

Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT

Bioethics Links

H. G. Wells writes that "human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." This issue of our newsletter focuses on various aspects of education in Pakistan. In our opinion, education is a moral debt we owe to our future generations. Editor

Nadia's dream. Will it come true?

*Zubeida Mustafa**

Nadia is a bright youngster who is nine. She has a dream. She wants to train as a doctor when she grows up. Will her dream come true? The odds are heavily stacked against Nadia. For one she is poor and cannot afford to go to a high-fee private school one of the institutions where a child can hope to learn something. Second, our educational system is such that it does not offer a level playing field to all children. This is a pity.

Dr. Atta Ur Rahman, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), has pointed out repeatedly the low enrolment ratio of students in the universities and other institutions of higher education in Pakistan - standing at a mere 2.9 per cent. According to the HEC about 423,000 students were enrolled at that level in Pakistan in 2004. Dr Rahman's strategy has been to counter this shortfall by launching a massive drive to open new universities and enroll more students.

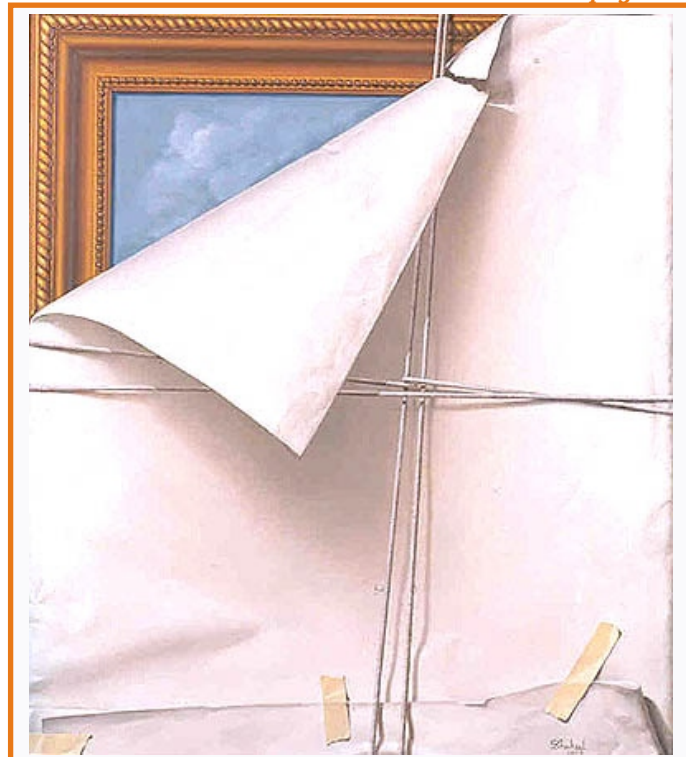
But it remains uncertain whether this approach alone will really benefit the country. The fact is that we do not merely need educated people holding higher degrees. Our need is for well educated people who have learnt to use their critical faculties, and are capable of creative thinking, people who know how to ask the right questions. Undoubtedly good education must impart knowledge and information but it must also help to develop an intellectual capacity to synthesize and assimilate this knowledge, and apply it in useful ways. In the absence of this,

"educated" people remain no more than conformist robots of society.

Another important characteristic of good education is that it imparts communication skills to the students. This includes proficiency and comprehension of languages that are the lingua franca, languages commonly spoken in their societies and also used in official transactions in the country.

In my opinion, without possessing these two basic prerequisites analytical power and

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"Wrapped IV," by Shakeel Siddiqui (Reproduced with permission)

* Assistant Editor, Dawn Newspaper, Pakistan

Distance Learning Component, CBEC's Postgraduate Diploma Program (PGD) in Biomedical Ethics "Cyber Talk"

The year long PGD Program in Biomedical Ethics offered by the Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture (CBEC) is structured to allow minimum disruption of work schedules of healthcare related professionals. During the year, enrolled students spend 4, one week long, "contact periods" in CBEC for intensive teaching sessions including lectures and workshops. For the remaining periods in the year distance learning assignments are employed for continuing education. These include email based Yahoo! Group discussions via internet, moderated by CBEC faculty, providing students continuity of educational experience throughout the year.

