
Witchcraft: Spiritual, Physical, and Healing Experiences

Witchcraft's Existence: The Spiritual, Physical, and Psychological Realms

When people feel a lack of understanding of some part of their lives, it is common that they turn to a certain practice that may allow for better control of their existence. To those who believe in it, witchcraft is one of such practices that is used either solely or combined with other faiths in order to explain the unexplainable and to gain a sense of guidance for oneself. Witchcraft in its basic entity is the practice of and belief in magical skills and abilities that are able to be exercised by individuals and certain social groups. It is a mere reflection of the people who use it, as witchcraft can be used for both good and evil. Users of witchcraft claim to have the psychic ability to cause physical harm to someone without any physical contact, but rather through energy transmission and natural forces (Witchcraft Notes, 2017: April 20th). Since witchcraft is a complex concept that varies culturally and societally, it is difficult to define its realms with precision. However, in its general terms, witchcraft often occupies a spiritual, religious, or healing role, and is often present within societies whose cultural framework includes a magical world view. While witchcraft and its history has been shrouded with superstition, its tangible features support the idea that witchcraft is in fact real. Though many skeptics may view witchcraft simply as indication of an overactive imagination, cases such as spiritual experiences, physical evidence, as well as psychological and physiological reactions demonstrate the existence of witchcraft and its effects on human beings. These encounters of witchcraft are expressed through different ways in various places, such as Mexico, Texas, Central Zimbabwe, and the United Kingdom (Taboo: Witchcraft).

Spiritual experiences when combined with black magic are one way that can explain the reality of witchcraft. For instance, the Sonora market, located in the heart of Mexico City, is a major site of witchcraft where spiritual services are held. In the backrooms behind stalls, spells can be cast or lifted, and customers may have their spirits cleansed through a specific set of rituals (Taboo: Witchcraft). As seen National Geographic's film called "Taboo: Witchcraft", witches used specific items, such as tongue of a pig and wing of a bat in order to cast a spell on a human. Moreover, customers in the Sonora market can also engage in satanic rites, where the devil is contacted and spirit possession may occur (Taboo: Witchcraft). Because the phenomenon of witchcraft does not die even when a witch is killed, captured, or struck, these spiritual services aforementioned are believed to be in existence. Witches control their victim through the human's spirit. Once the human host is killed, however, the spirit does not die and as a result, the witchcraft agency simply finds another human host to attach itself to (Ephirim-Donkor, 2017: 201).

Further regarding witchcraft's spiritual aspects, just as human beings need food and nourishment to survive as healthy individuals, spiritually too witches must feed on the blood of their victims in order to stay powerful and maintain their ongoing growth as they strive to become of old age. Blood is the ultimate food of choice as it is divine and thus contains the essence of life both spiritually and physically. One way that exemplifies witchcraft's spiritual existence, is the idea of how witches take the spirits of their victims and use it in order to prolong their own physical life. As a result of these witches feeding on the blood of younger

victims to elongate their lives, many elderly people are therefore accused of being witches when they outlive their children (Ephirim-Donkor, 2017: 201). Moreover, not only is blood a source of food for witches, but it is also a means by which witches connect themselves to the spiritual world, as the blood allows for the creation of inalienable and intense connections between the witch and the spirit (Ephirim-Donkor, 2017: 202). For instance, as displayed in the witchcraft film, a male witch in the United Kingdom slit open a part of his hand and used his blood to perform a ritual that would connect him to the spiritual world. Through smearing his blood on a piece of writing from the bible, and pouring whiskey around the ground, a substance he claims the spirits are fond of, the witch was able to cast a spell and contact the spirits by means of his human blood (Taboo: Witchcraft).

Though witchcraft's spiritual endeavors may be used for the purpose of evil, witchcraft is also used by witch cleansers. These witch cleansers, as seen in central Zimbabwe, examine a community where there is social disharmony caused by evil witches, and then take the opportunity to operate the village and create social harmony through spiritual rituals. The film shows singers and drummers accompany the cleansing ritual, as the witch cleanser uses medicine to wash the power of witchcraft off the village. The music awakens benevolent spirits, in hopes that they will chase away evil. In order to find out the source of the misfortune in a village, a witch cleanser will form a trial-like session where he uses certain tools to judge individuals and examine the cause of evil spirits within the village. The witch cleanser determines whether the individuals are innocent or guilty of practicing witchcraft. This is done through a balancing device, where the device only balances if an individual is not a witch and therefore innocent of practicing witchcraft. Suspects are also interrogated by the witch cleanser, as these cleansers claim to be capable of reading minds (Taboo: Witchcraft). As depicted, witchcraft can be revealed through spiritual experiences as mentioned in the examples above, and can be used for both good and evil in different ways throughout different places in the world.

Along with spiritual experiences that help expose witchcraft's presence, physical evidence is also a means of expressing witchcraft, as its tangibility allows for one to both see and touch witchcraft's goods and artifacts and apply them to uses of black magic. As indicated by the film, buried objects such as jars of human remain preserves are one type of physical evidence that exemplifies witchcraft's practices. Not only does witchcraft include the use of physical objects, but it also impacts certain physical landscapes as the land becomes cursed with black magic when artifacts are buried. For example, witch healers in a Mexican village were asked to cleanse a hill where witches were allegedly found to practice. They arrived at a site where black magic was rumored to take place. As they videotaped the events that followed, the witch healers saw that there were nearly 100 objects buried as part of a hexing ritual. Through these buried artifacts, specific spirits are invoked with the use of black magic. The witch healers as a result of the remains of black magic gained a sense of evil within the hill, as the buried objects comprised of people whose spirits were captured. These evil witches used black magic as a way to harm innocent people, break up relationships, and even kill. The witch healers began to feel unnerving and disturbed as the objects were being opened up and poured out. With the blowing of the wind, the objects began to swirl around, and it was felt that through the breaking of these spells, the witch healers had clearly entered somebody else's territory. If witches find out that someone has destroyed something they had done, they will come back and destroy something back of that other person. The witch healers began to feel both physically and mentally ill as there was so much evil concentrated into one place. With such a concentrated amount of evil and remains of cursed artifacts, the healers' spirits are in jeopardy and they therefore must be

cleansed in order to become whole again. These experiences push aside science and challenge one's beliefs as they involved psychological effects that ultimately produced physiological effects, a common phenomenon among many who have experienced witchcraft (Taboo: Witchcraft).

