

# Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture

## Bioethics Links

The December 2012 issue of *Bioethics Links* coincides with the end of CBEC's academic year. Our lead article by Ziba Mir-Husseini, who is running a workshop on Gender Ethic this month, argues for "Islamic Feminism" and a constructive dialogue with Islamic legal traditions to improve the status of women. This newsletter also reports on faculty and alumni activities during the International Association of Bioethics Congress and the Asian Association of Bioethics Conference.

The Editor

### Islam and Feminism: Opening a New Dialogue

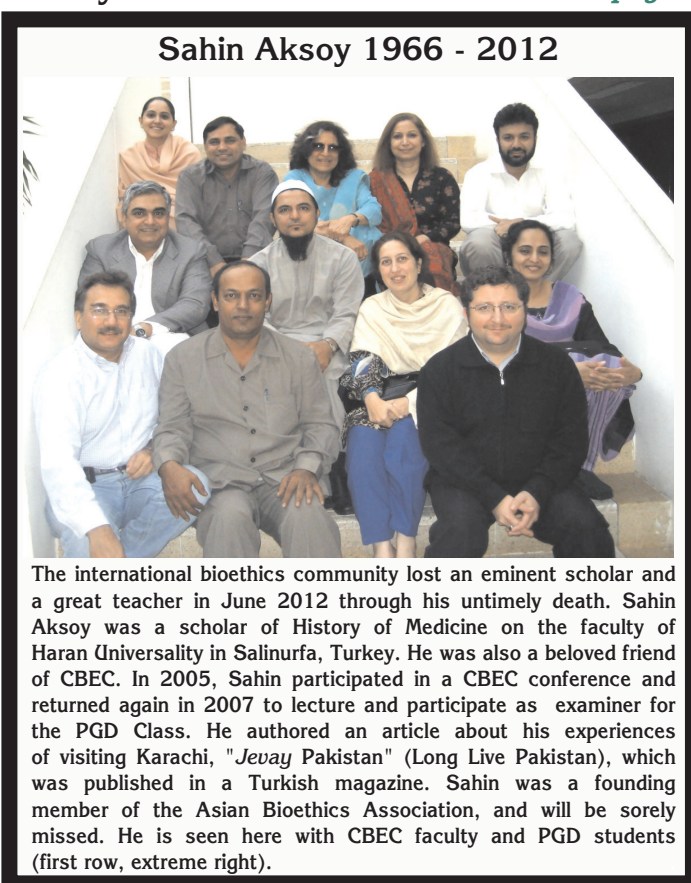
Ziba Mir-Hosseini\*

The term 'Islamic Feminism' gained currency in the 1990's as a label for a brand of feminist scholarship and activism that was associated with Islam and Muslims. There has since been much discussion and debate and a growing literature on 'Islamic Feminism,' to which I have contributed. The difficulty with the term 'Islamic Feminism' is that both of its components, 'Islam' and 'Feminism,' are contested concepts that mean different things to different people in different contexts. Each is the subject of multiple discourses and widely ranging perspectives that can be addressed at different levels. We need to start by asking: Whose Islam? Whose Feminism? - Questions that continue to remain unaddressed in most discussions on Islamic feminism.

I define 'feminism' in the widest sense - a concern with women's issues, an awareness that women suffer discrimination at work, in the home and in society, and actions aimed at improving their lives. There is also an epistemological side to feminism which sheds light on how we know what we know about women, family and religious tradition, and law and practices that institutionalize patriarchy by taking their legitimacy from religion.

I distinguish 'Islamic' from 'Islamist' and 'Islamism.' I define 'Islamism' as political commitment to public action to implement

what Islamists regard as an Islamic agenda, commonly summarized in slogans such as 'Islam is the solution' or 'Return to Shari'a.' 'Islamic,' on the other hand, when attached to an '-ism' such as feminism, means merely finding inspiration and legitimacy in Islamic history and textual sources. *Continued on page 6*



Sahin Aksoy 1966 - 2012

The international bioethics community lost an eminent scholar and a great teacher in June 2012 through his untimely death. Sahin Aksoy was a scholar of History of Medicine on the faculty of Haran University in Salinurfa, Turkey. He was also a beloved friend of CBEC. In 2005, Sahin participated in a CBEC conference and returned again in 2007 to lecture and participate as examiner for the PGD Class. He authored an article about his experiences of visiting Karachi, "Jevay Pakistan" (Long Live Pakistan), which was published in a Turkish magazine. Sahin was a founding member of the Asian Bioethics Association, and will be sorely missed. He is seen here with CBEC faculty and PGD students (first row, extreme right).