Each student is responsible for a suitable "posting" every month drawn from lay press reports or scientific journals which highlights an ethical issue. Postings must include reasons justifying the selection of the article. The class is required to discuss the postings through constructive comments and critique. This "Cyber Talk" among students has proven to be a popular and effective learning tool in the PGD Program.

The PGD Cyber Talk frequently includes student views based on personal experiences as clinicians, local cultural values, as well as referral to relevant literature. In the discussions by the Class of 2007, topics have been as diverse as the ethics of treating an infertile woman involved in an extramarital relationship with a married man, to the moral discomfort of a physician torn between a desire to help a patient end his suffering and remaining faithful to professional and religious beliefs about the sanctity of life. It is not uncommon for discussions to reflect tensions between secular and religious values and beliefs of many students (all of whom are Muslims), and their attempts to negotiate between these two realities of their lives.

CBEC faculty moderate postings and discussions and offer comments and suggestions when necessary. Excerpts from some of the interesting exchanges between students over the last 6 months are reproduced below (with their permission) with some editing.

Editor

On "Body Worlds" exhibition by Von Hagen

Samina Mansoor initiated a discussion on posthumous preservation via plastination, and the presentation of cadaveric human bodies by von Hagen in the form of a museum exhibition. "I think there are ethical issues linked to this exhibition of real human bodies. It violates human dignity. These bodies are denied burial or cremation. In our second module we discussed the use of human bodies for education of medical students, which I feel is necessary to educate our future doctors ... but this show of art work is more commercial than educational."

Bushra Shirazi: "I have had the pleasure to visit the "Body World" exhibition by Gunther von Hagen. I having read the plaques there ... came to know that all the bodies are self donation by people who believe in science to the extent that they are willing to donate themselves for the purpose of education."

Bushra Khizar: "Display of human bodies even after death for purpose of art, exhibition or teaching is against human dignity. I do not agree with an argument that these people are dead and therefore do not have any self- respect."

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تو بر من بلا شدی پروین شاہگر

کچے ذہن اور کچی عمر کی لڑکیاں

اپنی خوبی میں

مانع جیسی ہوتی ہیں

جس برتن میں ڈالی جائیں

اُسی شکل میں کیسے مزے سے ڈھل جاتی ہیں!

کیسا چھلکنا، کیسا اُبلنا اور کہاں کا اُڑنا!

