



Jinn Possession in Humans: An Islamic Jurisprudential Analysis

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Abstract: Islamic tradition maintains that Jinn possess supernatural abilities to inhabit humans, animals, and inanimate objects. While certain Muslim sects like the Mu'tazilah and Qadariyah reject this concept, authoritative Islamic sources confirm Jinn's capacity to possess human bodies and manipulate sensory faculties. This phenomenon is linguistically distinguished through two Arabic terms: *Lubs al-Jinn* (internal possession affecting mental faculties) and *Lams al-Jinn* (external physical manifestation). The paper examines theological evidences, types of possession (including hereditary cases), symptoms ranging from erratic behavior to reproductive health issues, and Islamic preventive/remedial measures including Qur'anic recitation and *Ruqyah* therapy. Findings affirm possession as both spiritual reality and medical phenomenon, particularly prevalent among women in Northern Nigeria due to socio-religious factors.

Keywords: Jinn Possession, Islamic Spirituality, *Lubs Al-Jinn*, *Lams al-Jinn*, *Ruqyah* Therapy, Paranormal Medicine.

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Review Paper

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The creation of Jinn and their presence is as true as the creation of mankind and his physical presence, the intangibility of the former notwithstanding. Allah the Most High says:

We created man from sounding clay, from mud moulded into shape. And the Jinn race, we had created before, from the fire of scorching wind. (Qur'an, 15:26–27)

The verse above is self-explanatory on the creation of both the Jinn and humans as among the creatures of Allah that are purposely created to worship their Creator, Allah the Most High, as indicated in the verse of the Glorious Qur'an.

No doubt, the juxtaposition of mankind and Jinn in the Glorious Qur'an explains some degrees of their relationship which both could demonstrate positively or negatively. Indeed, the possession of man by a Jinniy is part of the negative relationship with which the latter harms the former. And at certain times, some devilish individuals invite the possession themselves for ulterior motives. Such people include the soothsayers and pseudo-scholars commonly known as *Malaman Tsibbu* or *'Yan Bori* in the Hausa language (Gobir & Sani, 2018, 2019). Whatever the case, this paper attempts to make it clear that the entrance of Jinn into a human body and taking control of the person's movement entirely within

the period of the possession is quite true. However, before delving into the main theme of the paper, it is pertinent to briefly look into the meaning of the word possession, which is the central focus of the paper.

The dictionary meaning of the word possession may convince one to accept that the literal meaning is in strong agreement with the technical meaning of the term. The literal interpretation of the word suggests: "Having a powerful effect on somebody and controlling the way he or she thinks and behaves." (Hornby, 2006, p. 1130). Interestingly, the dictionary also did not overlook the meaning of the word in its relation to the subject matter of this research. It further explained that the term means: "The situation when somebody's mind is believed to be controlled by the Devil or by an evil spirit." (Hornby, 2006, p. 1130).

Technically, possession has been defined as a paranormal or supernatural event in which it is said that demons, spirits, or other discarnate entities take control of a human body, resulting in noticeable changes in health and or behaviour. It is also the belief that an individual has been empowered by an alien spirit or other para-human force, which then controls the person or alters that person's actions and identity (Khalifah, 2024). Similarly, the term can also describe a similar action of a spirit taking residence in an inanimate object, possibly giving it animation.

The dictionary meanings of the term possession as quoted above strengthen each other in the main focus of the implication of its outcome. That is to say, the complete or partial dominance of the possessed consciousness by the evil spirit resulting from the possession, which leads to the change of the nature and behaviour of the victim, is clearly noticed. As for the technical interpretations, they explain the extent to which demons are used for sorcery and other un-Islamic activities by some people. This is actually another negative relationship between man and Jinn as shall be elaborated under magical relationship. However, it may be more logical to explain the Islamic and cultural viewpoints on the Jinn's possession of the human body.

2.0 Jinn Possession in Islam

There is no doubt in the fact that Jinn can penetrate into the human body and take control of his movement, as clearly exemplified by Allah (The Most High) in the Qur'an with regard to those people who devour usury. The statement runs as:

Those who devour usury will not stand except as stands one whom the Evil One by his touch hath driven to madness... (Qur'an, 2:275)

The verse above is considered by many Qur'anic exegetes as proof for Jinn's appearance in the human body and criticizes some scholars like Zamakhshari, who rejected the possession of mankind by Jinn and condemned their opinion as baseless and against the Sunnah of the Prophet and the common belief of the Sunni Muslims. The verse serves as the strongest and most reliable proof of those Muslim scholars who believed in the possession of man by the Jinn. This is in addition to the authentic Ahadith and views of the earlier and later scholars in favor of the matter.

