

Chapter-28

Personal Memoirs Writing and its importance

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Members of the medical profession during their professional career come across so many incidents and situations and how they handle such a situation offers a lot for others to learn from the mistakes made by others. We all make mistakes but one should always learn a lesson from them and do not repeat those mistakes. That is why if all such incidents, situations are recorded, it not only becomes a part of history but a great learning experience for the readers. That is why I have always tried to impress upon my friends in the medical profession to spare some time and write their personal memoirs.

These memoirs are not an autobiography in the real sense but it certainly reflects on the personal life of the authors as well as on their professional life. I recently had the pleasure of reading and review a few of such personal memoirs by some distinguished medical personalities and also learnt a lot from them.

“Hadees-e- Arzoo Mandi” by Lt. Gen. Mahmood ul Hassan made an interesting reading. It showed that with honesty, sincerity and hard work even the son of an undistinguished office assistant can rise to the coveted position of Lt. General and Surgeon General in the Pakistan Army. It also gives some insight in the professional intrigues, conspiracies and the culture of recommendations.¹

“Journey Through Medicine” Personal memoir by another eminent physician from the Pakistan Army Lt. Gen. Afzal Najib who served as Dean and Chairman of Shaikh Zayed Hospital

Lahore, Executive Director of National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) at Karachi is also highly informative and interesting too. It describes that one has to be alert throughout the service and fight for one's rights even in the medical services in the Pakistan Army. The culture of recommendations so prevalent in the Civil Services also prevails in the Armed Forces Medical Services and one can get one's right only if one knows the people who matter in the power corridors. This book also provides an insight about the unethical practices and shows the way how to surmount the difficulties which one faces during professional career. Professional jealousies and rivalries are also highlighted along with certain immoral actions of a few.²

“Mukhtar Nama” a personal memoir by an eminent ophthalmic surgeon of Pakistan Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad who got early education through a scholarship offered by a kind hearted person enabled the boy belonging to a village in Faisalabad Division to rise to the status of the pioneer retina surgeon of Pakistan. He is credited for many innovations and firsts in the treatment of eye diseases in the country. Despite having achieved so much fame and distinction within his professional colleagues he was yet so innocent that when “Cabinet Secretary” came to consult him and sent him his visiting card, he asked him to see his secretary as a secretary should first see the secretary instead of coming direct to the ophthalmologist. Since he had never served in the Government except for a short stint of a few weeks, he never knew how important the post of “*Cabinet Secretary*” was. This book is a real eye opener which makes a very interesting reading.³

“Vision” by Dr. Sher Shah Syed is a fascinating story of a family who migrated from Behar in India to Karachi and the couple Atia and Zafar did wonders. Mr. Zafar first started a school in Leyari area, persuaded his wife to get admission into Midwife course and later into a Medical College, after getting married. Then the couple became proud fathers of over half a dozen doctors who excelled in different disciplines of medicine and have made a mark of their own. How it all

happened has been beautifully narrated by Dr. Sher Shah Syed, a noted Obstetrician and Gynecologist. The family has recently donated their personal Farm near Malir in Karachi to establish “Malir University of Science and Technology” which is headed by Prof. Tipu Sultan an eminent anesthesiologist and a leader of Pakistan Medical Association. All the brothers and sisters of Prof. Tipu Sultan have taken up different specialties as their professional career.⁴

I myself wrote my autobiography “*Plight of a Medical Editor*” recently. The prime objective of writing this was first to thank all those members of the medical profession who helped me a lot during my professional career to achieve my present distinctive status. The second objective was that it is not necessary that one should be born with a silver spoon in the mouth or hail from the affluent class to succeed in life. With hard work, honesty, sincerity, devotion and dedication one can also make a mark since God Almighty always rewards for these qualities. The only thing is that one should never lose hope, work honestly and then leave everything to the God Almighty. Little failures and disappointments in life should not discourage one as there may be much better things in store for you which you are not aware of. As is said, there is always a room at the Top.⁵