In addition to buried artifacts, the Sonora market as previously mentioned not only provides services but also offers goods to customers, such as herbal remedies, magical powders, lotions, potions, and much more. These tangible objects allow a customer to physically utilize the goods for purposes such as curing illnesses, getting rich, and making unwanted energy in a group disappear. As presented by the film, in the rooms behind the stalls, witches are also seen to recite curses in which they bind hexes in black ribbon in preparation for a burial in a human grave. These physical tools are incorporated into the spells as they offer different uses. In order to sanctify these prayers, live sacrifices are made using animals such as chickens, as such sacrifices invoke powers of darkness. As discussed earlier in witchcraft's spiritual experiences, witches use physical remains of animals such as a pig's tongue and a bat's wing as they cast spells on humans, which combines both spiritual forces with tangible items that help to highlight witchcraft's core principles (Taboo: Witchcraft).

Aside from the physical evidence and spiritual occurrences that assist in determining movements of witchcraft, a final means of identifying witchcraft's phenomenon is by its psychological effects, which may sometimes even lead to physiological outcomes. For instance, as portrayed in the film, a woman in McAllen, Texas was seen to experience psychological effects as she feared that she was surrounded by black magic within her very home. Since she was in such fear that a witch was watching her constantly, the woman started to not only have psychological reactions, but physiological ones as well. For example, she began seeing strange things and hearing unusual sounds, convinced that her house became alive at night. She even recalled that she would feel things touching her feet and hear footsteps running under her pillow. She felt psychological effects such as paranoia, anxiety, and terror, which resulted in physiological reactions like cold sweats, nausea, throwing up, and dizziness. Soon the woman became physically ill as her mind seemed to deceive her from the fear of being cursed by witchcraft, and she eventually became too sick to leave her house and was even fired from her job. Because the woman truly believed her and her home was cursed with black magic by a witch, her body naturally produced these mental and physical effects. This occurrence comes to show how powerful the phenomenon of witchcraft can be. Once someone is convinced that they are cursed with black magic, his or her state of mind is completely altered. And with a changed state of mind, the brain can control the physical body and produce physiological effects, as illustrated with the woman in Texas (Taboo: Witchcraft). If somebody fears that someone else has worked black magic on them, they will begin to feel both mental and physical effects and become sick because they believe that these witches are causing them to get sick. Sometimes it is even the simple fear of one being cursed under witchcraft's powers that can lead to physical death, as that human is so convinced that witchcraft is being operated upon his or her surroundings.

When discussing witchcraft's psychological realm and the physiological effects it produces, there does not have to be only one person involved who is experiencing both mental and physical effects as there can be one using his or her psychological awareness to produce a physical consequence on another human being. Another example of witchcraft's powerful mental and physical effects on the body can be illustrated through the male witch in the United Kingdom, who describes a haunting story of his past where his psychological strength led to the

physical harm of a childhood bully. As a young child, the witch explains that he was bullied by another boy in school. Rather than fighting back physically, however, the witch decided to take a different route by influencing the bully's physical body with his mind. He claimed that the spirits realized his issue and transmitted energy to him that empowered him to gain magical powers and thus gain revenge from the bully. By fighting back with magic at the bully, the young boy was capable of supernaturally pushing the bully down a flight of stairs. Ever since that incident, the bully never returned back to school (Taboo: Witchcraft). Through the witch's mental association with the spirits, it was demonstrated that he was able to gain the power to throw a curse at the bully and impact him physically. As illustrated through the occurrences mentioned, when the power of witchcraft's magic is believed so strongly, anything can happen as a result of people's actions.

Witchcraft is practiced through countless ways and throughout many different places in the world. It can be operating in any moment at any time, and may not even be realized by the common people. However, to the people who do not practice witchcraft, who claim to be rational people and as a result do not engage in the supernatural, they may want to rethink their day to day practices. While it may not be through the use of witchcraft, people perform certain actions every day in order to avoid the consequences from superstitious beliefs, such as walking through a ladder, or seeing a black cat crossing someone's path. People do not like to admit to it, but superstitious actions are still being practiced throughout the world, no matter what type of belief that practice is based on. Needless to say, of all supernatural phenomena, the powers of witchcraft are considered to be of most amazement and mystery. Science cannot completely define witchcraft in all logical terms, as even scientists have seen things that they cannot understand, like magical powers, spiritual forces, and hidden forms of knowledge. In societies where black magic is practiced, witchcraft takes on many forms, such as an evil force that threatens communities, a religion of spirits, and a means of exerting power over others. These forms can be revealed through the several methods that have been mentioned. Spiritual experiences through the medium of blood can connect witches to the spiritual world and may result in incidences of witchcraft (Witchcraft Notes, 2017: April 20th). Physical pieces of evidence, such as buried human preserves, are tangible in their nature and can thus expose the powers of black magic to the people in contact with the objects. And finally, witchcraft can be identified by the psychological effects it produces that may sometimes result in physiological reactions, a clear indication of black magic existing in one's surroundings.