

# Exorcism & Possession

## A Social and Psychological Perspectives in Exorcism: Some Observation

Dr. Pallavi S.Dubey  
Assistant Professor  
Parul Institute of Arts  
Parul University

### Abstract

Exorcism (from Greek εξορκισμός, exorkismós "binding by oath") is the religious or spiritual practice of evicting demons or other spiritual entities from a person, or an area, that are believed to be possessed. Depending on the spiritual beliefs of the exorcist, this may be done by causing the entity to swear an oath, performing an elaborate ritual, or simply by commanding it to depart in the name of a higher power.

*Index Terms* exorcism , Religion, Society, Media. 'Guthuk

### I. INTRODUCTION

The practice is ancient and part of the belief system of many cultures and religions. Requested and performed exorcism began to decline in the United States by the 18th century and occurred rarely until the latter half of the 20th century when the public saw a sharp rise due to the media attention exorcisms were getting. Exorcism (from Greek εξορκισμός, exorkismós "binding by oath") is the religious or spiritual practice of evicting demons or other spiritual entities from a person, or an area, that are believed to be possessed. Depending on the spiritual beliefs of the exorcist, this may be done by causing the entity to swear an oath, performing an elaborate ritual, or simply by commanding it to depart in the name of a higher power.

There was "a 50% increase in the number of exorcisms performed between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s. Exorcism is one of the fascinating facts in all the religions in India as well as in the world. We directly or indirectly believe in this. We all have been raised since our childhood we all the stories of spirits and ghosts. In society we have various cultures and in all the cultures we have many ways of it to explain.

The religions like

1. Buddhism
2. Jainism
3. Hinduism
4. Islam
5. Christianity

### Buddhism

The ritual of the Exorcising-Ghost day is part of Tibetan tradition. The Tibetan religious ceremony 'Gutor' རྒྱུ་གཏོང་དེ, literally offering of the 29th, is held on the 29th of the 12th Tibetan month, with its focus on

driving out all negativity, including evil spirits and misfortunes of the past year, and starting the new year in a peaceful and auspicious way.

The temples and monasteries throughout Tibet hold grand religious dance ceremonies, with the largest at Potala Palace in Lhasa. Families clean their houses on this day, decorate the rooms and eat a special noodle soup called 'Guthuk'. རྒྱལ་ལྷན་ལྷན་ In the evening, the people carry torches, calling out the words of exorcism

## Christianity

In Christianity, exorcism is the practice of casting out or getting rid of demons. In Christian practice the person performing the exorcism, known as an exorcist, is often a member of the Christian Church, or an individual thought to be graced with special powers or skills. The exorcist may use prayers and religious material, such as set formulas, gestures, symbols, icons, amulets, etc. The exorcist often invokes God, Jesus and/or several different angels and archangels to intervene with the exorcism. Protestant Christian exorcists most commonly believe the authority given to them by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (the Trinity) is the source of their ability to cast out demons.

In general, people considered to be possessed are not regarded as evil in themselves, nor wholly responsible for their actions, because possession is considered to be unwilling manipulation by a demon resulting in harm to self or others. Therefore, practitioners regard exorcism as more of a cure than a punishment. The mainstream rituals usually take this into account, making sure that there is no violence to the possessed, only that they be tied down if there is potential for violence.

### Catholic Church

In Catholic Christianity, exorcisms are performed in the name of Jesus Christ. A distinction is made between a formal exorcism, which can only be conducted by a priest during a baptism or with the permission of a bishop, and "prayers of deliverance" which can be said by anyone.

The statue of Saint Philip of Agirawith the Gospel in his left hand, the symbol of the exorcists, in the May celebrations in his honor at Limina, Sicily

The Catholic rite for a formal exorcism, called a "Major Exorcism", is given in Section 11 of the *Rituale Romanum*. The Ritual lists guidelines for conducting an exorcism, and for determining when a formal exorcism is required.<sup>[9]</sup> Priests are instructed to carefully determine that the nature of the affliction is not actually a psychological or physical illness before proceeding.

