

A REVIEW ON 'I LIVED LIFE' BY UNAIZA NIAZ

MOWADAT H RANA

Chief Editor JPPS

Adjunct Professor of University of Health Sciences, Dr Unaiza Niaz has been the most prolific author of books and scientific articles in Pakistan. Her scientific, clinical, and psychosocial work has few parallels not only locally but internationally. Her professional contributions towards psychiatry, psycho trauma, and women mental health are well recognized globally. The scale of her work crosses national and regional frontiers, leading us into international scientific, social, and political arenas. Her book titled '*I Lived Life*' aims at sharing of experiences, challenges, and hazards that a woman mental health professional, goes through.

When I first received the book, wrapped in a bluish grey stunningly beautiful wrapping knotted in a silver string, the feeling was no different than when I first met the author on a cold, yet sunny, Friday morning of 21st December, 1984. I was swept off my feet. This year, on a similar morning of February 2020, I received the book. The reaction was no different.

Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society has chosen to publish a book review on her work primarily on account of an important purpose. The Pakistan Psychiatric Society is going to have an ever growing number of members who are women, from here on. The book in review can serve as an inspiration, and a guide for the women mental health professionals of Pakistan. '*I Lived Life*' is equally relevant for the men psychiatrists nationally, as much as internationally. It inspires the reader intellectually, professionally, as much as spiritually.

Befittingly the book starts with a quote from Rumi '*I want to sing like the birds sing, not worrying about who hears or what they think*' and the opening lines with Dostoyevsky '*How could you live and have no story to tell?*'. What binds Rumi and Dostoyevsky, with the author is their common love for human freedom.

The rest of the book is all about how deaths of loved ones, setbacks, emotional turmoil, disasters, pain and anguish, grief and bereavements, losses and forfeitures, shattering of dreams, unfulfilled desires, broken promises, fail to break the born-free spirit of a daughter of a soldier. Keep turning the pages of the book and you will have a text or a picture that will tell the reader a story of fortitude, will flash an image of resilience, or narrate an event that can be told to future generations of psychiatry, as a fable of grit, determination, and endurance, all that, against all the odds.

Dr Unaiza's book is an autobiographical account that uses not words alone, but also memories trapped in images, news, and photographs, to give a chronological description of a journey of a woman mental health professional. One who as a bright young prospect of her class chose the discipline of psychiatry in Pakistan as a career, when it was heavily stigmatized, and the last discipline that even a man would opt for. A psychoanalytic mind would find mature defense mechanisms of sublimation, altruism, and anticipation, at play in this and many other choices she made in her '*Lived Life*'. The book vividly describes her meetings and brushing of shoulders with heavy weights of psychiatry from around the world, including Presidents of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, World

Psychiatric Association, American Psychiatric Association, and giants of the discipline from Africa, Australia, Europe, South America, and the Subcontinent. The most peculiar being her trip to Gaza, Palestine to be with Eyad El Sarraj, President of GCMHP. Amidst this sojourn, she spills the beans for an incisive eye when she captions a photograph as '*Ingrid Bergman of Casablanca. Such a silly romantic*'.

Her tributes to her mentors like, Prof Haroon Ahmed, Late Prof Gerald Russel, and Late General Ishrat Hussain (may his soul rest in eternal peace) are made with such intensity, and spiritual fervor, as if they were her gurus, murshads and masters. Her respect and admiration for her seniors and contemporaries like Prof Rashid Chaudhry, Prof Malik Mubbashar, Prof David Alexander, Prof Paul McHugh, Prof Haider Ali G Kazi, Professor Nirendra Wig, provides a chance to the reader to know the names of the stars in the galaxy where she glittered as brightly, if not more. However her sisterly bond and special admiration of the brilliance and excellence of Prof Malik Mubbashar at a personal as well as at family level stands out. She is generous in her mention of her juniors like Prof Farid Minhas, Prof Saeed Farooq, Prof Iqbal Afridi, and the undersigned.

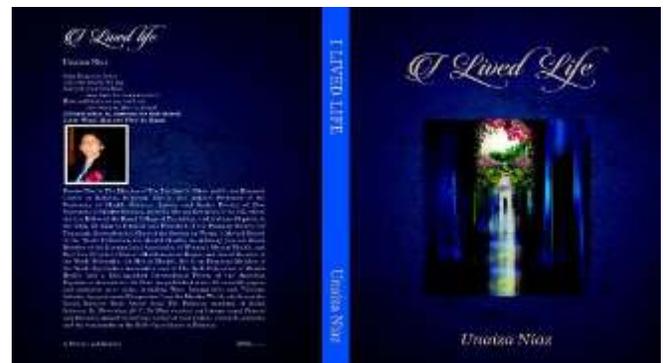
While she distributes and splashes her admiration, describes her awe, and showers superlatives and veneration on those who touched her personal and professional life, some of them have returned the favour. Following are excerpts from what her seniors and juniors expressed in admiration and approval on reading the book '*I Lived Life*':

Prof Haroon Ahmed Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry, Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Center, Karachi.