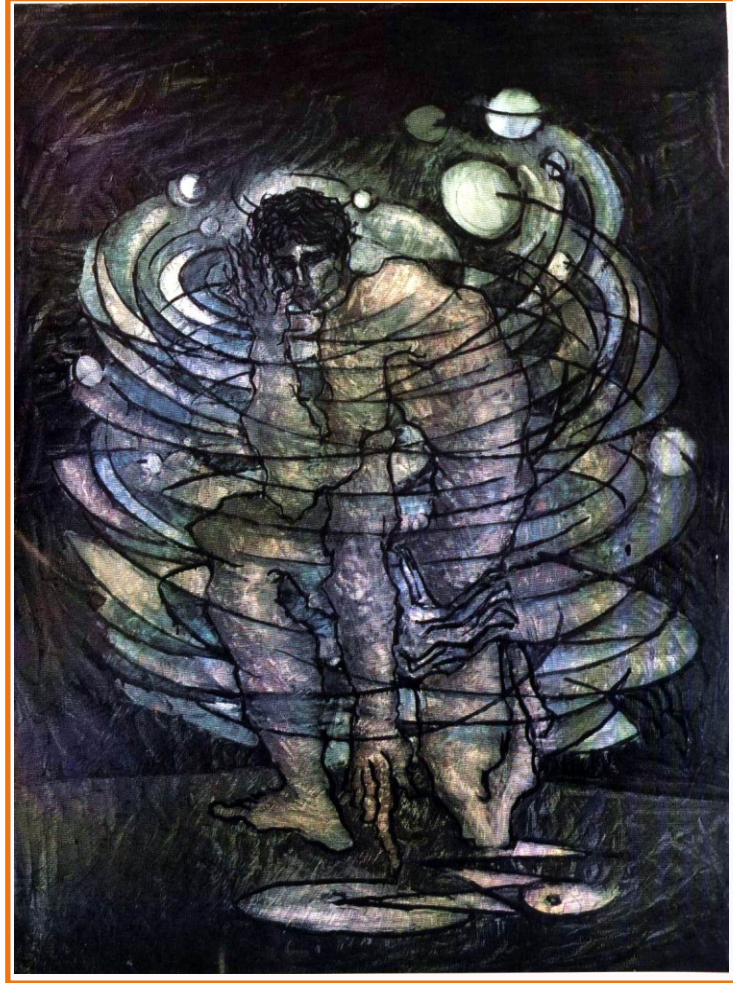
کاسہ خالی میں بے وجہ سما جانے کی بجائے

اُس سے اس قوت سے ٹکرا نا چاہوں کہ

ظرف تہی کی گونج سے اُس کا بھرم گھل جائے!

* **“My trial”**

Parveen Shakir



Sadequain's painting depiction of Ghalib's verse (below)
Reproduced from a collection by United Bank Limited (1970)

مرزا غالب

کنج میں بیٹھا رہوں یوں پر گھلا

کاش کے ہوتا قفس کا در گھلا

* Caged I will sit, my wings spread,
May the doors open so I can soar

Nubile girls, tender ages, impressionable minds,
Essence like water,
Poured in containers
Adopting their forms and shapes with ease,
No brimming over, no turmoil, unable to fly,
But I, a stone and a storm,
Poured into one, will not conform,
Wish to rage and fury against these walls
Until echoes resound, the hollowness laid bare

* Note by the Editor: The translations we offer in English do not capture the beauty and nuances of the original Urdu poetry of Perveen Shakir and Mirza Ghalib.

Dr. Farhat Moazam elected Fellow of The Hastings Centre, USA
(<http://www.thehastingscenter.org>)

The Hastings Centre, Garrison, New York was founded in 1969. Since then, it has served as a leading centre of bioethics research and scholarly activity. It provides an independent forum to outline issues and explore points of agreement between diverse opinions and values. In the fall of 2007, the Board of Trustees of The Hastings Centre elected Dr. Farhat Moazam as a Fellow of the prestigious Centre in recognition of her "distinguished contributions to ethics and the life sciences." She joins an eminent, selected group of bioethicists from across the world who have been awarded this Fellowship. According to the Centre's website, the Fellows "are an elected association of leading national and international researchers whose work has been influential in bioethics."¹

¹ <http://www.thehastingscenter.org/bioethics-public-interest.asp>

Nadia's dream. Will it come true?

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communication skills - no student who enters the portals of an institution of higher learning can expect to benefit from the education he or she receives there. Even the best of universities cannot begin from scratch and teach a student skills that should have ideally been developed during years of education in schools. These skills should be developed when a child begins to learn the three "Rs," namely, reading, writing and "rithmetic." Mastering them is a slow process and can take ten years or more; following this a student is ready to launch into higher education fully equipped with the skills needed to acquire and assimilate what universities and professional colleges have to offer.

Unfortunately Pakistan's failure in the school education systems has adversely affected progress and achievements in the higher education sectors. By failing to provide every child an education (nearly 13 million children in Pakistan within the age group of 5-9 years do not attend school), a birthright, the government has been unable to create a large pool of aspirants for university education from which the best can be selected into institutions of higher learning.

In this background, as a result of the drive to expand enrolment in the universities, even "second raters" can readily gain admission



CBEC team involved in a psychosocial study on kidney vendors in a village on the outskirts of Sargodha in Punjab

Recent International Links

1. University of Virginia, USA, October 17-18, 2007

* Medical Center Hour on Cultural Competence, talk by Farhat Moazam, "Universality of Science, Particularities of Human Experiences"

* HBIO Capstone Seminar conducted by Farhat Moazam, "Living Kidney Donation and Sales: Global Debates, Local Perspectives"

2. University of Missouri, Centre on Religion and the Professions, USA, October 24, 2007

Invited talk and book signing, by Farhat Moazam, "Medicine, Culture, and Religion: Live Kidney Transplantation in Pakistan"

3. National Bioethics Conference on Moral and Ethical Imperatives of Healthcare Technology, Bangalore, India December 6-8, 2007

* Farhat Moazam talk on "Culture and Bioethics: The Eye of the Beholder"

* Aamir Jafarey presents "Bioethics Education in Pakistan: An Overview"