\*Professorial Research Associate, Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Law, University of London

## Bioethics in Kuala Lumpur

*Saima Pervaiz Iqbal\**

Kuala Lumpur beckoned bioethics enthusiasts from Asia and beyond to the 13th Asian Bioethics Conference held from 27th August to 30th August 2012. Organized by the Asian Bioethics Association, the annual conference was held in the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR), Malaysia. The venue was beautiful, and comfortable with modern facilities, but a bit obscure in its location perplexing even the most experienced taxi drivers!

The balmy weather was ideal for listening to the presentations on a range of bioethical issues or, alternatively, playing truant to visit the attractions Kuala Lumpur has to offer. The theme of the conference was “Bioethics and Life: Security, Science and Society.” There was considerable emphasis on environmental ethics which was novel for many participants. This included discussions on water ethics, climate change, nuclear technology, disaster management, food security and aquatic meat production, to name a few topics. Presentations on the ethics of fortune telling, and fish pain and suffering, attracted the interest of many and offered insights into these novel concepts - but many remained sceptical, or believed that human suffering in the present day should be given greater priority.

The largest number of presentations were from Malaysians, as expected. Pakistan had the second largest delegation consisting of nine participants representing different cities and institutions from across

The country. Aamir Jafarey (CBEC) presented a paper entitled “Bioethics in Pakistan: Future Direction,” Bushra Shirazi (CBEC and Ziauddin University) spoke on “Language and Decision Making: Breast Cancer Patients in Pakistan,” and Saima Iqbal (Shifa College of Medicine Islamabad) presented a talk on “Perceptions on Being Involved in Medical Education.” These three papers were based on research conducted for their CBEC Masters in Bioethics (MBE) theses. Jafarey and Shirazi also chaired sessions in the conference. Sumaira Khowaja (SIUT) presented two papers entitled “Research Integrity and Responsibility” and “Religious Fatwa by Experts to Guide Medical Practice.”

Mumtaz Muhammad (Postgraduate Medical Institute, Peshawar), a member of the Ethical Review Committee in his institution who has

*Continued on page 3*



The Pakistani delegation at the ABA Conference in Kuala Lumpur in August 2012 was the second largest in the meeting after that of the host country. The picture shows “Team Pakistan” with friends.

Sitting, left to right: Marisa de Andrade (UK), Bushra Shirazi, Siti Noorani (Malaysia), Saima Pervaiz Iqbal, Anoja Fernando (Sri Lanka), and Nisreen Feroz Ali.

Standing, left to right: Farhat Moazam, Tashfeen Ahmad, Mumtaz Muhammad, Sumaira Khowaja and Aamir Jafarey.

**Congratulations to Aamir Jafarey, President-elect ABA, 2012 - 2014, and to Bushra Shirazi elected Vice President ABA for Pakistan, 2012 - 2014.**

\*Associate Professor, Shifa College of Medicine, MBE Class of 2011



Dr. James Dwyer from the Centre of Bioethics and Humanities, Syracuse University, New York was in CBEC from September 10-19, 2012 and conducted sessions with PGD and MBE students in the Clinical Ethics Module. In the picture on the left he is seen sporting an *ajrak*, a traditional gift from the province of Sindh. On the right, Dr. Dwyer and CBEC students are engrossed in a session.

*“Bioethics in Kaula Lumpur” from page 2*

attended several CBEC ethics workshops in Peshawar spoke on “Common Causes of Resubmission / Rejection of Research proposals: Experience from a Developing Country.” Masood Kadir (AKU, Karachi) spoke on “How do medical students perceive medico-ethical dilemmas?” based on research conducted by his medical students. The youngest presenter from Pakistan was Nisreen Feroz Ali, a medical student from Ziauddin University, Karachi. She presented findings of a study conducted with her colleagues entitled “Knowledge and Ethical Perceptions, regarding Organ Donation among Medical Students.” This was the first time that a medical student from Pakistan was presenting in an international ethics conference. Farhat Moazam (CBEC) and Tashfeen Ahmad (AKU) also participated in the conference.

ABA was saddened at the loss of Sahin Aksoy, one of its founding members, who died in October 2012. Anoja Fernando, President of ABA, chaired a memorial session in which an eulogy entitled “Sahin Aksoy, a young outstanding Bioethicist from the Land of Abraham,” was delivered by Professor Umar Angarra Jenie from

Indonesia. Askoy’s death is an irreplaceable loss for bioethics in Asia and the world.

