

Islamic Guidance on Magic

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Understanding the nature and reality of sihr according to Islam (Sihr is Arabic for magic, literally means hidden), is likely to make it easier to accept the concept of magic especially for a modern scientific mind, allowing one to come to terms with it and, thereafter, find a sensible cure that is devoid of superstitions and apply the treatment prescribed for it in Islam with confidence and reassurance.

Magic compared to medical illnesses

Normal illnesses that we come across are commonly caused by bacteria, virus etc. Chemically, they make a part of the body function abnormally. Sihr is similar in some ways. It is brought about by means that are related to the Jinn and take form in human body by hormonal and other physiological changes.

Means of Magic and its purpose

So, a human being who wants to do magic (not the magic involving mere simple visual trick) on someone else, co-operates with a non-Muslim Jinn. The Jinn does some work for the sorcerers that Allah has given the Jinn the ability to do, but not to us humans; not due to their superiority but merely as a test of their use of it in Allah's obedience or the lack of it. Jinn's effect may be of the form where he makes a person have an illusion that they have experienced something (e.g. seeing something) but it is merely an illusion. An example of this is mentioned in Surah Baqarah (verse 102) about influencing people's likes or dislikes towards one's spouse and this may be by creating circumstances or perhaps illusions or other 'magical-means', i.e. hidden from the eye. Another example is of the sorcerers of the Pharaoh as related in the Quran in Surah TaHa (No. 20). They made people see or imagine that they are seeing a snake in front of them whereas it was not a snake, rather a rope or a staff. Referring to their magic, Allah uses the word in Surah TaHa [20:66] "*yukhayyalu*", meaning they were brought to imagine or think they were seeing something. This may well have been Jinn itself taking the form of snakes and no more than that! (We know from some authentic hadith that what we see as a snake may in fact either be a Jinni or a real snake, hadith of Abu Saeed al-Khudri in Sahih Muslim, Book of Salutations and Greetings No.26, Hadith No. 5557).

This doesn't mean that the person is possessed by Jinn – i.e. Jinn have not entered a person's body in such a situation. In this case, a Jinni is taking a form in front of the human's eyes and trying to trick him visually and scare him with the aim of frightening him to the extent of being dependent for safety and deliverance on Jinn or sorcerers instead of Allah. This, shirk, i.e. associating partners with Allah in His Divinity, is the main goal of shaitan and the biggest test for us all. Even Prophet Musa alaihisalam was scared on the first instance when he saw what appeared to him to be snakes, simply because it is something we are not accustomed to. But Allah reassured Musa not to be afraid. So, if one of us was to start seeing things or imagining or hearing voices, we should not take it as any more than that – it is likely to be from Jinn and no more. Its aim is to shift our dependence from Allah to Shaitan. Realizing this, we turn to Allah even more for He alone can help us out of this.

Likewise, Jinn can make a person hear things – so that person may respond and talk back to him to the voice or follow instructions or suggestions. Allah mentions this in the Quran too, He says, *“Thus We made for each Prophet an enemy – shaitans from among humans and Jinn – whispering some to others nice saying to deceive them; had Allah willed they would not have done it; so leave them and that which they fabricate.”* [Quran Surah An’am, 6:112] This verse was revealed from Allah to His Prophet when the shaitan of Jinn and humans were whispering to the pagans, turning them against him and his message of monotheism towards polytheism (shirk). Had Allah willed, He would have prevented this. And when Allah has tried the people to the extent he wants, He will stop it. In the mean time, He does it to test so many parties in various ways with just one such incident. So, we do not feel helplessly at mercy of those mischief makers nor worry about them and instead rely on Allah alone because He is fully in control, doing it for a short time only and for a purpose and none can defeat His purpose – not even Jinn or an army of humans.

Seek cure from magic as with a medical illness

Just like we are not scared of the bacteria or the virus in our body, we should not be scared of these Jinn either. Just as Allah can prevent and stop the harm of the virus, He can also do the same with the harm of the Jinn. Just as a virus might make us sick for sometime, these Jinn may do so to us temporarily. Just as we take the cure for the bacterial infection we take the cure for this too, and its cure is Ruqya (ruqya is to recite relevant passages from Quran, hadith or elsewhere to the affected person or he recites to himself). Just as we realize there is no cure from a viral infection and we just have to wait for the power that Allah created in the body’s immune system to fight it and overcome it eventually, we do the same with this and not panic and instead be patient for it to pass by and finish and meanwhile we do what we can of Ruqya, dua and make our priority to pass and fare well in our trial by obeying Allah and not succumbing to the scheming of shaitan.

