

# **Transcultural psychiatry and psychology:**

**institutional racism (esp. stereotyping)**

**cultural dissonance,**

**limited knowledge base**

**Suman Fernando**

**<http://www.sumanfernando.com>**

**Visiting Professor in Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities**

**London Metropolitan University**

**(Former consultant psychiatrist, Enfield)**

# **RACIAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES IN ENGLAND**

**(reported since the 1980s and still evident)**

***Black / Ethnic Minorities more often:***

**Diagnosed as schizophrenic**

**Compulsorily detained under M. H. Act**

**Admitted as 'Offender Patients'**

**Held by police under S. 136 of M. H. Act**

**Transferred to locked wards**

**Not referred for 'talking therapies'**

**(and find these therapies do not 'make sense')**

**Ref: (after) table in Fernando and Keating, (2009) *Mental Health in a Multi-ethnic Society*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Routledge, London**

**(similar lists in various reports over the years)**

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PSYCHIATRY

## Historical Events

1418	Portuguese voyage to West Africa
1492	Columbus reaches America Vasco da Gama lands in India Plunder of America
	Genocide of Americans
1577	African slaves landed in America Triangular trade: England sugar, cotton      cloth, iron, tobacco      rum, guns America      slaves      Africa
1764	British Occupy Bengal Plunder of India
1807	Abolition of Slave Trade
1839-42	Defeat of China in Opium Wars
1861	British occupy Lagos
1884	Berlin Conference: Scramble for Africa Plunder of Africa
1947	Liberation of India
1957	Liberation of Ghana
1963	Commonwealth Immigrants Act
1971	Immigration Act
1981	British Nationality Act

## COLONIALISM

### SLAVERY



### PSYCHIATRY



## Growth of Psychiatry

1403	Bethlem Priory admits lunatics
1546	Bethlem Priory given to laity
1586	'Treatise on Melancholy' (Bright)
1621	'Anatomy of Melancholy' (Burton)
1632	Medical Governor of Bethlem
1713	Hospital for the Insane at Norwich
1734	'The English Malady' (Cheyne)
1744	Vagrancy Act
1774	Private Madhouses Act
1792	The Retreat for the Insane at York
1808	County Asylums Act
1841	Association of Medical Officers of Asylums
1858	'A Manual of Psychological Medicine'
1863	Broadmoor Hospital
1890	Lunacy Act
1930	Mental Treatment Act
1959	Mental Health Act
1963	British Journal of Psychiatry
1971	Royal College of Psychiatrists
1983	Mental Health Act

# Educational Legacy of Imperialism

based on table by John Wilinsky (2009) in  
*Learning to Divide the World. Education and Empire's End* p 256

Disciplines	Legacy	Domains
History Geography Science Language Literature Others	<p><b>Portrayal of the other</b></p> <p>Treatment of distance from the West</p> <p>Placement of the non-Western outside history</p> <p>Suggestion of evolutionary differences along moral, cultural, and/or psychological lines</p> <p><b>Construction of racial differences</b></p> <p>Equation of culture and/or nationality with race</p>	Students Families Teachers Schoolbooks Community Popular Culture Informal Education Arts Literature Scholarship State

# **DIVERSITY OF TRADITIONS**

**(concerning 'mind', health/illness, 'mental health')**

**[Western] 'scientific' psychology (objectifies the subjective)**

**.. at a crossroads ... between the subject and the object, between within and without, between lived experience and knowledge' (Foucault, 2006: pp. 529-30)**

**'Other psychologies' are often buried in religion, healing and philosophy - e.g. Maori, Buddhist, Hindu, Sufi, African indigenous knowledge, Anishinabi, etc.**

**'Psychiatries' (??) i.e. systems dealing with complex human problems in terms of (primarily) 'illness' model is seen in several cultural traditions**

# Whiteness of knowledge in clinical psychology

## In psy disciplines

**What is taught as ‘knowledge’ is largely derived from ideas about madness and mental health problems that are derived from western (European) cultural sources, based on western ideas about human nature, the ‘mind’, the purpose of life, etc.**

**Black academics seem to be side-lined and cannot get their views heard and do not get promotion if they are critical of main stream practice. Or they ‘disappear’—e.g. emigrate to North America**