'I Lived Life' by Prof. Unaiza Niaz is no ordinary biography but the pages carries the reader a visual treat along with the text bubbling with emotion and pride. The carefully collected rare photographs reveal another aspect of her organized self.

"I Lived Life" is readable autobiography of a women's struggle in a hostile environment and winning international recognition.

This was only possible by determination, fighting in adversity and working her way to the top. Hidden in this book are lots of lessons that



young girls aspiring to enter professional life.

**Professor Emeritus Malik Hussain Mubbashar (SI, HI)
Past Vice Chancellor, University of Health Sciences Lahore**

How does one even begin to pen in words the brilliance of the multi-faceted jewel that is Unaiza Niaz!

My association with her on a professional as well as personal level spans over 40 years. and she is to me and my family, a figure who lights up our house with her vibrance like no other.

Hailing from an esteemed family, Unaiza left no stone unturned to continue and create a legacy that is lustrous and lasting. Her service to psychiatry over the years, following an illustrious beginning under the influence of a number of greats including the eminent Gerald Russell, is laudable. She, in taking up psychiatry, proved that in taking the road less travelled, one can truly make all the difference! The breadth and depth of her work on Women's Mental Health and Disaster Management is impressive beyond measure. It is on these counts that I, had no hesitation in appointing her as Adjunct Professor at the University of Health Sciences, Lahore.

Unaiza's biography is a delightful kaleidoscope of the richness of her personal and professional journey and skimming through it was a trip down memory lane—a nostalgic reminder of shared experiences, challenges surmounted together and much from which great inspiration may be drawn.

While there are many professional colleagues that I admire for their academic prowess, there are few with whom bonds of spiritual and personal connectedness can be fostered with such depth.

**Prof Brigadier (R) Mowadat Husain Rana
Past Commandant Armed Forces Medical College, Rawalpindi**

'I Lived Life' is an aesthetic beauty, a printing marvel, a brilliant literary work, that sits in my lap as I turn the last page of the illustrated autobiography of my Big Sis, is more than anything I have ever read on this theory, a testimony of the equation: Personality = Gene X Environment.

Long time ago I had read one solid irrefutable fact about humans. Their personality was a product of genetics and environment. She is a true embodiment of this equation $P = G \times E$.

'I Lived Life'; a compulsory study for all students of social sciences to understand how adversity shapes greatness, a study for geologists on

what separates coal from diamonds; a treatise on how it is the same heat that softens a potato and hardens an egg.

'I Lived Life' is a living testimony of what an enlightened modern well brought-up thoroughbred Pakistani woman is capable of achieving on a national and international stage. How she can brush shoulders with top names not only in psychiatry, but in politics, military and civil bureaucracy, around the world, with equal grace, poise, and elegance. How in a single life span, a woman of substance can grow from a daddy's best loved child to fulfill all his dreams while he watches from the heaven, unscathed survive the devastation of her loving Bobby brother's young death, watch a sister Rose withering away in a wet gangrene, and yet have enough left in her to hold hands of a Gaza girl, a disaster struck Balakot mother, and console a traumatized soul at her Psychotrauma Centre.--All in a day's work!

**Prof Saeed Farooq, Professor of Psychiatry and Public Mental Health
Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, Keele University and,
Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist,
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, UK**

Unaiza, heartiest congratulations to you on your profile in Lancet Psychiatry. An honor for all of us. Masahallah you are khatoon e awal (first lady) of psychiatry

Lovely to see memoirs of Prof Unaiza Niaz, a great academician and clinician, highly respected colleagues and a towering figure in psychiatry in Pakistan and globally. Learnt so much from her. It was great to read about a life that touched so many lives.

**Prof Ejaz Vohra, Professor of Medicine, Director and Dean
Ziauddin Medical University, Karachi**

A beautiful book. Both in content and pictorial representation, lived life reminds me of a saying attributed to Aristotle.

"Unexamined life is not worth living" *You're courage is remarkable, it is real resilience and your illustrious career brings pride to Pakistan. Various books, which you have written reflects your social conscience and the meritorious history of your family is reminiscing with Quratullain Haider's 'Kare Jahan Daraz hai'*