### CBEC Forum Meetings (2012)

The Forum, organized every two months, provides an opportunity for participants to interact with scholars, public leaders, and literary figures on a wide range of topics with ethical significance. This May brought Sameer Hamid Dodhy, and Roland deSouza (members of “*Shehri: Citizens for a Better Environment*”) to CBEC to speak about environmental ethics and its relevance to Pakistan. Another Forum session was led by Shajia Sarfaraz to explore the philosophical grounding of ecosystems and environment. In July, Nida Rais, a lawyer with an interest in medical law, spoke on “Medico-legal Landscapes: The Challenges.” Literary critic and scholar of Urdu and Persian poetry Bari Mian, and poet Mahmood Jamal, elaborated on pain and healing as depicted in Urdu and Persian poetry, in the October Forum entitled “Words that heal.”



Shooting in progress for the video "More than meets the eye." On the left, a scene filmed in the SIUT library (at 11.00 pm) depicts a group of healthcare professionals discussing the case of a quadriplegic child. The picture on the right, shot in a hospital seminar room, pictures a surgeon and a psychologist speaking with the patient's brother.

### CBEC Film Productions

After a hiatus of almost two years, CBEC resumed making short videos to facilitate bioethics education. In 2010, we had produced three videos highlighting ethical issues commonly faced by researchers and health care professionals within the realities of developing countries. These focused on ethical aspects of obtaining informed consent in clinical settings, decision making dynamics in health care, and conflict of interest in research conducted by physicians on their patients. CBEC videos have been used not only in Pakistan but also by colleagues in other countries including India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Japan, UK and USA.

In the present round of shooting, two movies have been completed and uploaded to the CBEC website, and work on a third movie is about to commence. The new uploaded videos are "More than meets the eye" which deals with end of life issues, and "Publish or perish" which highlights different aspects of scientific misconduct.

CBEC employs the skills of Sharjil Baloch for its productions. Baloch, a physician, left medicine to go into

professional film making, preferring to follow his creative spirit. He has been invaluable as director, editor, cameraman, and sound man, all rolled into one. All actors in CBEC videos are amateurs—students, colleagues, and hospital staff, and all shoots take place in SIUT.

CBEC videos are accessible at: <http://siut.org/bioethics/CBECProduction.html>.

These videos can either be run online or downloaded for later use.

#### International Clinical Ethics Conference:

Organized by the National University of Singapore, Singapore

"The Ethics of Family Involvement in Healthcare"

February 1-2, 2013

Shaw Alumni Foundation House  
Singapore

For information: [medsak@nus.edu.sg](mailto:medsak@nus.edu.sg)

[Http://www.centres.sg/node/120](http://www.centres.sg/node/120)

## International Association of Bioethics Congress at Rotterdam

*Aamir Jafarey\**

The 20th World Congress of IAB was held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands from June 26-29, 2012, and attracted a large number of international delegates and excellent speakers. The Congress theme was “Thinking Ahead: Bioethics and the Future.” Parallel sessions addressed issues ranging from genomics to biopolitics in addition to ethics of research and clinical practice.

Farhat Moazam chaired plenary and poster sessions and participated in IAB Board meetings, while Aamir Jafarey had a busy time as invited speaker in a plenary panel discussion and presenter in different symposia. His plenary panel discussion involved Principlism in bioethics in which Tom Beauchamp responded to critique of this approach by four panelists, two from UK and one each from the Netherlands and Pakistan. Jafarey, the only clinician among philosophers, highlighted difficulties in implementing a philosophical, principle based approach within religious, family centered societies like Pakistan. In a symposium organized by the Asian Bioethics Review, featuring speakers from Asian countries, Jafarey spoke on “Research in South Asian Communities and Conflict of Interest: The Challenge.”

The Congress introduced an innovative session titled “Next Gen Medicine meets Next Gen Ethics” for young bioethicists termed “Generation Next.” In this session, Jafarey offered arguments against regulated human organ trade and reproductive markets presented as “pragmatic” solutions. His talk, “Available Cheap! Human Body Parts for Sale and Rent,” was based on CBEC research on kidney trade in Pakistan. Jafarey's free paper, “Bioethics in Pakistan: Foreign Seeds in *Desi* (local) Soil,” in the “Bioethics Education” session elaborated on his experience with teaching bioethics in Pakistan.