4. Sultan Qaboos University, First International Conference on Quality Management in Health Care, Muscat, Oman, January 17-20, 2008

Farhat Moazam and Aamir Jafarey will conduct a Clinical Ethics workshop "Approaching Conflict Resolution in Clinical Practices"

5. National Taiwan University, Second Asian Task Force Meeting on Organ Trafficking, Taipei, Taiwan, January 25-26, 2008

Farhat Moazam will give a presentation on "Pakistan's Organ and Tissue Transplantation Ordinance 2007: An Update"

A head of the English department at the University of Karachi told me many years ago that if he were to admit strictly, on merit alone, those who qualify for the Masters programme he would not be able to fill even half the seats that are available. This implies that our universities, which are burgeoning with a growing enrolment, have students who do not really qualify on merit. Would not such substandard students bring down the academic standards? Would the university academic faculty, howsoever highly qualified, be able to raise their standards?

It is surprising why this simple truth is beyond the comprehension of our policymakers. While they are focusing on bringing more and more students into the universities, their strategy to raise standards is misguided and will not produce substantive results. They are not doing enough to enhance school enrollment ratios even as the standards of school education are falling rapidly.

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Furthermore, simply sending all the out of school children to school will not solve the problem of the universities. In the present system these children will prove be poor performers who will be ill educated and under-qualified candidates for university education. A start must be made by first taking steps to improve the standards of school education. Simply churning out more PhDs will not help the school system; PhDs do not teach children aged 5-15 years.

Our academic standards at all levels have hit rock bottom and this is now apparent in every walk of life. The major reason for this is the fact that at present policy making for education in Pakistan is totally fragmented. There are multiple bodies at different tiers concerned with education that are working at cross purposes. At the federal level, the Ministry of Education, the Higher Education Commission, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Human Development Commission, and the Ministry of Special Education are dealing with this sector individually without any coordination among themselves. Then there are the provincial education departments in every province. At the city government tier the executive coordination officer (education) has the final say in determining the implementation of policies. These many agencies have competitive rather than cooperative relationships and the battle for

Presentations by Graduates of PGD Class of 2006

7th Annual CMC Symposium, Chandka Medical College,
Larkana
December 14-16, 2006

- 1) *R. Naqvi*, "Stem Cell Cloning: Ethical Issues"
- 2) *T. Razzaki*, "Ethical Issues in Animal Research"
- 3) *F. Ghani*, "Curriculum in Biomedical Ethics for Undergraduate Students at Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences"
- 4) *Y. Wajahat*, "Development of Curriculum for Interns and Postgraduates in OB/GYN"
- 5) *I.U. Memon*, "Terminally ill patients should be let to die or suffer in agony: Ethical Perspectives"

8th Asian Bioethics Conference, Bangkok, Thailand
March 19-23, 2007

R. Muzaffar, "Common Issues in Ethical Review of Research: A Pakistani Perspective"

Turf distorts priorities. Sometimes the heads of various departments are not even on speaking terms with one another. This is not conducive to promoting interaction and coordination without which a holistic, comprehensive and integrated approach is impossible.

This is unfortunate as, for the first time in several decades, the government has shown a willingness to allocate more funds for the education of the youth of this country than ever before.

The education budget has registered a phenomenal rise from Rs 1.2 billion (about 1.5 per cent of the GDP) in 1973-74 to Rs 207 billion (about four per cent of GDP) in 2006-07.

But bad planning and poor implementation have only resulted in corruption and falling standards. High spending does not necessarily result in efficiency. Take the amount spent in the private and the public sectors on education. In the former this works out to an average of Rs 2,963 per head calculated cumulatively at all levels from primary schools to the technical universities. The corresponding expenditure by the exchequer on educating students in government institutions is Rs 6,252

Against this backdrop we discern a sudden shift in emphasis towards higher education with massive funds being pumped into the

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Publication and Presentations by Students of PGD Class of 2007

Publications

- 1) *M. Siddiqui*, "Ethics of Organ Transplantation," *Pakistan Journal of Medical Ethics* Vol 8, No. 1, 14, June 2007
- 2) *M. Siddiqui, N Anwar*, "Opinion on suicide: a web based discussion group in a programme on biomedical ethics in Pakistan," *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* Vol. IV No. 4, 181-183, October-December 2007

Presentations

- 1) *A. Hussain*, "Ethical Issues in Cloning," Conference on Bioethics in Life Sciences, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat, Pakistan, November 28-29, 2007
- 2) *B. Khizar*, "Perception of Physicians and Medical Students on common Ethical Dilemmas in a Pakistani Medical Institute." (New Zealand Bioethics Conference), February 3-5, 2008

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establishment of new universities and fellowships for the mass production of PhDs.