In Catholic practice the person performing the exorcism, known as an exorcist, is an ordained priest. The exorcist recites prayers according to the rubrics of the rite, and may make use of religious materials such as icons and sacramental. The exorcist invokes God—specifically the Name of Jesus—as well as members of the Church Triumphant and the Archangel Michael to intervene with the exorcism. According to Catholic understanding, several weekly exorcisms over many years are sometimes required to expel a deeply entrenched demon.<sup>[1]</sup>

### Lutheran Churches

From the 16th century onward, Lutheran pastoral handbooks describe the primary symptoms of demonic possession to be knowledge of secret things, knowledge of languages one has never learned, and supernatural strength. Before conducting a major exorcism, Lutheran liturgical texts state that a physician be consulted in order to rule out any medical or psychiatric illness. The rite of exorcism centers chiefly around driving out demons "with prayers and contempt" and includes the Apostle's Creed and Our Father.

Baptismal liturgies in Lutheran Churches include a minor exorcism.

## Hinduism

The image of Hanuman at the Hanuman temple in Sarangpur is said to be so powerful that a mere look at it by people affected by evil spirits, drives the evil spirits out of the people affected

Beliefs and practices pertaining to the practice of exorcism are prominently connected with Hindus. Of the four Vedas (holy books of the Hindus), the Atharva Veda is said to contain the secrets related to exorcism, magic and alchemy. The basic means of exorcism are the mantra and the yajna used in both Vedic and Tantric traditions. Vaishnava traditions also employ a recitation of names of Narasimha and reading scriptures, notably the Bhagavata Purana aloud.

According to Gita Mahatmya of Padma Purana, reading the 3rd, 7th and 9th chapter of Bhagavad Gita and mentally offering the result to departed persons helps them to get released from their ghostly situation. Kirtan, continuous playing of mantras, keeping scriptures and holy pictures of the deities (Shiva, Vishnu, Hanuman, Brahma, Shakti, etc.) (especially of Narasimha) in the house, burning incense offered during a Puja, sprinkling water from holy rivers, and blowing conches used in puja are other effective practices<sup>1</sup> It is also believed that praying to Lord Hanuman gives the best result. It is also mentioned in the Hanuman Chalisa. It is believed that just uttering the name of Lord Hanuman makes the evil forces and devils tremble, in fear. The main puranic resource on ghost and death-related information is Garuda Purana. A complete description of birth and death and also about the human soul are explained in Katō Upanishad, a part of Yajur Veda. A summary of this is also available as a separate scripture called Kāttakam.

## Islam

Islamic exorcisms consist of the treated person lying down, while a sheikh places a hand on a patient's head while reciting verses from the Quran, but this is not mandatory. The drinking or sprinkling of holy water (water from the Zamzam Well) may also take place along with applying of clean non-alcohol-based perfumes, called as ittar.

Specific verses from the Quran are recited, which glorify God (e.g. The Throne Verse (Arabic: آية الكرسي Ayatul Kursi)), and invoke God's help. In some cases, the adhan (call for daily prayers) is also read, as this has the effect of repelling non-angelic unseen beings or the jinn.

The Islamic prophet Muhammad taught his followers to read the last three suras from the Quran, Surat al-Ikhlās (The Fidelity), Surat al-Falaq (The Dawn) and Surat an-Nas (Mankind).

A hadith recorded in Sahih al-Bukhari, 8:76:479 states: "Seventy thousand people of my followers will enter Paradise without accounts, and they are those who do not practice Ar-Ruqya and do not see an evil omen in things, and put their trust in their Lord." Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, a scholar, commented on this hadith, stating: That is because these people will enter Paradise without being called to account because of the perfection of their Tawheed, therefore he described them as people who did not ask others to perform ruqyah for them. Hence he said "and they put their trust in their Lord." Because of their complete trust in their Lord, their contentment with Him, their faith in Him, their being pleased with Him and their seeking their needs from Him, they do not ask people for anything, be it ruqyah or anything else, and they are not influenced by omens and superstitions that could prevent them from doing what they want to do, because superstition detracts from and weakens Tawheed".

## Judaism

Josephus reports exorcisms performed by administering poisonous root extracts and others by making sacrifices.

In more recent times, Rabbi Yehuda Fetaya (1859-1942) authored the book Minchat Yahuda, which deals extensively with exorcism, his experience with possessed people, and other subjects of Jewish thought. The book is written in Hebrew and was translated into English.

