

Historical Perspectives

Remembering for tomorrow: Professor Mansour Ali Haseeb

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ABSTRACT

This is a highlight of the obituary ceremony in tribute to Professor Mansour Ali Haseeb (1910 - 1973), organized by the Medical Students Association of the Faculty of Medicine, the University of Khartoum (U of K). Professor Haseeb has been the first Sudanese Professor and first Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. He was an outstanding humane teacher, mentor and researcher, and was awarded the international Dr. Shousha Foundation Prize and Medal by the WHO. He was also an active citizen in public life and became Mayor of Omdurman City. The obituary ceremony reflected the feelings of the medical community and included speeches by Professor Abdalla El Tayeb, President of U of K; the Dean, Faculty of Medicine; the Late Professor Haseeb's colleagues and students, His family representative, and an elegy poem.

Key Words:

Professor Mansour Ali Haseeb; Obituary; Faculty of Medicine; University of Khartoum; Professor Abdalla El Tayeb; Elegy poem; Sudan.

On September 29, 1973 Professor Mansour Ali Haseeb passed away at his home while the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum (U of K) was on vacation [1]. His sudden death was shocking to the medical profession and particularly to the medical students, many of whom like myself, have

been spending the vacation with their families in different regions of Sudan. We were saddened that destiny deprived us of the chance of having a farewell glance at him and attending his funeral like we did before with the late Professor Tigani El Mahi [2,3]. Professor Haseeb died at the prime of his profession, having received in the same year the prestigious Dr. Shousha Prize from the WHO. His scholarly book "A Monograph on Biomedical Research in The Sudan" (Figure 1) was in print having been forwarded by the renown scientist Harry Hoogstraal [4,5], who was described as the "greatest authority on ticks and tick borne diseases who ever lived" [6].



Figure 1 - The covers of Professor Haseeb's scholarly book "A Monograph on Biomedical Research in The Sudan".

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The Medical Student Association decided to organize an obituary ceremony in tribute to his memory and a photography exhibition to be held at the Faculty of Medicine where he served as the first Sudanese professor and first Sudanese dean[1] (Figure 2). The exhibition was scheduled to be inaugurated by the Professor Daoud Mustafa (Figure 3) [7,8]. This was held at Al Baghdadi Lecture Theatre, named after the

philanthropist Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi, the patron of the Sudanese medical students who donated the major part of his wealth to the medical school [9]. As a first Sudanese Dean Faculty of Medicine, U of K, Professor Haseeb initiated the Graduate's Day in 1966 and laid flowers at the grave of the late Hashim Bey Al Baghdadi [1]. Now came the time of Al Baghdadi to honor him.



Figure 2 - Professor Haseeb (sitting in the middle), the first Sudanese Dean of the Faculty of Medicine (FoM) , University of Khartoum with members of the Medical Students Association Executive Committee. To his right: Professor HV Morgan, the first Professor of Medicine and Dean, FoM (1955 - 1958). In 1963, Professor Daoud Mustafa (sitting second from right) replaced Professor HV Morgan as first Sudanese Head, Department of Medicine [7,8].



Figure 3 - Professor Haseeb (left), the first Sudanese Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum in a picnic with the medical students in Wadi Sayyidna accompanied by Professor Daoud Mustafa (to his right)[7,8].

The programme of the obituary ceremony (Figure 4) (1921 - 2003), then President of U of K, the renowned consisted of speeches and elegies delivered by The Arab language scholar and Winner of the King Faisal Dean, Faculty of Medicine, U of K, and the President of the Medical Students Association. This was followed by an elegy by his disciple and student Professor Hashem Erwa, who pioneered immunology in Sudan and shared with Professor Haseeb one of the pioneering field trials, worldwide, of meningococcal A vaccine [10]. This was followed by a short speech by his lifetime friend and colleague, Dr. Mohammed Hamad Satti [11] who could not complete it due to surmounting emotions. Professor Abdalla El Tayeb



Figure 4- The program (in Arabic) of the Obituary Ceremony organized by the Medical Students Association in tribute to the memory of Prof Haseeb at Al Baghdadi Lecture Theatre, Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum where he served as the first Sudanese professor and first Sudanese Dean[1].