In a scathing comment on the higher education sector in its State of Human Rights, 2006, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan points out that not one of Pakistan's universities ranks among the top 500 in the world. As for the faculty members, of the 10,000 teachers employed at the university level all over the country only 3,000 are PhDs. The HRCP notes, "In January 2006, it was reported that 3,500 posts for college teachers were lying vacant in 475 colleges in the Punjab. Of these, 100 colleges were functioning without a principal."

The HRCP goes on to say, "According to results announced in March 2006, almost all the students taking the MA English and Economic examination of the Punjab University failed. While there were calls for fresh testing, analysts said the situation pointed to the poor teaching standards at many institutions. Only around 50 per cent of pupils across the country cleared matriculation and intermediate examinations."

It is plain that we have failed because the political will has been missing and because of this the education policies which were drawn up ten so far in 60 years have not been able to produce desired results. Another major factor that accounts for Pakistan's failure in the education sector is the fact that the entire system is skewed in favor of the elite. In a country where over 65 per cent of the population subsists on an income of less than \$2 a day per head, it is easy for the government to neglect the vast majority.

The miniscule elite, privileged class can do without the government's support; it has the money to fend for itself. While public sector universities have been allowed to stagnate, a handful of private universities charging exorbitant fees have been given carte blanche to operate for the very few who can afford them. Pakistan's education system is largely tailored to the needs of the urban elites producing a highly skewed, well qualified but selfish intelligentsia which forms a thin crust of society the bulk of

which remains illiterate or ill-educated. This in turn serves the interest of the elites who by virtue of their better education and knowledge can monopolize power, prestige and privilege. Although never publicly admitted, their interest is in keeping education restricted to a small minority.

This situation which would be perceived as being anti-social and antediluvian in any civilized society has been promoted diligently but discreetly. Previously feudal lords openly resisted the establishment of schools in their fiefdoms since they feared that the spread of knowledge and education would create awareness among the peasants and empower them politically and economically. Today they pay lip service to the cause of education while tacitly ensuring that the common man does not benefit from the education that is made available to him by keeping standards abysmally low.

Given the stratified society in Pakistan and the deep economic disparity among the classes, only concerted state intervention in education can provide equal access to services like good education and adequate health care to all people. Since this is missing, it is not surprising that the education sector has been neatly split between the high cost high, good quality, commercialized private educational institutions and the no-fee/low fee government/private schools and colleges with low educational standards. This leaves parents of modest means with Hobson's choice.

The private sector's rapid expansion and growing cupidity in Pakistan will further exacerbate this problem. The solution does not lie in inhibiting the private sector although it could do with some judicious regulation. It would be more helpful if the government upgrades its own public institutions to bring them to a level where they can compete with the private institutions. This alone can ensure that Nadia's dream of becoming a doctor when she grows up will come true.



Participants of a workshop on Clinical Ethics organised by PGD 2007 Students at Workshop on Research Ethics organised by Graduate of PGD 2006 at Shaikh Zayed Shifa International Hospital (March 2007)



“Cyber Talk”

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Ali Lanewala: “The argument that human bodies have their dignity (violated) would hold true only if it is being done without their consent. As I recall from our discussion on (use of) patients for medical education, we find it acceptable as long as the patient gave consent for it. We all accept modeling and dancing as art forms in the living, why are we objecting to the same in the dead?”

Ashraf Hussain: “Despite all the arguments of informed consent and education one still feels that this type of exhibition of cadavers is against human dignity ... From religious point of view, this type of activity is not permissible. Respect of human body is desired in Islam and such an exhibition cannot be endorsed.”