Commenting on the verse, a leading exegete of the Qur'an, Imam al-Tabari, understands it as a touch which causes loss of consciousness as a result of being possessed by the evil spirit in this world. This interpretation, according to al-Tabari, was the common saying among the *Mufasssirun* (al-Tabari, 2008, p. 101). Al-Baghawi (n.d.) also stated: "It (the verse) means, the devourer of usury will be raised on the Day of Judgement in the state of madness, like the one afflicted with epilepsy caused by Jinn's possession."

Imam al-Qurtubi has equally observed that the verse explains the condition of the usurer on the Day of Judgement, who will be raised from his grave like a person with an epileptic fit, as explained by Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, and Ibn Jubair. He further says: "The phrase '*Yatahabbatuhu al-Shaytan*...' means, 'whom the Evil One possesses and enslaves.' Furthermore, the word 'al-mass' as it appears in the verse connotes the meaning of 'al-junun,' which means 'madness.' He concluded that the verse is proof against the opinion of those who disputed the possession and entrance of Jinn into the human body (Imam Qurtubi, 2001, pp. 302–305).

In his commentary on the verse, al-Mawardi quoted Ibn Abbas, Ibn Jubair, Mujahid, and Hasan, saying that the devourer of usury will be raised from his grave like the person possessed by the Jinn, as if he is suffering from an epileptic fit (Mawardi, n.d., pp. 347–348).

From the comments of the exegetes of the Qur'an sampled above, the assertion of al-Tabari mentioned earlier is correct. All the Tafsir works that this researcher has laid his hands on, with the exception of Zamakhshari's and Baydawi's, have confirmed the possession of man by Jinn as shown in the verse under review.

Additional proofs could also be found in some Ahadith of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

A Hadith was reported by Ibn Abbas of a woman who came to the Prophet (S.A.W.) and complained to him about her epileptic fit, seeking the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) to invoke for her cure. However, the Prophet (S.A.W.) gave her two alternatives: to either pray for her recovery or she should exercise patience and enter Paradise. The woman chose to be patient. Nonetheless, she told the Prophet (S.A.W.) that sometimes she used to become naked whenever she was possessed. The Prophet (S.A.W.) prayed for her, and thereafter, she never became naked even in the state of the epileptic fit (Imam Bukhari, 1985, pp. 376–377).

Commenting on the Hadith, al-Asqalani observes that the epilepsy suffered by the affected woman was a result of the Jinn's possession and not a mere clinical case. He further stated that the possession by Jinn, which led to the situation of losing one's faculty of reasoning, is certain and was normally caused by evil spirits (Asqalani, 2001, pp. 133–155).

The Hadith of Ibn Mas'ud is also a clear proof of the reality of the Jinn's possession, as quoted in the following wording:

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, used to say (once he assumed the prayer): "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from Shaytan the despised; from his evil suggestions, inspirations, and whispers..." (Ibn Majah, 2008, p. 162).

The phrase "evil suggestions" is interpreted as the possession which causes epilepsy (Ibn Majah, 2008, p. 162). It is also good to cite another Hadith which indicates the circulation of Shaytan in the human body like the blood circulates in his veins (Imam Bukhari, Vol. 3, p. 141–142). While commenting on this Hadith, Asqalani says that the Hadith can be understood in its practical sense because Allah (S.W.T) gives Shaytan the power and ability to do that (Asqalani, Vol. 4, p. 327). Therefore, since Shaytan is considered the father of the

Jinn, then all his family members are equally endowed with such powers and capabilities.

Another Hadith, which is more explicit on the issue of the entrance of Jinn into the human body and possessing the affected individual, is the following:

"If one of you yawns, he should place his hand on his mouth because Shaytan enters into it." (Imam Bukhari, 2007, p. 253).

Therefore, unlike the Mu'tazilah and their cohorts, who denied the entrance of Jinn into the human body, some Prophetic Traditions have confirmed its occurrence.

In addition to the proofs from the Qur'an and Hadith, statements of some past venerable scholars regarding the true nature of the Jinn's possession need to be examined with a view to establishing more evidence on the issue.

The *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (the followers of the four schools of jurisprudence) believe in the entrance of Jinn into the human body, which leads to his possession. Possession, as believed by the Salaf, is a practical experience as established by the Shari'ah (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998, p. 9). Ibn Taymiyyah observed that the scholars of the four schools of law were unanimous on the possession by the Jinn, just as they were on their existence. He said that a Jinn enters the body of the possessed and talks through him in a language different from that of the afflicted person, and if he (the possessed) were to be flogged, he would not sense it, no matter how painful it may be (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998, p. 9).

According to Ibn Ashur, the word "Mass" indicates that Shaytan does not only whisper into the human mind, as misinterpreted by Mu'tazilah scholars, but also possesses mankind. Similarly, al-Jaza'iri also explained that the possession by Jinn is a practical episode that has been witnessed a number of times, and its denial is baseless. He narrated the experience with his sister, whose possession by a Jinn led to her death (Jaza'iri, 1989, p. 279).

