

A Doctor's Journey: An Emotional and Humorous Look at Life Through the Eyes of a Doctor

Noorali Bharwani

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"If there ever was a case for euthanasia this was one." This is not the sort of statement a reader might expect to read in a book written by a kindly medical doctor. Yet in *A Doctor's Journey* Dr. Bharwani reveals himself to be a deeply philosophical soul who seeks a greater understanding of suffering and the human condition. Unfortunately he fails to consistently deliver the wisdom and insights revealed at the book's best moments.

This series of essays offers remembrances of family friends events in his life and the lives of people in the communities he has lived in. Bharwani writes in a literate easy style offering questions on larger issues and explanations of medical procedures as they impact him his family and his patients.

Bharwani's childhood memories and the hardships he endured while in medical school would make for fascinating reading as would his travails in immigrating to Canada at the end of a circuitous journey that led him from Africa to India to England. Readers would also be interested to read more about how he was required to complete surgical certification all over again in Canada in order to practice as a specialist. However Bharwani recites these in a dry manner more suited to a resume or curriculum vitae: "Three years went by and I was elected fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Canada... ." The reader may wonder what went on during those three years.

His narrative soars however when he describes medical procedures. His knowledge and love of his work come through each time he discusses medicine and health. Humorous essays about snoring and golf prove he has a light approach that can engage nervous patients. Bharwani's humanity also shines when he remembers family members lost to disease; when he questions the greater plan of a God that allows such things to happen; and when he asks whether any religion is better than any other and what makes it so. Gentle questions designed to elicit thought rather than argument are his highlight; it is unfortunate that more of the book is not devoted to the perceptions that led to such understanding. Glimpses of his own story can be seen as he talks about his physical ailments shaving his head for cancer patients and whether doctor-prescribed religious activities including prayer can help or hinder patients.

Bharwani wrote a medical column "What's Up Doc?" for the *Medicine Hat News* as well as other pieces. His talent with the written word is clear but his detachment from his early biography and multiple repetitions of some of the material he includes (quotations details about himself and his family history descriptions of people he has already discussed) detract from the book. The story of this doctor's journey promises to be both compelling and deeply moving; however he has not told it here.

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