

PROF. MAHMUD ALI SHAH

Pages with reference to book, From 107 To 108

Professor Mahmud All Shah was appointed Professor and Head of the Department of Ophthalmology, Dow Medical College in 1948 and served with distinction as an outstanding ophthalmologist, clinical teacher and researcher for a period of 22 years till his retirement in 1970. Earlier he had been Assistant Professor and Professor of Anatomy, et seq., in the same institution with an honoraiy assignment in its Eye Department. The anatomy museum of the college is an eloquent testimony of his capacity to do hard work of the highest quality with dogged persistence. His devotion to duty was superb and his capacity to surmount obstacles phenomenal. The museum was completed in a historic one year's record time as the department was to be readied for recognition by the Bombay University in that short spell. It would, in all fairness be appropriate to record that it was the joint labour of Professor Shah and his loving wife Mubarika who was also serving with him in that department as a demonstrator. Both worked from morning till mid-night at great peril from attacks of obscurantists who insisted on burying all unclaimed dead bodies and would not permit their dissection for teaching purposes. He was an outstanding researcher. His contributions to Anatomy adorn the pages of the Journal of Anatomy: (The Squatting Index, 1942, Quadricipital biceps brachii, 1946; the Journal nature: (Popliteal facet in squatters, 1945) and jointly with his wife, of the Anatomical Record and the well known Text Book, Grant's Method of Anatomy, (arterial supply of the vermiform appendix, 1946). His contributions to ophthalmology were also substantial. Among the areas he covered were trachoma (Brit. J. Ophthal., 1951 and Holme's Geographic Ophthalmology, 1958. Springfield, USA in which he was an author) and epidermolysis bullosa, a rare disease, in the publication of pictures of which he had to face great threats and even legal proceedings which culminated in his being forced to burn his high quality clinical photographs along with their negatives before the complainant's lawyers. The article was finally published in 1955 in the Brit. J.

Ophthal. (with Mubarika Shah as co-author) without the valuable pictures of women patients owing to obscurantist opposition. His corneo-scleral track suture (Brit. J. Ophthal. 1954) appears to be better known and practised abroad than in Pakistan. He was an impressive and methodical teacher and ophthalmic surgeon who held sway over his field in spite of his characteristic humility. He held many administrative appointments which spanned from Vice-Principal, Dow Medical College, Medical Superintendent, Civil Hospital, Director, Health Services, Karachi to Principal, Dow Medical College from which indeed his name is inseparable. His assignments abroad included Leader, Pakistan Delegation to W.H.O. (EMRO) Trachoma Conference Paris in 1959 and of the W.H.O. (EMRO) Conference on Medical Education, Tehran in 1962 in the same capacity. He was Member of Delegation to all subsequent W.H.O. (EMRO) Conferences on Medical Education from 1963 to 1970. This work culminated in his being elected Vice-President of the World Medical Conference on Medical Education in 1965. He was also a Member of the Organising Committee of the Association of medical schools in the Middle East (W.H.O.). Professor Shah was also interested in matters military. He volunteered for the University Training Corps and was given the rank of major after requisite training. As such he organised his company and annually led what seemed to me to be a remarkably smart part of the Independence day Parade during the years in which it was held in Karachi. He went through his annual military "toughening" with enthusiasm and used to relate to this writer with great relish what it meant. From 1965 to his death he was Honorary Consultant Ophthalmologist to our Navy and had been Hon. Surg. Rear Admiral for some years, a promotion spontaneously given to him by the President of Pakistan immediately after he had heard his citation for the award of Ramzan Ali Syed Gold Medal in 1984 at the 8th Afro-Asian Congress of Ophthalmology held in Lahore. Earlier, Shah had been awarded Tam gha-i-Imtiaz in 1969 by the President of Pakistan. This writer has had the privilege of knowing Dr.

Shah since 1937 when as a student of King Edward Medical College, Lahore. the first impression he had of his tutor in Anatomy was that of great intellectual integrity. He had no shame in admitting what he did not know and never misguided any student as a few demonstrators indeed did. From that time on started a deep and satisfying teacher-pupil relationship which changed to a very happy position of a colleague and friend on joining the staff of Dow Medical College in 1948. As a senior colleague and later boss he was always very encouraging, kind and fair. Inconsideration and pomposity were nowhere near him. Later in maturer years it was clear to the writer that he as a professor was way above us all and undoubtedly the best among us from any angle. His integrity was above reproach. An enthusiastic rotarian, he was Founder Trustee and Honorary Director of the Layton Rehmatullah Trust, a charitable organisation running free ophthalmological services for the poor and postgraduate programmes in ophthalmology for doctors till his death. He was the principal figure who organised the hospitals of the Trust. Professor Shah was a deeply religious man. Demonstrative rituals were not his cup of tea but solid, quiet, ethical conduct exuded his solid religious belief. If there still are among us any who could be called God's own men, surely, he was one of them. He was generous in hospitality and had even learnt to make some delicious sweet meats which he joyously offered as part of his large variety of dishes. His humor was among his many assets. This he preserved till the early part of his term in illness before he lost consciousness. He was happily married to Mubarika who earlier in her career was with him in the Anatomy Department and later became a very capable and popular pediatrician and teacher. Her sudden accidental death about 2 years ago left him extremely depressed and he died at age 81 of a difficult and prolonged illness. They are survived by three married daughters, grand children and a sister who along with a large number of friends, colleagues and patients mourn him. The void left by his death would be hard to fill. The reality is that an era of scholarship, medical education, research and humanism has ended. Mahmud Ali Shah was born in July 1911, graduated M.B.B.S in 1935 from the Punjab University. He proceeded M.S. (Pb) with ophthalmology as special subject in 1943. His thesis was on Pathological Cataracts. Fellowship in ophthalmology followed in Harvard 1951-52. FACS, FICS, FCPS (Founder Fellow). Started his career as house surgeon in the Mayo Hospital, Lahore to Colonel P.B. Bharucha, Professor of Surgery and Principal, K.E. Medical College. Demonstrator in anatomy and Medical Officer, Eye Department 1937-44, whence he shifted to Hyderabad as Assistant Professor, Department of Anatomy and Hon. Surgeon, Eye Department in the medical school there. The latter institution shifted to Karachi and inaugurated as Dow Medical College by the then Governor, Sir Hugh Dow in 1945, which Professor Shah served till 1970, when he retired. Other academic appointments held: Member, Medical Faculty, University of Sindh and Member of its Board of Studies for Medicine 1947-52; Member Academic Council and of the Senate, University of Karachi 1955-62; Dean Faculty of Medicine, University of Karachi 1968-70; Member, Pakistan Medical Council upto 1970 and Member, Pakistan Research Council for 2 years. Professor Shah had at least 59 publications.

Dr. Musbtaq Hasan

