

AR-RUQYAH: A MEANS OF TREATING JINN-RELATED ILLNESS IN ISLAM

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Abstract

In every civilization, medication serves as an important tool in overcoming poor health conditions of its members and a driving wheel to its growth and development. Thus, Islamic civilization comes along with its divine guidance for treating different illnesses suffered by humans. It is against this background, this paper discusses one of the Islamic methods of treatment of Jinn related ailments; generally known as ruqyah (exorcism). The paper explains the meanings of ruqyah and traces its origin to the Messenger of Allah (S.W.T),-Muhammad bn Abdullahi (S.A.W). The conditions and mode of application of ruqyah had also been discussed. The paper argues that the Muslim ruqyah practitioners could be useful in conventional psychiatric hospitals where mentally retarded receive treatments. Similarly, the paper discovers the effectiveness of ruqyah in combating Jinn related afflictions. Conclusion and recommendations are also provided in order to consolidate the findings of the paper.

Keywords: *Ar-Ruqyah, Jinn, Illness, Treatment, Islam*

Introduction

The word “*Jinn*” is a plural form of “*Jinni*” or “*Jann*” in Arabic language.¹ The word *Jinn* is a derivative of “*Ijtinan*” which means something hidden or covered.² It is based on this concept an embryo is referred as “*al-Janin*” as it was described in the Glorious Qur’an:

...He knows you well when He created you (Adam) from the earth, and when you are hidden in your mothers’ wombs...³

The English equivalent of the word *Jinn* is given as “Demons”, “Fairies”⁴, and “Spirits”. The word spirit is more familiar and frequently used in many writings.

Meanwhile, it is the belief of the Muslims that Allah (The Most High)

controls both health and illnesses. As such, a Muslim is allowed and also instructed to search for an appropriate treatment for any affliction which befalls him. In a *Hadith*, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) advised Muslims to use medicine with a warning that such a medication must not be from unlawful source(s).⁵ It is equally mentioned by the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W) that there had been no existence of any ailment except that Allah (The Most High) had sent down its cure.⁶

It is clear that Islam recognises the arts and sciences of medication with the sole objective of curing diseases. Therefore, medication is to take any form of medicine to prevent or treat an illness.⁷ Thus, it is part of the Muslims’ belief that the Glorious

Qur'an is a cure and remedy to human ailments. Allah (The Most High) says:

We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy to those who believed...⁸

Hence *ruqyah* which involves reading verses of the Qur'an for medication is quite relevant within the Islamic frame work in tackling medically threatening cases that are of *Jinn* related as explained in this write-up.

1.1 Meaning, Types and Conditions of *Ruqyah*

Ruqyah as an Arabic term is defined in the dictionary as the act of getting rid of an evil spirit from a place or a person's body by prayers⁹. Specifically, exorcism in Islam is the recitation of some verses of the Glorious Qur'an on a sick person.¹⁰ The act is done with the intention of curing or relieving the patient from the affliction he or she suffers.

Exorcism is an Islamic approved method of dispossessing the body of the possessed from the possessing *Jinni*, and is a means of curing *Jinn* related illnesses. Exorcism is frequently used among Muslims and is found effective in treating various *Jinn's* afflictions.

1.2 Types of *Ruqyah*

Scholars have categorised exorcism into two viz:

Lawful exorcism (*Ruqah al-Shar'iyah*)

Unlawful exorcism (*Ruqah al-Shirkiyyah*)

According to *Asqalani*, there is consensus among Muslim scholars on the permissibility of conducting

lawful exorcism after satisfying the following three conditions:

- i. It must be from the words of Allah (The Most High) or by calling His Names and Attributes.
- ii. It must be recited in Arabic or any other language the meaning of which could be understood. The recitation must not be vague.
- iii. The exorcist must have a belief that it is not the *Ruqyah* in itself which has the influence in the cure, but Allah (The Most High) is the real Healer.¹¹

