12578 - Witchcraft and Seeking Help From Practitioners of it

the question

Is there anything such as witch doctors? What should we do if someone says "I don't believe in magic" because "this is just an illusion"?

Detailed answer

Sihr (witchcraft or magic) is a word referring to something hidden. It is real and there are kinds of witchcraft that may affect people psychologically and physically, so that they become sick and die, or husbands and wives are separated. Its effects happen by the will of Allah. It is a devilish action, most of which is only achieved by means of shirk (polytheism) and drawing close to the jinn and shayateen (devils) by means of that which they love, and it is based on associating others with Allah (shirk).

There are doctors who are also practitioners of witchcraft, who treat people by means of seeking the help of the jinn. They claim to have knowledge of the sickness with no need to identify it, and they prescribe for the patient foods and drinks that bring him closer to his allies among the devils. He may tell them to slaughter a pig whilst saying “Bismillah” (in the name of Allah) over it, or to slaughter a permissible animal without saying “Bismillah”, or when saying the name of one of the devils.

This is kufr or disbelief in Allah, and it is not permissible under any circumstances to go to these people. The hadd (Islamic prescribed) punishment for these people is execution. It has been proven from three of the sahabah (companions - may Allah be pleased with them) that the practitioners of witchcraft are to be put to death.

The Standing Committee was asked a question about this matter, in which it was said:

Please note that in Zambia there is a Muslim man who claims that he has with him a jinn, and the people come to him and ask him to treat their sicknesses, and this jinn states what their treatment should be. Is that permissible?

They replied:

It is not permissible for this man to use the jinn, and it is not permissible for the people to go to him seeking treatment for sickness through his using the jinn, or to meet any other need by this means.

Seeking treatment through human medical doctors and using permissible medicines is sufficient and means that there is no need for that, and it keeps people safe from the sorcery of the magicians.

It was narrated in a saheeh (authentic) report that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever goes to a fortune-teller and asks him about something, his prayer will not be accepted for forty days.” [Muslim].

And it was narrated by the authors of al-Sunan and by al-Hakim, who classed it as saheeh, that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever goes to a soothsayer and believes what he says has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad.”

This man and his companions from among the jinn are regarded as being among the fortune-tellers and soothsayers, so it is not permissible to ask them anything or to believe them.

Fatawa al-Lajnah al-Daimah.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baz said:

Given that there are so many charlatans lately, who claim to be doctors and to treat people by means of magic and witchcraft, and they have become widespread in some countries and they exploit the naïveté of the ignorant, I thought that in the spirit of sincerity towards Allah and His slaves, that I should explain the grave danger that this poses to Islam and the Muslims, because it involves dependence on something other than Allah and going against His command and the command of His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), so I say, seeking the help of Allah:

It is permissible to seek treatment according to scholarly consensus. The Muslim may go to a doctor to seek treatment for internal diseases, injuries, nervous complaints, etc, so that he can identify the disease and treat it in an appropriate manner, using medicines that are permissible according to sharee'ah (Islamic law), based on his knowledge of medicine, because this comes under the heading of using the ordinary means, and it is not contrary to the idea of putting one's trust in Allah. Allah has sent down the disease but He has also sent down with it the cure; those who know it know it and those who do not do not. But Allah has not created the healing for His slaves in that which He has forbidden to them, so it is not permissible for the sick person to go to a soothsayer who claims to know the unseen, in order to find out from them what is wrong with him. And it is not permissible for him to believe what they tell him, because they speak of the unseen without knowledge, or they summon the jinn and seek their help in doing what they want. The ruling on these people is that they are kafirs (disbelievers) and misguided, because they claim to have knowledge of the unseen. Muslim narrated in his Saheeh that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever goes to a fortune-teller and asks him about something, his prayer will not be accepted for forty days." And it was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever goes to a soothsayer and believes what he says has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)." [Abu Dawood and the four authors of al-Sunan]. Al-Hakim narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever goes to a fortune-teller or soothsayer and believes what he says has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)." And it was narrated that 'Imran ibn Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "He does not belong to us who observes bird omens or has that done for him, or who seeks divination or who has that done for him, or who practices witchcraft or has that done for him. Whoever goes to a soothsayer and believes what he says has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)." [al-Bazzaar].