“*In Pursuit of Knowledge*” is an autobiography written by Dr. Sher Mohammad Khan a noted Nuclear Physician from Khyber Pukhtunkhawa (KP). Dr. Sher Muhammad Khan Swati Painsdakhel who as is evident from his long name hails from the Swat Valley. This book apart from being his personal autobiography also highlights the life in the State of Swat when it was ruled by the Waali of Swat before it was merged with Pakistan. Not only that, it also throws light on the characteristics of Pashtun Culture which is not fully known to a large segment of population in Pakistan. Despite an over dose of matters related to Sex, it is an extremely useful, informative book which helps one understand lot of things related with the Pashtuns and it also confirms many things for which the Pashtuns are known.⁶

More recently the latest autobiography which I have enjoyed reading is “*Keyani Kahani*” by Maj. Gen. (R) Masood Rehman Keyani an eminent cardiac surgeon who retired as Commandant of Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology re- confirming many facts.⁷ It lays emphasis on the fact that lack of resources is never a major hindrance and one can progress in life and create a place for oneself with honesty, hard work and sincerity. It offers a lesson for many who do not belong to affluent families not to lose heart and carry on the struggle. Education plays a vital role in one’s progress and development. He recalls how dedicated and devoted the teachers were at King Edward Medical College while he was enrolled there and pays tributes to late Prof. Sardar Ali Sheikh, Lt. Gen. Shaukat Hassan Malik, Lt. Gen. Mahmoud Ul Hassan, Gen. Ali Masood Akram and Maj. Gen. Zulfiqar Ali Khan the founder and first commandant of AFIC for their help and guidance in his professional career.

Most painful are the chapters which relate to the partition in 1947, crisis in East Pakistan, the civil war of 1971, the separation of East Pakistan and emergence of Bangladesh, details of difficult conditions under which Pakistan Army had to fight this war, the surrender that led and later life in Prisoners of War Camps in India as he himself was one of the POWs.

This autobiography also discusses the working within the AMC; how personal likes and dislikes play an important role in promotions; the differences between the GDMOs and Specialists cadre; documents the last phone call between late Maj. Gen. Zulfiqar Ali Khan and the then Chief of Army Staff Gen. Asif Janjua who refused Gen. Zaufiqar’s request for extension in service, Lt. Gen. Malik Shaukat Hassan’s retirement before time as he had requested Gen. Ziaul Haque not to execute late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto; how Zain Zia, General Ziaul Haque’s daughter who was operated upon in London and she was accompanied by Col. later Maj. Gen. Zulfiqar Ali Khan and Masood Rehman Keyani brought them close to General Ziaul Haque which helped them to establish AFIC; the details of death

of Gen. Asif Janjua the then Army Chief; attempts to implicate Mian Nawaz Sharif in his murder alleging that Gen. Asif Janua's death occurred due to poisoning for which Mian Nawaz Sharif was blamed but later detailed investigations confirmed that the cause of death was acute myocardial infarction; corruption among Generals though he has not named anyone but has hinted at a General who after retirement used to live in London and Switzerland and returned to Pakistan after plea bargain with National Accountability Bureau. He also became the chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board. The history of cardiac surgery in Pakistan, working of various Surgeon Generals of Pakistan Army, development and functioning of AFIC are discussed in detail. Maj. Gen. Masood Ur Rehman Keyani has also shared the advice by late Prof. S.M.K.Wasti not to marry with class fellows and make sure that your life partner is at least five years younger than you. In addition he has also written about his various trips to beautiful scenic valleys in Northern Areas, how to bring up children, how to live peacefully in a joint family system, respecting one's seniors and his personal views about military dictators besides numerous political personalities of Pakistan also form part of this book. There is a lot to learn from this autobiography.

The objective of sharing the above stories is to encourage all the readers to write their personal memoirs, autobiographies. It should not only narrate the actual happenings, pin point professional hazards, tell the story in an interesting style and make sure that it should also have some message for the readers.

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