According to Muslim scholars, the *Ruqyah* which satisfies these conditions and is not intended for anything forbidden has a definite impact if carried out properly by a righteous and morally upright person properly.¹² This view is quite acceptable because the Glorious Qur'an is a means of guidance and cure.¹³

The unlawful type of exorcism consists of ambiguous statements either in Arabic or any other language. Such *Ruqyah* contains element of *shirk* or inviting evil spirits by calling their different names to come to the aid of the exorcist in healing the patient. This polytheistic type of exorcism is strongly rejected by all the four leading Muslim Jurists.¹⁴ Their rejection is based on the *Hadith* in which Prophet Muhammad (*S.A.W*) described it as *Shirk*.¹⁵

From the classifications above, it can be said that Islam accepts and permits the use of the lawful exorcism where as the unlawful type is rejected and condemned as idolatry.

1.3 Conditions for the exorcist(s).

Ibn Qayim observed that since *ruqyah* has to do with healing of not only physical but also those ailments caused by evil souls, it needs a person with strong piety and incorruptible soul before it could have impact on the patient.¹⁶ Therefore, three basic conditions that a *Raqi* should fulfill before succeeding in his treatment with the recitation of *ruqyah* were outlined thus:

- i. Piety (*Al-Taqwa*).
- ii. Trust in Allah (*Al-Tawakkul*)
- iii. Turning to Allah (*Al-Tawajjuh*).¹⁷

It may be agreed that all other religious pre-requisites for lawful exorcism such as; sincerity and avoiding major offences (*Kaba'ir*) could have a place in one of the three items above. However, other conditions include;

- i. Should have knowledge about affairs of the patient and the sickness.
- ii. Should also have experience which qualifies him to treat *Jinn* related illnesses. Thus, he must possess knowledge about *Jinn*; their nature, types and behaviour and how he could deal with them successfully without causing harm to himself or his family.
- iii. Should have the knowledge of diagnosing *Jinn*'s ailments.
- iv. Confidentiality. He must guard the confidential affairs of his patients and protect their secrets.¹⁸

Satisfying the above conditions by an exorcist is of great significance and even necessary for him to succeed in his treatment. It is observed that since exorcism is part of spiritual medication, it is required to be

administered by people of good moral conduct, through whom only the *ruqyah* could have impact on the patient. Therefore, the powerful influence of exorcism in combating *Jinn*'s attack against humans depends on the knowledge and religious position of the exorcist.¹⁹ *Ibn Qayyim* narrated that he had severally witnessed cases of *Jinn* possession where his teacher, *Ibn Taymiyyah* would send somebody to deliver his message to the possessing *Jinni* that, the *Jinni* should leave the body of the possessed and the *Jinni* would instantly obey the command.²⁰

Also, there was an account in which it was reported that *Imam Abu Hanifah* sent somebody with his pair of shoes to go and inform a certain *Jinni* who possessed a lady that the owner of this shoe said he should get out of her body. After delivering the message, the *Jinni* replied that *Abu Hanifah* was Allah's obedient servant, and therefore, must be respected. That *Jinni* dispossessed the lady.²¹ However, after the death of *Imam Abu Hanifah*, the same *Jinni* returned to the same lady and possessed her again. One of the students of *Abu Hanifah*, whose name was not mentioned in the report, did exactly what was done by his teacher. However, the *Jinni* said that he would not comply. Thereafter, the scholar went by himself and asked the *Jinni* to leave and the *Jinni* refused to leave the lady. But when he (*Abu Hanifa's* student) recited some verses of *ruqyah* and flogged the *Jinni* mercilessly, the *Jinni* agreed to leave and he left the possessed instantly.²² This is indeed, explaining the different degrees of

piousness on the impact of *ruqyah* in medication.

Therefore, an exorcist needs to be Allah's conscious and should comply with those conditions as outlined by scholars as stated above before attempting to heal *Jinn* related afflictions through *ruqyah*.