From the comments and explanations of the scholars above, in addition to the proofs from the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith, one cannot help but accept the view of Ubaid, which says that none can deny the entrance of Jinn into the human body except an atheist (Bali, 2007, p. 61), probably because of the clear texts from the Qur'an and Hadith that support the Jinn's possession. This is because falsifying any verse of the Glorious Qur'an or authentic Tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.) is tantamount to Kufr.

No doubt, the entrance of Jinn into man's body is a plain truth, as described in both the Glorious Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (S.A.W.), and it is now becoming more rampant among people due to negligence

of religious norms, such as recitation of the Glorious Qur'an and daily Adhkar that serve as a fortress against the evil Jinn. Socio-economic reasons can also be another cause for the rampant Jinn possession, as shall be unveiled while discussing the reasons for Jinn possession.

Having examined the viewpoints of Islam about the possession by Jinn, it is imperative to look at the cultural perspectives and examine how the matter is conceived in Northern Nigeria.

2.1 Types of Jinn Possession

Principally, Jinn's possession falls into two categories:

- i. "*Lams al-Jinn*"
- ii. "*Tams al-Jinn*"

The word "*Lamasa*", which is the root word of "*Lams*", literally means "touching" (Baydoun, 2008, p. 315), while "*Tamasa*", whose root word is "*Tams*", is translated as "to destroy" (Baydoun, 2008, p. 251), among others. The two terms, though used in relation to Jinn's possession, have been differentiated by scholars based on their degree of harm to man.

The first type of possession (*Lams al-Jinn*), therefore, would mean the physical touch of Jinn on the human body, which leads to physical ailments in the affected part(s). In this kind of possession, the Jinn does not necessarily need to enter the human body (Halwani, n.d., p. 32). The affected person remains mentally conscious but may experience physical disabilities, such as partial paralysis. There are three categories of *Lams al-Jinn* as follows:

1. **Complete touches (*Mass al-Kulli*):** This involves the touching of the whole body.
2. **Partial touches (*Mass al-Juz'i*):** This occurs when a Jinni touches one or some parts of the body.
3. **Ambulant touches (*Mass al-Taif*):** This type of touch causes horrible nightmares or leaves the affected person in a constant state of fright (Halwani, n.d., p. 32).

The second type of possession (*Tams al-Jinn*) refers to the atrocity committed by some Jinn when they enter a man's body and take over his reasoning faculty (Halwani, n.d., p. 32). Such a person behaves abnormally and cannot account for his actions during the state of possession. It is this kind of possession that sometimes leads to mental disorders. However, it has also been observed that *Tams al-Jinn* can be hereditary. In some cases, Jinn claim that they target a person (the possessed) due to an existing relationship with that person's parents or grandparents, and as long as the family members live, they will continue to possess their descendants (Anka, 2017, p. 117).

It has been observed, this unethical relationship occurs more frequently with females than males, likely

because women are weaker than men both in faith and practice. Gobir & Sani (2018 p. 72) consider women to be more vulnerable to Jinn possessions due to such reasons.

Having discussed the types of Jinn possession, the subsection below examines the causes and signs of possession.

2.2 Causes and Symptoms of Jinn Possession

Although *Lams al-Jinn* and *Tams al-Jinn* differ in their nature and effects, both share common causative features. Based on Ibn Taymiyyah's discussion of the causes of Jinn possession, the following can be considered the major ones:

- a. **Desire, Interest, and Love:** Some Jinn possess mankind under the pretext of love or desire they have for the possessed. The possession that occurs due to the first two reasons (desire and interest) is solely intended to harm mankind. However, possession based on love is sometimes less injurious because the possessing Jinni may demonstrate apparent affection toward the possessed, such as protecting him or her from harm (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2009, p. 68).
- b. **Hatred and Revenge:** If a person pours hot water in a Jinn's residence, throws stones, or urinates in their habitation (DM, n.d., p. 118), thereby harming some of them, the affected Jinni may seek revenge by possessing the perpetrator. If the injury is severe enough to cause the Jinni's death, the victim's relatives may avenge by possessing the person and afflicting them with ailments (Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d.).
- c. **Wickedness and Play:** Possession sometimes occurs due to the Jinn's inherent wickedness or as a form of horseplay. In such cases, the possession involves evil acts by the Jinn, which may be done in jest—similar to how foolish humans commit evil for amusement (Zaghib, 2013, p. 56).
- d. **Magic or Witchcraft:** Magicians employ Jinn to accomplish their evil missions. Similarly, when a witch practices witchcraft, they enlist the assistance of Jinn, who then possess the victim. This makes it easier for the witch to harm the targeted person, sometimes leading to death or severe illness (Zaghib, 2013, p. 56).