These ahadeeth (reports) demonstrate that it is forbidden to go to soothsayers, fortune-tellers, witches and the like, and ask them questions and believe them, and a warning is issued to those

who do this. Community leaders and those in positions of power and authority must forbid going to fortune-tellers, soothsayers and the like, and not allow anyone who deals in such things to operate in the marketplaces or elsewhere. They should denounce them emphatically, and denounce those who go to them. We should not be deceived by the fact that they may get things right sometimes, or by the fact that many people go to them, because they are ignorant and the people should not be deceived by them. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) forbade going to them, asking them questions and believing them, because this is a great evil, a serious danger and leads to bad consequences, and because they are immoral liars. These ahadeeth also indicate that soothsayers and witches are also kafirs, because they claim to have knowledge of the unseen, which is kufr (disbelief), and because they only reach their goals by serving the jinn and worshipping them instead of Allah, which is kufr or disbelief in Him and associating others with Him (shirk). The one who believes them and their claims to have knowledge of the unseen is like them. Everyone who goes to these people and deals with them, is disowned by the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). It is not permissible for the Muslim to accept what they claim is a kind of treatment, such as their muttering mumbo-jumbo or pouring lead and other kinds of nonsense that they do. This is a kind of sorcery and deception of the people. Whoever accepts it is helping them in their falsehood and kufr.

Majmoo' Fatawa al-Shaykh Ibn Baz.

Secondly:

With regard to witchcraft (sihr), it is real and is not an illusion, and it may have an effect by Allah's leave.

Al-Qurafi said: Sihr is real, and the person against whom it is done may die, or his nature or habits may be changed, even if he does not deal with it himself. This was the view of al-Shafi'i and Ibn Hanbal. Al-Furooq.

The Mu'tazalis, Qadaris and some of the scholars held a different view, but no attention should be paid to that. Al-Qurafi and others mentioned that the sahabah (companions) were

unanimously agreed that it is real before there appeared those who denied that.

The evidence of Ahl al-Sunnah (those upon the prophetic teachings) concerning that is as follows:

1. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"… but the shayateen (devils) disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Harut and Marut, but neither of these two (angels) taught anyone (such things) till they had said, "We are for trial, so disbelieve not (by learning this magic from us)." And from these (angels) people learn that by which they cause separation between man and his wife, but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's leave. And they learn that which harms them and profits them not." [2:102]

This verse clearly indicates what we are trying to say, which is that sihr (witchcraft) is real, and that the practitioner of witchcraft may create a division between a man and his wife thereby, and that he may harm people by means of his witchcraft, but he cannot do any harm except by Allah's leave.

2. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And from the evil of those who practice witchcraft when they blow in the knots."
[113:4]

"… those who practice witchcraft when they blow in the knots" refers to female witches whose witchcraft involved tying knots then blowing into them. If witchcraft were not something real, Allah would not have commanded us to seek refuge from it.

3. Further evidence is provided by the fact that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was bewitched by the Jew Labeed ibn al-A'asam. This is a saheeh hadeeth (authentic narration) that was narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

Ibn al-Qayyim said: The witchcraft which can cause sickness, lethargy, mental sickness, love, hatred and delusions is something that does exist and is known by the masses. Many people

know it from experience. Al-Tafsir al-Qayyim.

Thirdly:

There are many types of witchcraft, including illusions and deceiving the eyes. But not all sihr is as such. Some scholars listed different kinds of witchcraft, and counted eight kinds, the most well known of which are:

1. Knots and incantations

i.e., reciting words and mumbo-jumbo by means of which the witch is able to use the devils to do what he wants of harming the person being bewitched. But Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"… but they could not thus harm anyone except by Allah's leave." [2:102]

2. Sleight of hand

They become skilled in this by means of practice and training to do things quickly, and bring out something hidden.

For example, the magician may bring a dove and strangle it in front of the audience; then he hits it with his hand and it gets up and flies.

But in fact there was a kind of anesthetic in his hand and he made it smell it and made the audience think that he had strangled it and killed it, then when he hits it, he wakes it up from that stupor.

3. Bewitching the eyes

This is very common among the liars; the magician does not really put a sword in his body, rather he bewitches the eyes of the audience, and puts the sword by his side, but the bewitched people think that he puts it through his middle.

These tricksters have become well known among us, because among the audience there are those who protected themselves with Quran and dhikr (remembrance of Allah), and

remembered Allah a great deal whilst sitting in the gathering watching the magician, so they saw what really happened, unlike what those who were bewitched saw.

4. Using chemicals

This is done well by those who know how substances react with one another, thus producing a substance that is not affected by some other substances, such as the Sufi Rifa'iyyah who make people think that they are not affected by fire, when in fact they coat themselves with some fireproof substances. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) challenged them to wash with hot water before entering the fire and they refused because this would have exposed their deceit.

And there are many other things that the practitioners of witchcraft do, which could not happen unless Allah decreed it.

See Tafsir Ibn Kathir; Majmoo' Fatawa al-Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen; al-Sihr by Shaykh 'Umar al-Ashqar.

And Allah knows best.