2.1 Permissibility of *Ruqyah* in Islam

In fact, the Islamic exorcism has a genuine divine source through the Prophet (*S.A.W*) and had guided his followers on how to do it and practised it himself. It is reported in *Sahih* Muslim that the Prophet (*S.A.W*) was asked by *Awf bn Malik* about the *ruqyah* they were used to during *Jahiliyyah* whether they could continue with it or not. The Prophet (*S.A.W*) responded thus:

Let me hear what you say, there is no harm in exorcism as long as they do not include *Shirk*.²³

In another *Hadith*, the Prophet (*S.A.W*) considers *ruqyah* as a form of assistance to a brother Muslim afflicted with ailment when he said:

Whosoever among you can help his brother, let him do.²⁴

The Prophet (*S.A.W*) said this when the family of *'Amr bn Hazm* told him that they had a *ruqyah* which they applied for scorpion's sting, and when the Prophet (*S.A.W*) listened to what they said in the *Ruqyah*, he approved it and encouraged them to continue practicing it as a help to the victims.²⁵

Furthermore, the Prophet (*S.A.W*) was said to have exorcised some of his *Sahabah* among who were *Sufyan bn*

'Uyainah and *Thabit bn Qays bn Shums*.²⁶ Similarly, *A'ishah (R.A)* stated that the Prophet (*S.A.W*) used to exorcise members of his family when afflicted with certain ailments.²⁷ She also said that he exorcised his body whenever he retired to bed. However, on his death bed, he asked her to do it for him and she said, whenever she recited the verses of the last three chapters of the Glorious Qur'an she would spit on his blessed palms and rub his body with them.²⁸ It is also another evidence to mention that the Arch Angel *Jibril* exorcised the Prophet (*S.A.W*) when he was not in good health condition.²⁹ The Angel *Jibril* had specifically exorcised him when the Prophet (*S.A.W*) was poisoned at *Khaybar* by a woman named *Zainab bnt Harith*, a Jewish lady.³⁰

In another report by *Imam* Muslim, one day Prophet Muhammad (*S.A.W*) was in company of his *Sahabah* when a woman came along with her son and complained to him about his ill condition which the Prophet (*S.A.W*) diagnosed as evil spirit's possession, and thereafter exorcised him with some verses of the Glorious Qur'an after which he instructed the *Jinni* to get out of his body. Instantly, the patient was cured from the ailment. On their way back from the journey, the Prophet (*S.A.W*) met the woman in the very position they met with her when they were passing by and with her are some goats which she handed over to him as a sign of appreciation of what the Prophet (*S.A.W*) had done for her child. She informed the Prophet (*S.A.W*) that since the time he treated her son, he never experienced such ailment again.³¹

From the discussion above, application of exorcism which is in line with the *Shari'ah* is absolutely permitted for both *Jinn* related and other normal sicknesses. However, since the subject matter of this research is on the sicknesses caused by *Jinn*, it is pertinent to mention at this juncture that for such a *ruqyah* to be effective, some conditions must be fulfilled by any person who wishes to engage in it.

2.2 Application of *Ruqyah*

Having outlined the conditions that an exorcist should duly satisfy before engaging in the practices of *ruqyah*, in this sub-section an explanation has been provided on the approved Islamic pattern on practical application of exorcism.

It is important for the exorcist to note that, he has to restrict himself to those chapters and verses of the Glorious Qur'an used by the Prophet (S.A.W) for the purpose of *ruqyah*. This is referred to by scholars as "*Ruqyah al-Tawqifiyyah*" (Restricted exorcism). He is equally allowed to recite the chapters and verses of the Glorious Qur'an as pointed out by some scholars based on test and experience. This is known as "*Ruqyah al-Ijtihadiyyah*" (Exorcism by the use of independent judgement).³² Apart from the recitation of the verses of the Glorious Qur'an, one is also permitted to use the divine statements of the Prophet (S.A.W) or some statements of scholars that are approved by the *Shari'ah*.³³ Similarly, before starting *Ruqyah*, the exorcist should observe the following major preliminary stages:

- i. Should have physical and spiritual purification including ablution.
- ii. The patient should perform ablution, if he or she is in the state of consciousness.
- iii. Take out all pictures and statues from the place of the *Ruqyah*.
- iv. There should be no music or musical instruments.
- v. The patient should not be wearing anything unlawful such as gold by a man or applying scent by a woman.
- vi. A woman should dress properly and make sure that no part of her body is visible in the course of the *Ruqyah*.
- vii. While treating a woman, her closest relation in the absence of her husband must be present. In no circumstance is a *Raqi* allowed to be lonely with a woman in the name of exorcism.
- viii. Finally, he should have the belief that the power to heal belongs to Allah (The Most High) alone and that he should seek His help only.³⁴

After the preliminary preparation is completed, the exorcist would sit by the right side of the patient and start reading the verses of *ruqyah* directly into the right ear of the afflicted with loud voice.³⁵ As soon as the reading starts, one of the two things could happen; either the possessing *Jinni* leaves the body without having to speak or the *Jinni* will respond and speaks to the exorcist. The exorcist could notice the presence of the *Jinni* in the body of the patient by one of the following signs viz; shaking of the patient's body, weeping, quick closure of the eyes, rapid eye blinking,

covering of the victim's face with his hands, squeezing of his body and sometimes the *Jinni* may mention his name and urge the exorcist to stop reading the verses of the Glorious Qur'an because of their impact on the *Jinn*.³⁶ However, if the *Jinni* speaks or a sign of his presence in the body of the afflicted is noticed, then, the exorcist may ask him the following questions:

- What is your name?
- What is your religion?
- Why did you enter his/her body?

The purpose of asking about his religion and reason (s) of his possession is to deal with the *Jinni* appropriately.

Sometimes, the *Jinni* may appear but refuse to talk. In such a case, the exorcist should read the following verse:

﴿ وَقَالُوا الْجُودُوهِرُ لِمَ شَهِدْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا
اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۗ ﴾³⁷

And they will say to their skins, why do you testify against us. They will say Allah has caused us to speak as He causes all things to speak...(Q41:22)

He then continues repeating the last phrase:

﴿ قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۗ ﴾

Allah's willing the *Jinni* will speak or get out of the body of the possessed.³⁸

Similarly, in a situation where the *Jinni* expressed his aggressive intention of not relieving the patient, then the next step to be taken by the *Raqi* is to read those verses that are used to punish the *Jinn* (*Ayah al-*

Ta'adhibul-Jinn).³⁹ Sometimes, a *Jinni* may appear and leave unceremoniously, leaving the exorcist helpless without accomplishing his task. In such a case, scholars suggested that as soon as *Raqi* notices the presence of *Jinni* in the patient's body, he should use one of the following methods to tie him up in order to prevent him from fleeing.

- i. Writing of two Arabic letters; *nunun* and *Qafun* (ن & ق) and say while writing the letters; "I have tied you up in the light of:"

﴿ ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ ۗ ﴾⁴⁰

By the Pen and by what they (the Angels) write in the Records of men. (Q86:1)

Thereafter, the following verse is read repeatedly;

﴿ قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَعَابٌ مَوَّجٌ فَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَىٰ
جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ۗ ﴾⁴¹

Say (O Muhammad S.A.W) to those who disbelieve: 'you will be defeated and gather together to Hell, and worst indeed is that place of rest (Q3:12)

- ii. Tying a rubber-line around the big toe of the patient's leg is also another means of chaining the *Jinn*.

