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Autobiography & Memoir

Hope in Sight: One Doctor's Quest to Restore Eyesight and Dignity to the World's Poor
Aisha Simjee
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Burmese ophthalmologist's memoir aspires to incite hope and ambition in patients and caregivers in third world countries.

Hope in Sight, by Aisha Simjee, an award-winning ophthalmologist, is the insightful memoir of a woman's travels from the third world to the first world and back again through the pathways of the medical profession.

Her story begins in her homeland, Burma, where she surpassed the educational achievements of her family and her tribe. At age seven, she suffered from trachoma and found healing through a folk remedy—a young mother squirted breast milk into her eyes—and her interest in eye health began. She studied medicine during the political upheavals of the 1960s and became intrigued by American life and politics. In 1970, at the age of twenty-six, she left Burma by securing an internship at a hospital in Baltimore.

After years of medical practice in the United States, and years of watching the devastation of her homeland from afar, Simjee began pursuing medical missions in 1991. Since then she's taken more than twenty-five trips to the far reaches of the globe—from Nigeria to Bosnia, from Pakistan to Haiti, and in 2006, she had the opportunity to return to Burma.

Her experience allows her to bestow more than charity on her patients around the world: she gives them understanding, hope, and dignity. Her perspective will change the way readers think about their own charitable efforts, showing them how to give themselves in a way that truly affirms human worth.

Each chapter opens with quotations by famous people throughout the world and history, such as Helen Keller's statement, "Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it." Many sections also contain photos of her work that help readers see the realities she has confronted and the results of her efforts. The images reproduced quite well,

even in black and white. The appendix includes a list of charities worthy of support—a nicely curated, though short, selection.

Simjee's life is a triumph of will and compassion. The humility of her voice, alongside the power of her medical work, will earn the admiration of readers and inspire them to action. Through determination, hard work, and sacrifice, her life has confirmed the closing words of her book: In America, "even seemingly outlandish dreams do come true." As she gives sight to those around the world, she brings the hope that more and more dreams will be fulfilled.

Melissa Wuske