The Jewish exorcism ritual is performed by a rabbi who has mastered practical Kabbalah. Also present is a minyan (a group of ten adult males), who gather in a circle around the possessed person. The group recites Psalm 91 three times, and then the rabbi blows a shofar (a ram's horn).

The shofar is blown in a certain way, with various notes and tones, in effect to "shatter the body" so that the possessing force will be shaken loose. After it has been shaken loose, the rabbi begins to communicate with it and ask it questions such as why it is possessing the body of the possessed. The minyan may pray for it and perform a ceremony for it in order to enable it to feel safe, and so that it can leave the person's body.

### *Taoism*

In Taoism, exorcisms are performed because an individual has been possessed by an evil spirit for one of two reasons. The individual has disturbed a ghost, regardless of intent, and the ghost now seeks revenge. An alive person could also be jealous and uses black magic as revenge thereby conjuring a ghost to possess someone. Members of the fashi, both Chinese ritual officers and priests ordained by a celestial master, perform Chinese rituals, in particular, exorcisms.

Historically, Taoist exorcisms include chanting, physical movements, and praying as a way to drive away the spirit. Rituals such as these occur during festivals. Rituals such as these are considered of low order during these festivals. They are more for entertainment than a necessity during festivals.

The leaders of the exorcisms create a dramatic performance to call out the demons so the village can once again have peace. The leaders strike themselves with a sharp weapon so they bleed. Blood is considered to be a protector, so after the rituals, the blood is blotted with a tissue and put on the door of houses as an act of protection against evil spirits.

### *Scientific view*

Demonic possession is not a psychiatric or medical diagnosis recognized by either the DSM-5 or the ICD-10. Those who profess a belief in demonic possession have sometimes ascribed to possession the symptoms associated with physical or mental illnesses, such as hysteria, mania, psychosis, Tourette's syndrome, epilepsy, schizophrenia or dissociative identity disorder.

Additionally, there is a form of monomania called demon mania or demonopathy in which the patient believes that he or she is possessed by one or more demons. The illusion that exorcism works on people experiencing symptoms of possession is attributed by some to placebo effect and the power of suggestion. Some cases suggest that supposedly possessed persons are actually narcissists or are suffering from low self-esteem and act demonically possessed in order to gain attention.

Within the scientific community, the work of psychiatrist M. Scott Peck, a believer in exorcism, generated significant debate and derision. Much was made of his association with (and admiration for) the controversial Malachi Martin, a Roman Catholic priest and a former Jesuit, despite the fact that Peck consistently called Martin a liar and a manipulator. Other criticisms leveled against Peck included claims that he had transgressed the boundaries of professional ethics by attempting to persuade his patients to accept Christianity.

### *Exorcism and mental illness*

One scholar has described psychosurgery as "Neurosurgical Exorcisms", with trepanation having been widely used to release demons from the brain. Meanwhile, another scholar has equated psychotherapy with exorcism.

#### United Kingdom

In the UK, exorcisms are increasing. They happen mainly in charismatic and Pentecostal churches, and also among communities of West African origin. Frequently, the people exorcised are mentally disturbed. Mentally ill people are sometimes told to stop their medication as the church believes prayer and/or exorcism is enough. If psychiatric patients do not get better after exorcism, they may believe they have failed to overcome the demon and get worse.

There are many real stories on exorcism as well.

1. Anneliese Michel

Perhaps one of the most terrifying exorcism cases in history, Anneliese Michel's story went on to inspire the 2005 film *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*. Michel, a young German woman, had struggled from an early age with mental illness. Diagnosed with epileptic psychosis, she also experienced depression and visual and auditory hallucinations, for which she was hospitalized. With time, her symptoms intensified, growing to include an aversion towards religious iconography. Both she and her Catholic family attributed her condition to demonic possession, and beginning at 22, she underwent an intense 10 months of Catholic exorcism rites. Nearly 70 exorcisms were performed in secrecy under the order of the church. In July of 1976, Michel passed away. An autopsy declared her death was the result of emaciation, malnutrition and starvation at the hands of her priests and her family, who had, during the exorcisms, discontinued consultations with doctors. The family and priests involved were investigated, charged with negligent homicide, and found guilty of manslaughter, serving six months in jail and three years probation.