When the *Raqi* finishes his questions, the next thing is to instruct the *Jinni* to get out from the body of the victim. If the *Jinni* complied then he should thank Allah (The Most High) for achieving the purpose for which the *ruqyah* is done. Equally, if the *Jinni* refuses to obey the order of the exorcist after the recitation of *Ayah al-Ta'adhib* as indicated above, then the

Raqi is allowed to beat the *Jinni* through the body of the possessed. The *Jinni* will feel the effect of the strokes which could lead him to dispossess the patient as documented by *Ibn Qayyim*.⁴² However, the exorcist should be very careful while beating the body of the possessed, because the *Jinni* can easily sneak out of his body and the effect of the punishment would be on the patient. Taking this into cognisance and in order to avoid inflicting injuries on the body of the possessed, scholars have specified parts of the body that the *Raqi* is allowed to beat which include; shoulders, buttocks and limbs.⁴³ However, if at any given time during the recitation of the *Ruqyah* the *Jinni* responds, the exorcist should not engage in conversation with him but should ask him questions stated above and thereafter instruct the *Jinni* to leave the body of the affected individual. While agreeing to leave, the *Raqi* should give the *Jinni* an oath of covenant that he will not return to the person again neither will he attack anybody.⁴⁴

After the *Jinni* might have left the body of the possessed, the exorcist may recommend for the patient to keep to the following rules and regulations to avoid the return of the ailment:

- i. The patient should be told to have hope in Allah (The Most High) and should not despair.
- ii. He should understand that the Healer is Allah alone and that, *Ruqyah* is just a means prescribed by *Shari'ah* for seeking healing.
- iii. He should continue with supplications to his Creator for permanent recovery.

- iv. The patient should shun evils, repent and seek for Allah's forgiveness.
- v. He should recite daily *Adhkar* morning and evening.
- vi. He should recite some portions of the Glorious Qur'an regularly. It is required of him to read *Surah al-Baqarah* after every three days or listen to its recitation through tape recorder or any other audio player.
- vii. The afflicted should also be observing supererogatory acts in Islam, such as voluntary fasting and optional prayers. The wisdom in doing this is that the more a Muslim becomes closer to his Lord, the more he becomes safer from any evil spirit.
- viii. He should try to be in a state of purity every time. He should try to keep his ablution throughout the day as much as possible, even when going to bed.
- ix. Let him be mentioning the name of Allah (The Most High) at the beginning of every action like eating and drinking.
- x. The exorcist should also prescribe some medicines for his patient after the *Ruqyah* such as; the use of *Habbatus-Sawda'* (Black seed), *Zaytun* (Olive oil) and drinking of Zamzam water).

It is recommended for the practitioner of *Ruqyah* to repeat the *Ruqyah* one month after as a follow-up treatment.

2.3 Practical Experience of Treatment of *Jinn's* Afflictions through *Ruqyah*

This section contains some practical illustrations of *ruqyah* done by the Prophet (*S.A.W*) himself, with a view

to ascertaining and proving its divine origin. Equally, the researcher also shares his own experience in his effort to treat some possessed persons some years back.

Uthman *bn* Abi al-‘As reported that when he was appointed by the Prophet (*S.A.W*) in charge of the affairs of the people of Ta’if, something seemed to him in his prayer and made him to forget how many *Rak’ah* he prayed. He complained to the Prophet (*S.A.W*) who informed him that it was caused by a devil. The Prophet instructed him to sit closer to him which he did. The Prophet (*S.A.W*) sat on his feet and struck his chest with his blessed hand and spat on the direction of his face and said “get out Oh! Allah’s enemy;” three times⁴⁵. According to the reporter from that time, he had never seen such things again throughout his life. This has shown that the noble Prophet (*S.A.W*) had practiced *Ruqyah* as a means of freeing somebody from the possession of *Jinn*.

