

Culture and Ethics: The Eye of The Beholder

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Plan of Presentation

- Texts and contexts; ideas and realities (lost in translation)
- Our study; To assess “Pakistani” concept of an ethical/good physician (*ba-akhlaq/achha daktar*)
- Our findings; The kind, “parental” physician (Pakistani “webs of significance”)
- Making ethics relevant – understanding the “whole” (moral) elephant

“Having the idea is not living the reality,
of anything”

Jelaluddin Rumi (d. 1273)

The Essential Rumi, 1997

Texts and Contexts

- Contemporary (US) Bioethics
 - * Defining characteristics
 - * Globalization
- “Doing” bioethics in Pakistan **

** F. Moazam, Riffat M. Zaman, “At the Interface of Cultures,” *Journal of Clinical Ethics*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 246-258

Lost in Translation*

(English to Urdu)

- Medical Ethics – *Tibbi Akhlaqiat*
- Paternal – *Pidri*
- Autonomy – *Khudmukhtari*
- Family – *Khandan*

* F. Moazam, *Bioethics and Organ Transplantation in a Muslim Society*, eds. Meslin and Miller (Bloomington: IUP, 2006): 222-226

Background of CBEC Study

- “Lecturing” on biomedical ethics in English, “discussing” it in Urdu*
- Beneficiaries of bioethics must be those we serve – patients and the public
- Bioethics “transplanted” into Pakistan by physicians; no input from local stakeholders

* F. Moazam, A. Jafarey, “Pakistan and Biomedical Ethics,” *Cambridge Quarterly* vol. 14, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 249 -255

“We are the children of our landscape;
it dictates behavior and even thought
in the measure to which we are
responsive to it”

Lawrence Durrell

Justine

Nature of Study

- Exploratory; open ended questions
- Convenience sampling; patients, families
- Study subjects; from one public, one private sector healthcare institution
- Approval; Ethics Review Committee of each institution
- Verbal consent of subjects (no refusals)

SIUT (Public Hospital) – A Waiting Area



LNH (Private Hospital) – A Waiting Area



Participant Characteristics

- **SIUT**, public sector, free services
- Post-TX patients
- N = 51 (males 34)
- Education level:
 - * None – 9
 - * High School – 26
 - * Baccalaureate or above - 16
- **LNH**, private sector, fee for service
- Patient attendants
- N = 20 (males 14)
- Education level:
 - * None – 0
 - * High School – 3
 - * Baccalaureate or above - 17

Study Questions In Urdu

- * "What, in your opinion, are the characteristics of an *achha* (good) *daktar*?"
- * "What, in your opinion, are the characteristics of a *ba-akhlaq* (ethical) *daktar*?"
- * "Any difference between the two?"

Man is an animal suspended
In webs of significance he himself has spun,
I take culture to be these webs"

Clifford Geertz

The Interpretation of Cultures, 1973

"Eye of the Beholder": The *Ba-akhlaq* Doktor

- All participants defined *ba-akhlaq* as character traits (virtues) of physician:
" *Khush mizaj,*" " *piyar, mohabbat say baat,*" " *achha, naram rawayya,*" " *achhee personality,*" " *har mareez say aik jaysa salook,*" " *dehan day,*" " *piyar say samjhata,*" " *satisfy karta hay*"
- " *Achhee baat say adha marz khatam*"

Findings (cont.): *Achha vs. Ba-akhlaq* doctor

- All but 2 (n = 71) conflated the characteristics of an *achha* (good) doctor and a *ba-akhlaq* (ethical) doctor -

"Aik hee hein," "koi faraq nahin," "agar akhlaq nahin to achha doctor nahin," "akhlaq say hee achha doctor banta hey"

Findings (cont.): The "Family" Paradigm*

- Using the family paradigm to describe a *ba-akhlaq* (ethical) doctor (12) -
"Beta kar key baat karein," bachay kee tarah piyar say daikhein," "samjhaein jis tarah bachay ko sabaq (re. disease)," "piyar jis tarah maa baap daitein hein," "doctor maa baap kee tarah hotay hein," "waldein ka piyar dein," "salook jaisay apna brother ho," "ghar jaisa mahol (in clinic)"

* Riffat M. Zaman, "Adaptation of Western Psychotherapeutic Methods to Muslim Societies," *World Psychology* 3 (1997): 65-87

Ethical Doctor – *Ba-akhlaq Daktar*

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master – that’s all.”

Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking Glass

Rumi's Elephant in a Dark Room

“Each of us touches one place,
and understands
the whole in that way”

Jelaluddin Rumi



Researchers Involved

- One psychologist, 2 surgeons
- All bilingual, proficient in English and Urdu
- Portions of education and training (professional and/or in bioethics) in the United States