2. Anna Ecklund

Often said to include speaking in tongues and strange guttural voices, levitating and clinging to bedroom walls, disturbed thoughts and revulsion of holy objects and sacred spaces, Ecklund's possession spanned several decades beginning in 1912 when she was just 14 years old. Her case was so well known that it served as the basis for a *Time* profile of the priest in charge of her exorcism, Father Theophilus Riesinger.

Anna's demonic possession was reportedly the result of a curse, put on the devout Catholic in 1908 by her caretakers: her father and her aunt, Mina. Mina was widely believed to be the lover of Anna's father, as well as a witch who used spelled herbs in Ecklund's food to put her under the demon's spell. Father Carl Vogl penned an account of Anna's possession in a pamphlet, published in 1936, called *Begone Satan: A Soul Stirring Account of Diabolical Possession in Iowa*.

The first exorcism performed on Ecklund in 1912 was successful for a time, but Ecklund would be possessed again by even more demons in 1928. Her second exorcism, which lasted three sessions, was held at a convent in Earling, Iowa and was so grueling it resulted in the deterioration of Ecklund's body. The demons were eventually exorcised, and Ecklund went on to live her life, with only milder possessions after.

3. The Smurfs' Poltergeist

Unlike many other well-known cases of demonic possession, the Smurl family claimed it was not a person who was possessed. Instead, they claimed their West Pittston, Pennsylvania double-block home had been taken over by a poltergeist. The Smurl family's case was both highly publicized and heavily scrutinized, discredited by paranormal professionals and clergy who claimed on several occasions that nothing unusual was happening at the residence. **Paranormal Cases Investigated by Ed and Lorraine Warren That We Can't Stop Talking About** However, paranormal investigators and demonologists Ed and Lorraine Warren claimed the house was occupied by a "very powerful" demon, performing several exorcisms on the home to rid it of the dark shadow they saw there. The unsuccessful exorcism was done in an attempt to stop the demon's alleged attacks on the family, which included loud banging, foul-smelling odors, shaken mattresses, physical and sexual assaults on one member of the family, others being pushed down stairs, and even their dog being thrown into the wall. In 1986, after publishing a book about their experiences, the family claimed intense prayer had helped return things to normal—although the family matriarch said there were still odd occurrences in 1987.

4. Roland Doe

In many ways, Ecklund and Roland Doe (also known by another alias, "Robbie Mannheim") had similar experiences with possession, including the fact that both were cataloged and published by priests. Doe's case became so notorious that it, too, was adapted into a film: His case was the inspiration for the 1973 horror classic *The Exorcist*.

After the passing of his aunt, the 13-year-old turned to a spirit board to commune with his beloved family member. Instead of inviting his aunt, Roland apparently invited something much more sinister. After the family became overwhelmed by weird occurrences, including odd noises, furniture moving by itself, and objects levitating when Roland was around, they reached out to their Lutheran pastor who, after monitoring Roland's behavior, declared that he should see a Catholic priest. He did; during the resulting exorcism the boy slashed the Catholic priest's arm with a bedspring, temporarily putting an end to any further action.

#### 5. David Berkowitz, Son of Sam

One of America's most notorious serial killers claimed to have been possessed during his spree, blaming the demons for the murder of six New York City residents. In the year between 1976 and 1977, Berkowitz would terrorize the residents of the city's five boroughs murdering six and wounding seven, a violent spree he attributed to "Papa Sam," a mysterious, evil figure Berkowitz referenced in the letters he left at his crime scenes.

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After his capture, it was revealed that "Sam" was the dog of his neighbor Sam Carr. Berkowitz claimed in his prison diaries that the animal was possessed by a 6,000-year-old man named Sam, an alcoholic who consumed human blood. Berkowitz also claimed that the spirit locked him in the attic and commanded him to kill through the dog. "He told me [to kill] through his dog, as he usually does," David wrote in his diaries, before revealing concern that he "may, one day, evolve into a humanoid or demon in a more complete state."

