں درپن (Eyes-a mirror of reflection) when I had difficulty in searching meanings of certain Hindi words frequently used in his poetry. He kindly wrote down for me the meanings & sent me back the paper. No doubt Dr. Tahir Saeed Haroon was a man with rare qualities and high moral status.

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With each passing day, we may be having more qualified clinicians in our ranks but are certainly losing great persons without their replacement. May his soul rest in peace with blessings of Allah - the greatest.

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Basic principles of Islamic Bioethics

- No Harm No Harassment
- Protection against distress
- Necessity to avert probable harm
- Create balance between Individual and Community