**Policies and training reflect the above.**

**e.g. BPS-DCP policy “Understanding schizophrenia and psychosis”**

***Why Is my curriculum white?***

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dscx4h2I-Pk>**

**Kalathil and Faulkner (2015): ‘Racialisation and knowledge production: A critique of the report Understanding Psychosis and Schizophrenia’ *Mental Health Today*, Jan-Feb 2015, 22-3**

# **CULTURE OF WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY & PSYCHIATRY**

**Mind-body dichotomy**

**‘Natural’ (understandable) causes of illness / distress**

**Mechanistic view of life: cause and effect**

**Materialistic concept of mind (more-or-less)**

**Segmental approach to ‘mind’**

**Spirituality as a ‘thing’ apart from person**

**See Fernando, S. (2010) *Mental Health Race and Culture*, third edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave**

**Macmillan p. 60**

# Māristāns (mental hospital) Aleppo, Syria



Photo by Questier: <http://www.questier.com>

# Therapy in the mǎristāns

... mixture of Galenic Greek medicine with pre-Islamic folk medicine and over-arching principle of divine causation (Dols, 1992).

... blissful union of science and religion (Graham, 1967)

... ‘sort of spiritual therapy .. Involving music, dance and theatrical spectacles and readings of marvellous stories’ (Foucault, 2006)

Dols (1992): *Majnūn: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* D. E. Immisch (ed) (Oxford: Clarendon Press). Foucault, M. (1967) *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Tavistock). Graham (1967): *Medieval Minds. Mental health in the Middle Ages* (London: Allen & Unwin)

**Muhammad Zakariyā Rāzī**  
**al-RAZI, Abu Bakr Muhammad Zakariyya**  
**(Latinized name: Rhazes or Rasis)**

**Born: 854 CE**  
**Rey (near Teheran)**

**Died: 932 or 925 CE**  
**Rey, Iran**

**Persian polymath,  
physician, chemist,  
philosopher, court  
physician and chief  
physician of Baghdad and  
Rey hospitals**

**Prolific author**  
**Wrote texts on  
melancholia and other  
mental illnesses**



# Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) (Statue at Cordoba)



# **‘Psychiatry’ (?) in Tibetan Medicine around 12-13 Century**

**‘...complex interweaving of religion, mysticism, [Mahayana Buddhist] psychology and rational [Ayurvedic] medicine.’  
(Clifford, 1984: p. 7)**

**Psychology involved with insanity [‘psychosis’?] is the same as that required for pursuing enlightenment: ‘..it all depends on whether it is accepted or not ...’ (Clifford, 1984: p. 7)**

**Ref: Clifford, Terry (1984) *Tibetan Buddhist Medicine and Psychiatry: The Diamond Healing*. York Beach, Main: Samuel Weiser**

# Snippets from research

1. WHO's International Pilot Study of Schizophrenia (IPSS)  
1960s and 1970s; 3-5 yr and 13-15 yr follow-ups

*Better outcome in non-western locations*

2. Tamil Nadu (2002): healing centre in Hindu Temple – 31  
'patients' no specific ceremonies

*Outcomes as good as with bio-medical psychiatry*

3. Kerala study (2004) of 100 'patients' attending (a) Hindu /  
Muslim / Christian locations for healing; (b) Ayurvedic  
Hospital; and (c) Allopathic Hospital for 'mental illness'

*By shopping round, one third benefited from each*

# **Healing systems in the Kandyan region of Sri Lanka**

**Western (allopathic) medicine**

**Ayurvedic medicine**

**Healing rituals such as *Thovil*, *pujas***

**Astrological consultation, fortune-telling, spirit-healing, instruction to perform rituals**

**Practical advice based on (Buddhist) dhamma, *Pirit* rituals, meditation (including mindfulness)**

(Adapted from Vogt, 1999, p. 12)

# **Plurality of Mental Health Services some services in Southern Province, Sri Lanka**

**Government (free) out-patient clinics (western psychiatry)**

**Government (free) out-patient clinical (Ayurvedic)**

**Private psychiatrists (Western psychiatry mainly)**

**Private psychologists (psychosocial approaches) (very few and far-between)**

**Religious organisations (worship, counselling, support) sometimes in liaison with out-patient clinics (at churches (e.g. St Jude), mosques, temples)**

**Private Indigenous medical practitioners**

**Private non-religious healers (kovil, kattadiyas)**

**Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing counselling, psychosocial support**

**Thank You!**