Ibn Qayyim also gave an account of the *ruqyah* of his teacher, *Ibn* Taymiyyah, had conducted. According to him, a patient was brought to *Ibn* Taymiyyah and he read in his ear:

﴿أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا

تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾ ﴿٤٦﴾

Did you think that We had created you in play (without any purpose), and you would not be brought back to us. ...Q23:115-118

Thereafter, the possessing *Jinni* answered yes out of mockery which made the *Shaykh* to take a stick and beat the *Jinni* through the body of the

patient severely until people around thought the patient might have died. In the process of the beating, the possessing *Jinni* who happened to be a female spoke and said she loved the patient and she wanted to take him to Makkah to perform pilgrimage. The *Shaykh* said he did not want to go to *Hajj* with her. The female *Jinni* said she would leave in honour of the *Shaykh*, he said no, but let her leave in obedience to Allah and she left. When the patient regained his consciousness, he was surprised to see him in front of the *Shaykh*. He asked of what brought him to the *Shaykh*. He was asked about the beating, and he said: “what have I done?” This is because the effect of the beating was felt by the *Jinni*⁴⁷.

Similarly, this researcher was one time called upon to a young boy of approximately fifteen years old, possessed by *Jinni*. The boy was totally unconscious and the researcher started reading the verses of *Ruqyah*. After about ten minutes, he started groaning indicating the presence of the possessing *Jinni* and then, I asked: “Who is that?” He answered “Aliyu.” “What is your religion?” “Islam” he responded. “Why did you possess him?” “He urinated on me in the mid day while at school” He replied. Then I said to him, “Remember that he was not aware of your presence because he cannot see you, and it is forbidden in Islam to punish somebody for what he had done unintentionally.” He accepted the researcher’s submission and agreed to leave. I gave him oath and he left through the mouth of the possessed. Instantly the boy regained his consciousness and was healed by the Will of Allah (The Most High).

Another example of the researcher's experience was his treatment of a married woman possessed by a *Jinni*. At one time, a husband of a lady invited the researcher to his wife who was possessed by a *Jinni* at about eleven o'clock (11:00pm) in the night. On my arrival, I renewed my ablution and started reading the *Ruqyah*. No sooner the recitation commenced, there appeared a *Jinni* with all kinds of threat, demanding me to stop reading the verses but I ignored him and continued with the reading, until I reached the pausing point. Then I asked, "What is your name?" (I am *Arne*.) I am not a Muslim, I don't like that thing you are doing" he said. "I preached to him, reminding him of a torture awaiting the disbelievers and those who cheat others innocently on the Day of Judgement. I called him to accept Islam which he rejected in the first instance, but later, when I continued reminding him of the Greatness of Allah (The Most High) and His Powers, he agreed to profess Islam. He changed his name to Ibrahim and promised to convert his wife and children that he said were seven in number. He agreed to dispossess the lady which he did after I gave him the oath of quitting the body without returning to the patient again.

Studying the illustrations above, one can say that the *Ruqyah* has a divine origin and the Prophet Muhammad (*S.A.W*) as the final divine Message, can be considered as the first *Raqui* theoretically and practically.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be agreed that *Jinn* really affects humans with

different ailments and that *ruqyah* is one of the effective means of treating them. Islam recognises human sicknesses happening with Will and Powers of Allah (the Most High). And equally, The Most High, out of His mercy had provided medicine for each disease prior to its existence.

Recommendations

Looking at the significance of *ruqyah* and the important role its practitioners play in treating *Jinn* possessed and other related illnesses, the paper is recommends the following:

- i. Muslims should embrace Islamic pattern for treatment of ailments that are *Jinn* related so as to avoid corrupting their faith by seeking other un-Islamic filthy means of medications, such as visiting soothsayers.
- ii. Government can join hands with Muslim experts in treating psychiatric cases that are related with *Jinn* infection through *ruqyah*. Such people could be employed in our psychiatric hospitals with a view to complementing the efforts of conventional medical doctors in treating such illnesses.
- iii. Exorcists should maintain their existing personality and integrity, and above all become Allah's conscious in all their deeds so as to become successful in their tasks.

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Notes:

- ¹ A.A. Baydoun, *Arabic-English students Dictionary*. Dar akautub al-'ilmiyyah, Beirut-Lebanon,2008, P.5
- ² Ibn Manzur, *Lisanul- 'Arab*, Darul-Hadith, al-Qahirah,2003, P. 230&231
- ³ Qur'an, 53:32
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