\*Associate Professor, CBEC, SIUT, MBE Class of 2011

The four days of the IAB Congress provided the Pakistani “delegation of two” an opportunity not only to interact with bioethicists from around the world, but also to project aspects of their country which are largely ignored.



Aamir Jafarey (second from left) in the IAB plenary panel discussion on “The Principlism Approach in Bioethics.” Seated to his left is Tom Beauchamp, coauthor of *The Principles of Biomedical Ethics*.

### KMU Research Ethics Workshop November 29-30, 2012

CBEC faculty conducted a Research Ethics Workshop at Khyber Medical University, Peshawar. This was their 6th workshop conducted for KMU and its affiliate institutions in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Participants of the workshop included students enrolled in the M.Phil and Ph.D programs of the Institute of Basic Medical Sciences, KMU. This CBEC workshop highlighted ethical issues in genetic research. Teachers included PGD alumnus (2007) Natasha Anwar, Associate Professor, Forman Christian College University of Lahore, in addition to Farhat Moazam and Aamir Jafarey.

*“Islam and Feminism” from page 1*

When thinking and talking about Islam we also need to make another distinction, namely between faith (and its values and principles) and organized religion (institutions, laws and practices). There is a pervasive polemic-rhetorical trick of either glorifying a faith without acknowledging the horrors and abuses that are committed in its name, or condemning it by equating it with those abuses. Words such as *din*, as much as 'religion,' are ambiguous and can be hopelessly imprecise for the purposes of analysis. Similarly, the meaning of Shari'a is widely contested. For some Muslims, Shari'a has become synonymous with patriarchal laws and cruel punishments. For the Muslim masses, Shari'a is the essence of justice, while for Islamists Shari'a is a powerful political ideology. In Muslim tradition, Shari'a is a theological and ethical concept more than a legal one, associated with the sacred, denoting the totality of God's will as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). In my work, I have sought to keep the distinction between Shari'a (lit. the path) and *fiqh* (lit. understanding). While the first embodies the revealed law the second is the science of Muslim jurisprudence, human attempts to extract legal rules from the sacred sources of Islam and make laws that are mundane, temporal and local. Anyone who claims that a specific law or rule 'is' Shari'a is claiming divine authority for something that is in fact a human interpretation.

Two events in 1979 marked a turning point in the politics of relations between Islam and feminism. The first was the UN General Assembly's adoption of CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women), which gave a clear international legal mandate to women's rights as human rights. The second event was the Iranian

Revolution, which brought an end to a US-backed monarchy and introduced an Islamic Republic that sought to reintroduce laws that conformed with traditionalist Islamic jurisprudence. Subsequent decades saw the concomitant expansion, globally and locally, of these two equally powerful but opposed frames of reference.

The human rights framework gave women's rights activists, including those in Muslim countries, language and tools to resist and challenge patriarchy, and the idea that violence against women, rooted in traditions and religious practices, is a violation of their human rights. Meanwhile, Islamist forces started to invoke Islam and Shari'a as legitimizing devices to reverse the process of reform and secularization of legal systems. Their rallying cry of 'Return to Shari'a' led to regressive gender policies with devastating consequences for women, including the revival of tribal models of social relations. These developments widened and intensified the conflict between 'Islamists' and 'Feminists,' and reignited old polemics between 'Islam' and the 'West.'

However, the conflict between these bitterly opposed positions found a kind of resolution in the emergence of a new gender discourse that came to be called 'Islamic Feminism.' The Islamists' agenda of 'Return to the Shari'a,' and their defence of patriarchal rulings as 'God's Law,' had some unintended consequences. Not only did they bring classical jurisprudential texts out of the closet but they enabled a growing number of women to question whether there is an inherent link between Islamic ideals and patriarchy. Relying on the ethical and egalitarian spirit of the Qu'ran, these women saw no contradiction between their faith and their aspiration for gender equality. Paradoxically, political Islam gave them the incentive to critique the gender biases of

*Continued on page 7*

*“Islam and Feminism” from page 6*

Muslim family laws in ways that were previously impossible. Since the late 1980s, we have witnessed the emergence of a new brand scholarship from within the Islamic tradition, informed by a feminist analysis that is mindful of gender as category of thought.