On “Language shapes Cultural Views”

Naseer Chaudhry posted an interesting article discussing the impact of language and its relationship to culture. He gave the example of a Punjabi word *beebea* (a colloquial, positive term) to describe an individual noting that this is almost impossible to translate into English as it has nuances that only a person born and raised in Punjab would understand instinctively. “I feel that every language has its depth and impact on the social and cultural values which set the basis

of societal norms and ethics values ... the term *beebea* in 'Punjabi' language has a lot of depth, meaning (of) values and integrity, and it ... (is) used to describe the personal characteristics of a person, his habits and qualities. A single word can express the different traits of an item in a particular language and it can shape the cultural views and values for that particular group of people speaking that language.”

Moderator: “You can also find many examples of how we (can) change the entire connotation of things simply by using a different set of words, ... sometimes there may be a hidden agenda (in doing so). As example, 'human materials' quite adequately describe human tissues and organs yet using this term clearly commodifies the human body, which (may be considered) inherently wrong.”

Moin Siddiqui: “One of the ways of looking at language is that thoughts come in our mind first and then we use those thoughts to develop it into our languages (In contrast) two linguists by the name of Sapir and Whorf hypothesize that language determines thought. They claim that language that we speak determines what we think (*Literary Theory* edited by John Culler, OUP) ... sacred words like human organs and tissues have undergone a profane deterioration into human materials ...

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“Cyber Talk”

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On the same lines I could think of *Gurda Piri* akin to *Bakra Piri* (alluding to kidney trade in Pakistan) that Dr. Moazam had mentioned ... We attend and use the term 'workshop' so often (in our education). Have we ever thought that it has a mechanical connotation. I would think that a workshop is not just a mechanical exercise and is an inappropriate word.”

On “Conceiving a Child after Death of the Father”

Bushra Khizar posted as article debating the ethical issues in the posthumous use of a husband's sperm by his wife to conceive a child. “Using stored sperms to create a child after the death of an American soldier in war zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan is being practiced increasingly by widows and girl friends ... I know this is out of question in Islam as our religion does not allow conception of such child after death of the father.”

Azra Amerjee: “We realize why Islam has forbidden the conception of a child after the death of a man even for his widow ... that their relationship ceases to exist after the death of either partner. (But) new reproductive technologies have opened up (new) vistas of ethical implications including where without any advanced directive, sperms of men who died suddenly (can be) stored by their loved ones and are inseminated into a woman without the deceased's consent, to bring about a new life into the world.”

Natasha Anwar turned to the issue of the nature of the husband and wife relationship in Islam. “I am not sure I realize why Islam has forbidden the conception of a child after the death of the husband other than scholars telling us that 'death ends life and severs the relationship of marriage.’”

CBEC's Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics Class of 2008

The Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT received 70 applications from the four provinces of Pakistan. Final selection for the PGD Class of 2008 will take place following interviews conducted in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad of short listed candidates. The academic year begins in January 2008.

Provincial Distribution of Applicants

Karachi/Sindh	49	Punjab	13
NWFP	7	Balochistan	1

Ibn Nujaim says, 'Death nullifies the rulings relevant to this word, because it is a state of total helplessness.'

(http://www.islamset.com/ioms/Code2004/Islamic_vision2.htm#3) ... Do emotion and experiences associated with an individual disappear when they die? A woman who loses her husband has the opportunity to find a new partner and have a family, Islamic law would not frown upon such a decision. (The fact that) it would be unlawful for a woman who does not want another husband but wants to carry on her life with a part of him in the form of a child, I find this a little hard to accept with all due respect to Islam.”

Bushra Shirazi: “The only reason that really comes to my mind is that our faith believes in a family system and single parenting is therefore not encouraged. That is why second marriage is recommended when one loses a spouse ... In previous times the (woman was) considered weak and unable to support and look after herself and her children, hence the recommendation. But today the woman's role has changed in many ways, and I think that Islamic scholars need to sit and analyze the different views and come to a consensus. Islam is a religion for all times and we need to understand it.”

CBEC Faculty and Staff

<i>Dr. Farhat Moazam</i> Professor and Chairperson	<i>Mr. Syed Nabeel Anwer</i> I.T. Engineer/Webmaster
<i>Dr. Anwar Naqvi</i> Professor and Coordinator	<i>Mr. Nanji Premji Solanki</i> Secretary to Chairperson
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