International Prize in Arabic Language and Literature in 2001 [12,13], highlighted the humane and humble character of the late Haseeb despite his glaring academic and scientific success. He related this to the heritage of Haseeb’s clan, renowned of being teachers to their communities who “used to wear clean clothes and sit with people on earth”. This was followed by a speech from Haseeb’s family delivered by his son the late Judge Haseeb Manour A. Haseeb (1949 - 2010) [Figure 5].



Figure 5 - Obituary Ceremony: A speech from Haseeb's family delivered by his son (standing) the late Judge Haseeb Manour A. Haseeb (1949 - 2010).

I had the chance to contribute to the obituary through an elegy poem in which I tried to reflect what Professor Haseeb meant for us as medical students (Figure 6). I also tried to reflect on what I know about him and how we perceived his role as a teacher and mentor. Ironically, I only knew later that Professor Haseeb was a published poet and that he is a descendent of Majadhib clan who were known to be scholars and included the renown Sudanese and Arab poet Mohammed Al- Mahadi Al- Majdhub (1, 15 - 18). The elegy poem (in Arabic), which was later published in Al Hakeem (the Medical Student Association Journal) [19], was kindly translated by Ali Abdalla, PhD, college of Arts, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It goes as follows:

“Why did you pass away, making a room for such a remoteness to separate us!?”

Did you think that your painful absence would cure our hemorrhaging wounds!?”

Ah! You used to be a tender-hearted man. You used to be so kind and merciful to the degree that

our misery and sadness made you deeply grieved. Is it true that because of being such a merciful man fate has chosen you to quit?”

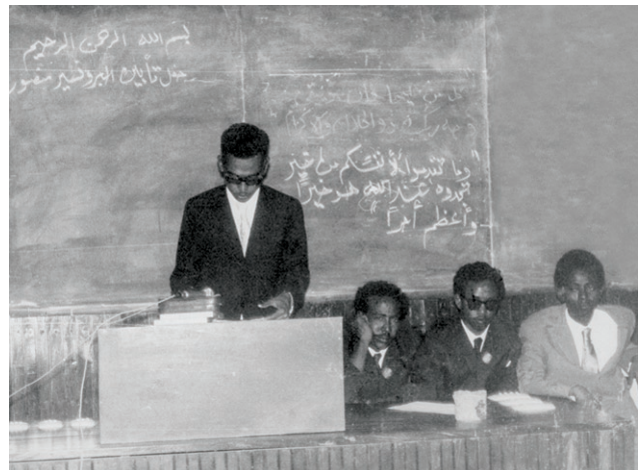


Figure 6 - The Author (standing) had the chance to contribute to the Obituary Ceremony through an elegy poem in which he tried to reflect what Professor Haseeb meant for the medical students and for the community at large. Sitting are members of the Medical Students Association (MSA) Executive Committee. First left: Dr Elfatih Mohamed Saeed, Ex-State Minister of Health. First from right: Prof Bakri Osman Saeed, President of MSA, currently President of Sudan International University [14].

Reflection on the humane personality

Professor Haseeb was perceived by all those who knew him as a living reflection of the two words, depicted on the logo of the Faculty of Medicine, U of K, namely: Honesty and Humility. When being interviewed for the entrance to the faculty of Medicine, he asked me about my hometown. When I mentioned “Kosti”, he asked whether I knew of “Ahmed Kuku”, a philanthropist businessman in Kosti. I later realized that Professor Haseeb worked in Kosti as a medical officer and that he contributed with Ahmed Kuku in Kosti and other leading citizens of Kosti in establishing Kosti Ahlia Intermediate School where I studied. This has been part of his commitment to the Sudanese Graduates’ Club where he served in its Executive Committee who pioneered efforts to establish National Schools in Sudan [1,20]. Having finished the preliminary year and joined the Faculty of Medicine, we were supposed to move from the U of K Students Hostels Campus to the campus at the Faculty of Medicine. However, the places in our new residence, currently known as Haseeb Students Hostels, were not ready by the time we arrived. I chose, with other colleagues, to convey the problem we faced to the Dean, then Professor Haseeb, and I was amazed by the ease with which we met with him without prior appointment, his concerns about our situation, and his directive to solve the problem urgently.