In addition to the above causes, Sa'eed, the author of the book titled *Evil Eye*, also added three more as follows:

- i. **Breach of a covenant with a particular Jinni:** For example, if someone who associates with Jinn agrees to a condition stipulated by a certain Jinni for maintaining their relationship and later breaches the agreement, the person may easily be possessed by the Jinni out of provocation.
- ii. **Excessive passion and nervousness:** If a man demonstrates excessive passion or is prone to

intense fear, this may provide an easy opportunity for Jinn to enter his body.

- iii. **Repugnant type of *Adhkar*:** This occurs when someone is made to recite filthy *Adhkar* by *Malaman tsibbu*, such as invoking and glorifying the names of Jinn with the intention of enlisting their help for ulterior motives. In some cases, if a person involved in such *Adhkar* is not strong-hearted, they may become frightened, leading to possession by the Jinn and sometimes even insanity (Sa'eed, 2005, pp. 34–35).

If any of the reasons above occurs and consequently leads to Jinn possession, one or more of the following symptoms may be manifested:

- a. **Erratic behavior in one's words, deeds, and movement:** The possessed person will behave abnormally in speech, attitude, and sometimes gait.
- b. **Seizures:** This refers to sudden mental attacks, which some medical doctors attribute to causes like epilepsy.
- c. Paralysis of a limb without clinical reason.
- d. **Getting angry quickly:** An unreasonable display of temper by a Jinn-possessed person.
- e. **Sitting in the toilet for a long time and talking to oneself:** On occasion, the possessed enjoys sitting in the toilet without reason.
- f. **Constant headache:** The pain may be one-sided or all over the head and hardly responds to medical treatment.
- g. **Irregular menstruation in women:** Blood flow from the private parts without medical cause is also considered a symptom.
- h. Inability to have children without medical problems (e.g., impotency) (Ameen, 2005, pp. 86–87).
- i. **Fatigue and sometimes exhaustion:** Jinn possession causes fatigue and general bodily weakness.
- j. **Insomnia:** Inability to sleep without an apparent cause can signify Jinn possession.
- k. **Conversation with the possessing demon:** The possessed may be heard talking to themselves, but in reality, they are responding to the whispers of the controlling Jinni.
- l. **Terrifying dreams and nightmares:** The possessed may experience horrifying nightmares, such as being pursued by dangerous wolves, falling from a great height, or seeing themselves in a graveyard (Sa'eed, pp. 36–37).

In addition to the above signs, experience reveals that pelvic pain in women (sometimes preventing conception) is another symptom of Jinn possession. However, not all affected women are unable to conceive. In some cases, the woman may lose her pregnancy to miscarriage. Occasionally, the Jinn removes the embryo

from the placenta and fills the stomach with air to mimic pregnancy. The writer encountered such cases during research on this matter in 2016. This practical observation was noted among several women in the course of the study.

3.0 CONCLUSION

It is evident from the contents of this paper that the possession of man by Jinn is entirely possible and has occurred repeatedly. This possession represents one of the negative relationships between man and Jinn, despite the latter's invisibility. The paper has demonstrated that Jinn can enter the human body, possess individuals, and render them unconscious. As identified, such possession can be either *Lubs al-Jinn* (which causes mental derangement) or *Lams al-Jinn* (which does not result in epileptic fits but affects physical health).

This paper finds that Jinn possession has become increasingly prevalent, particularly among females compared to males. This disparity may stem from many women's neglect of religious duties due to their natural weaknesses. Another plausible explanation for the rise in Jinn possession is urban expansion, which has led to the destruction of trees and other Jinn habitats. In retaliation, the displaced Jinn may possess humans who build homes in areas previously inhabited by Jinn.

3.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following remedies are recommended for cases where a Jinn fully possesses and controls its victim:

- i. **Daily Recitation of the Glorious Qur'an:** Muslims should consistently read the Qur'an, as it serves as one of the strongest protections against evil spirits.
- ii. **Regular Practice of Adhkar:** All Muslims should adopt the habit of reciting daily remembrances of Allah (S.W.T.) (morning and evening) as recommended by the Prophet (S.A.W.).
- iii. **Recitation of Ayatul-Kursiy (Verse 255 of Suratul-Baqarah) Before Sleep:** This practice should be observed regularly for protection.
- iv. **Modest Dressing for Muslim Women:** Women should avoid indecent attire and adhere to modest, ethical clothing at all times, especially when leaving home, as divinely ordained in Verse 33 of Suratul-Ahzab.
- v. **Ruqyah Recitation for the Afflicted:** When someone suffers from Jinn possession, *Ruqyah* verses should be recited over them to expel the Jinn without causing harm.

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