Messenger of Allah sought cure from Magic by Ruqya

Even the Messenger of Allah sallallahu alaihi wasallam once had mild magic performed on him, as is established in authentic hadith in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim (see for example Sahih Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 54, Hadith 490 narrated by Aisha and an example in Sahih Muslim with Dua of Jibreel to treat the Prophet from magic, Book of Salutations No. 26, hadith number 5424 & 5425 from Aisha and Abu Saeed). He was made to imagine he did things which he did not. We learn from how he dealt with it because he is our practical model to emulate. Just as he demonstrated for us the rest of what he preached of Islam, he did so with magic too. He did not panic nor get scared. He was patient realizing that Allah is allowing this and Allah is fully in control of what is happening. Allah showed him the remedy. Allah directed him to recite the last two Qul surahs of the Quran to seek refuge from such things. Then the angel Jibreel did ruqya on him with a supplication seeking from Allah to drive this away from him (hadith referenced above from Sahih Muslim). Allah alleviated this hardship from the Prophet in due time. He informed the Prophet about the location where the magic knots had been buried and hidden and directed him to unearth them and undo the magic.

Ruqya works on us as it did on the Prophet Muhammad

One of us in such a situation would behave in the manner of the Prophet described above and not by adopting superstitious practices. The person would persevere patiently obeying Allah all the while. If the place of the cause of magic was known, then undo it or else do Ruqya by reciting Quran and other permissible recitations including the dua of Jibreel on the Prophet. Recite the Qul surahs from the Quran (the last two surahs three times) as prescribed in

authentic hadith, the prescribed dhikr from the sunnah in the morning and evening and prior to sleep, recite Surah fatiha on oneself or have someone else do so on the suffering person – all of these work by reversing the damage done by magic on a person’s Iman (faith in Allah) and Tawakkul (reliance and trust in Allah). Ruqya, supplications and the Quran recitation strengthen one’s dependence on Allah and thereby bring success in the test intended from magic, i.e. the degree of tawakkul (trust) in Allah is restored as the sorcerer or Jinn are not turned to for rescue, rather Allah alone. This can cure any other medical condition too as it does with magic but the mechanism of this form of cure is by the Will of Allah and His direct interception as opposed to chemical reactions via medicines. The more the reciter and the one recited on feel dependent on Allah trusting Him, turning to Him in humility and devotion, realizing that it is only He ultimately Who can really do anything about it, the more one develops this, the higher is the likelihood of the ruqya form of treatment succeeding. Such success is because this ailment and its cure are primarily for the purpose of putting one’s devotion to Allah on trial. You will be amazed how much good this can do even in our lives today centuries after the time of the pious Companions of the noble Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

Others performing ruqya on us

It is permissible and recommended for others, especially those experienced in Ruqya, to volunteer to perform ruqya in the manner described above without the suffering person seeking from them to perform ruqya. This is better as the trust of the one suffering remains focused completely on Allah and not a little is lost turning and depending on piety of others for success of ones own health and needs. It is permissible though not recommended for a person suffering to seek another pious person instead of himself to perform ruqya and even to pay him wages for his treatment. However, this is only so long as the dependency of the ailing person is on Allah and not on the reciter of Ruqya. In either case, the people reciting are only a means just like the medicine whereas it is Allah alone who is ultimately capable of curing the illness.

Not a curse but perhaps a blessing in disguise

It could have been other illnesses or calamities instead of magic done on him. All these are a variety of trials to test who a suffering person turns to in times of need. Allah chooses for the person a means of trial that He knows the person is better able to deal with, for a given test. This trial may well be a ‘blessing in disguise’ as sins are wiped off with patience in face of any trial and adversity. If it persists long, it is good in terms of the sins erased and good deeds earned with patience and obedience of Allah. But, if the ailment ceases in short time, the person is grateful and able to continue with other means of seeking reward and forgiveness for sins without the suffering. Moreover, the experience may leave the person after recovery with an unshakable iman, reliance and trust (tawakkul) in Allah. A curse, according to Islamic understanding, is to be distanced from the mercy of Allah. But far from being a curse, this may become a blessed experience for a believer with increase in temporal and eternal good in so many ways, as described above. Day after day, for as long as the ailment persists, the Muslim does not put his life on hold, rather perseveres patiently, earning reward all the while, doing other good deeds all the more, feeling reassured and confident of the promise of Allah in Quran for times of trials and adversities that, “*Surely, the help of Allah is near.*” [Quran Surah Baqarah 2:214]

Note: Full textual basis for the points made above have been left out for brevity as they are available in detailed works on the subject.