Professor Abdelmageed Mohammed Kambal, a graduate of the faculty of Medicine, U of K, currently Professor of Microbiology, at the college of Medicine, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia [21], told a story which illustrates the warm and fatherly feeling which Professor Haseeb had for his students. In those

days, the new intake for the Faculty of Medicine consisted of a few select who attained the best results in the Science Preliminary Year, at U of K. They also had to be interviewed first by a panel at the Faculty of Medicine. Professor Kambal, having attained the required standard, was hesitant to join the Faculty of Medicine and thought of withdrawing his application, but later decided to attend the interview. To his surprise, Professor Haseeb asked why he was hesitant to join the Medical School. Kambal answered, “Because I stutter”. Professor Haseeb replied, “Stuttering did not prevent Moses from being Prophet.”

Historically, the Faculty of Medicine, U of K is famous for its stern and rigorous examinations. The presence of Professor Haseeb in an oral exam was comforting to students, since he always maintained a comforting friendly attitude, and had his wise and gentle way of making an over-all assessment of the candidate’s performance. One of my classmates, now a Professor, was asked during the oral of the Microbiology and Parasitology exam to mention the vector of yellow fever. He answered, “*Pediculus humanis var corporis*” guessing that such a difficult Latin name might be the appropriate answer. Professor Haseeb sitting besides the External Examiner, replied, “You mean the mosquito? Very Good!” Professor Abdulrahman Salim, a pioneer in virology in Sudan, was sitting in the panel of examiners. He taught our class an extensive, impressive and memorable course of virology, having had his PhD in virology from the University of London in 1967 [4] and published in Nature [22]. After the exam has finished, he summoned my classmate and said to him, “Hasn’t it been for the presence of Professor Mansour, you would have definitely failed the exam! You want to tell us that yellow fever is a louse-borne disease?!”

Reflection on Professor Haseeb, the teacher and scientist

The elegy went to say:

“Oh, dear! Why did you pass away at a time everyone of us could redeem you, so as to keep Science and Knowledge alive?”

How can I eulogize a man from his hands glory and nobility used to penetrate.

How can I compose an elegy at a time of such a painful loss!?! Poetry is definitely obstinating me at this moment; words have gone away and abandoned me as well.

What a pity, dear Mansour! That we’ll eagerly keep waiting for your generous hand.

Moreover, research fields will never find a scholar as great as you.

How can the fields concerned become as green as they used to be in the absence of the Nile that used to irrigate them?”

Attending the lecture of Professor Haseeb was most enjoyable for us (Figures 7 and 8) [23 - 28].

Microbiology isn’t an easy or palatable subject for the undergraduates! Nevertheless, our class used to grasp the lectures once they were finished because of the ease by which these difficult Latin named organisms was depicted. As shown in Figure 8, the student in the first row ‘absorbed’ in the lecture of Professor Haseeb is Dr. Nageeb Suliman Saeed, currently, Director of the Sudan National Health Laboratories (formerly, Stack Medical Research Laboratories, and Ex-Head, Microbiology Department, Faculty of Medicine, U of K, which has been established by Professor Haseeb [23, 24].

A personal gift from Professor Abdalla Eltayeb During and following the Obituary ceremony, the atmosphere was gloomy and sad. Professor Abdel Rahman El Tom, then Head, Department of Community Medicine [29], approached me and said, perhaps in a comforting way, “You are lucky. I asked Professor Abdalla Eltayeb his opinion regarding your poem and he replied, “This is good poetry.”



Figure 7 - The student in the first row to the left ‘absorbed’ in the lecture of Professor Haseeb is Dr. Nageeb Suliman Saeed, Ex-Head, Microbiology Department, Faculty of Medicine, U of K and currently Director of the Sudan National Health Laboratories [23,24].



Figure 8 - During a lecture by Prof Haseeb to the Fourth Year medical students. Dr Ibrahim Abdelgani is first from left in the first row (currently, Consultant Pediatrician/Neonatologist, Al Iman Hospital, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia). First from left, second row: Dr Magboul M Ali Magboul (Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Anesthesia, University of Iowa, USA, renown for Magboul laryngoscope)[25,26]. Third from left, second row: Prof Ahmed A Mohammedani (Establishing Dean of the Faculty of Medical Laboratory Sciences, University of Gezira, Sudan)[27]. The Author is sitting first from right in the second row. Fourth row, second from left: Prof El Bushra Ahmed Doumi (Ex-Dean, Faculty of Medicine and Health Science, University of Kordofan, Sudan)[28].

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