Meanwhile, in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA, the politics of the 'war on terror,' the illegal invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, both partially justified as promoting 'democracy' and 'women's rights' the subsequent revelations of abuses in Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and Bagram, and the double standards employed in promoting UN sanctions, have all discredited international human rights ideals and feminism in the eyes of many. The gap between these ideals and the practices of some of their proponents have increasingly invited accusations of hypocrisy. As the first decade of the new century came to a close, both 'Feminism,' now commonly identified with international human rights law and its politics, and 'Islam,' now often reduced to Islamists and their slogan of 'Return to Shari'a,' lost legitimacy and moral authority in many quarters.

It is against the backdrop of these developments that we should place the feminist voices and scholarship in Islam. Realizing the close link between religious and political identity in Muslim contexts, more and more women came to realize that there can be no justice and no sustainable change until patriarchy is separated from the Shari'a. To abolish patriarchal laws and customs among Muslims it is insufficient, and counterproductive, to attack these on human rights grounds alone. To achieve sustainable change injustices arising from patriarchal laws must be revealed as taking their legitimacy from a particular reading of Islam's sacred texts, and offer defensible and

comprehensible alternatives within a framework that recognizes equality and justice within Islam through interpretations of its sacred texts. Scholarship must join activism to bring together fresh perspectives on Islamic teachings, universal human rights principles, and the lived realities of women and men today, and to argue that equality in the Muslim family is now both necessary and possible, and that denial of this equality in the name of Islam and tradition should be firmly rejected.

This century has given birth to a new gender discourse that is Islamic in its sources of legitimacy yet feminist in its demand. A constructive dialogue between feminism and Islamic legal tradition has begun; but a true dialogue is only possible when the two parties treat each other as equals and with respect; otherwise it will remain a dialogue of the deaf. For those committed to justice for women there is no other option but to bring Islamic and feminist perspectives together.



It takes more than a small roof leak to stop work in CBEC! With a strategically placed bucket on his desk, and an umbrella positioned over his head Aamir Shehzad, CBEC's IT staff, calmly continues his work.

## I, Malala Yusufzai

I, Malala Yusufzai,  
The bullet aimed at my head,  
Also set free as it flew,  
The blaze of my mind,  
Smashing dark recesses in minds  
Led by the cruel, foes of education,  
Startling them to ask,  
What was Malala's crime?  
What did she do so wrong?  
And I smile,  
Their questions, my victory

\*Nida

\*Consultant General Surgeon, Patel Hospital, PGD Alumni Class of 2010

## میں ملالہ یوسف زئی

میں ملالہ یوسف زئی  
میرے سر پر لگی گولی  
میرے روشن ذہن کی اڑان لے کر  
تاریک ذہنوں کو روشن کرنے کے سفر پر چلی  
وہ ذہن جو اب تک  
علم دشمن ظالم کو سمجھے تھے اپنا رہبر  
آج پوچھتے ہیں  
میرا قصور کیا تھا؟  
ملالہ نے کیا کیا تھا؟  
اور میں ان کا یہ سوال سن کر مسکراتی ہوں  
کہ یہ ہی میری جیت ہے

نیدا

## Karachi Bioethics Group

The KBG, inaugurated in 2004, meets every other month and brings together individuals with a shared interest in bioethics. Members include healthcare professionals, researchers, trainees, and journalists. A range of ethical issues relevant to Pakistan are discussed. CBEC was the 2012 host for KBG meetings. Past hosts, on a rotational scheme, have included Patel Hospital, Aga Khan University, Ziauddin Hospital and Karachi Medical and Dental College. The picture shows rapt KBG members in the December meeting listening to a presentation by Naeem Sadiq (far right) founding member of the "Public Right to Information" group

For queries about KBG [kbq2004@gmail.com](mailto:kbq2004@gmail.com)



## Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT

Full Time Faculty:	Farhat Moazam Professor and Chairperson	Anwar Naqvi Professor and Coordinator	Aamir Jafarey Associate Professor
Associate Faculty:	Bushra Shirazi Ziauddin University	Rubina Naqvi SIUT	Anika Khan READyslexics
Staff:	Aamir Shehzad IT Administrative Assistant	Michelle Fernandes Executive Secretary	

5th Floor, Dewan Farooq Medical Complex, SIUT New Building, Karachi 74200, Pakistan

Phone:(92 21) 3272 6338 Fax:(92 21) 3520 6738

Email: [cbec.siut@gmail.com](mailto:cbec.siut@gmail.com) Website: [www.siut.org/bioethics](http://www.siut.org/bioethics)