Although Berkowitz has gone back and forth, sometimes sticking with the possession story, sometimes recanting it, he, to this day, believes that his crimes were part of an epic struggle between God and the Devil.

#### CONCLUSION:

While the use of exorcism in the past fifty years has become quite controversial, that doesn't take away from the fact it is a very real practice. This ancient rite has been exploited by the Hollywood media for selfish reasons. It has become nothing more than hoax that gets people killed by a whole generation thanks to movies like *The Exorcism*, and *the Possession*. It is a very serious rite and cases like Michel's are all that is reported, not the thousands of exorcisms that go right and that save lives. Weather you believe in this rite or not do not let your opinion be swayed by the media. If you aren't sure on the subject or if you think someone is actually possessed do your research before you trust some movie merely out to make money.

"Rituals [of exorcism] vary from a more spiritual laying-on of hands by a clairvoyant exorcist, taking the entity into his or her own body and then expelling it, to the formal procedure outlined in the *Catholic Rituale Romanum* (Guiley 89)."

In order to fully understand the goals of an exorcism, it becomes crucial that one understand actual procedure. Vincentius von Berg's famous exorcism manual, *Enchiridium*, supplied a list of tests to determine whether the possessing spirit were good or evil. The spirit was said to be wicked if it:

1. The sign of the cross, holy water, the name of Jesus, etc Said anything against the Catholic Faith.
2. Excited the mind of the possessed to pride, vainglory, despair, etc. Refused to discuss the possession with a priest
3. Appeared with a loathsome or dejected appearance, or departed leaving a stench, noise, frightfulness, or injury.
4. Approached mildly, but afterward left behind grief, desolation, disturbance of soul and clouds of the mind.

If the exorcist felt confident that the person was truly possessed, the next step was to conduct an exorcism. Therefore, it became imperative that the exorcist determine how the evil spirit entered into the afflicted's body.

There were only two ways in which a person can be possessed: the permission of God for the demon to enter the

body or a witch's incantations inducing the demons to take possession.

Even if the exorcist suspected the possession was a witch's doing, he was forbidden to question the name of the suspect,

for doing so would be obtaining help from the devil. The Sorbonne in 1620 proclaimed that the testimony of demons could never be accepted. Demons **always** lied, even under the influence of an exorcism.

If after all of these tests, the exorcist believed that the evidence was insufficient to reach a conclusion, he would perform a general

When the exorcist was finally convinced of an actual possession, he would ask the devil a series of questions.

The most important task was naming the demon(s) torturing the victim. In so doing, the exorcist was able to have control over him,

according to a primitive animistic theory. In addition, the knowledge of the demons could help

in treatment and the exorcist was allowed to specially tailor the exorcism to cure a victim of a particular demon.

Other questions included how many devils were possessing the sufferer, how long the devil planned on staying, and how

it entered the body.

These questions as part of the exorcism occurred between prayers.

Finally, the practice of exorcisms was not to be taken lightly. Certain safeguards were made, such as the presence of witnesses

, especially concerning women demonics, and warning existed to caution the exorcist from saying or doing anything that may provoke obscene thoughts.

The exorcist must also be keenly aware that they are placing himself in great danger. He must be prepared to have his entire

life bared by the paranormal knowledge of the Devil.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



- (1578) Martha Broissier was a young woman who was made infamous around the year of 1578 for her feigned demonic possession discovered through exorcism proceedings
- (1619) Mademoiselle Elizabeth de Ranfaing, who having become a widow in 1617 was later sought in marriage by a physician (afterwards burned under judicial sentence for being a practicing magician). After being rejected, he gave her potions to make her love him which occasioned strange developments in her health and proceeded to continuously give her some other forms of medication. The maladies which she suffered were incurable by the various physicians that attended her and eventually led to a recourse of exorcisms as prescribed by several physicians that examined her case. They began to exorcise her in September, 1619. During the exorcisms, the demon that possessed her made detailed and fluid responses in varying languages including French, Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Italian and was reportedly able to know and recite the thoughts and sins of various individuals who examined her. She was further also able to describe in detail with the use of various languages the rites and secrets of the church to experts in the languages she spoke. There was even a mention of how the demon interrupted an exorcist, who after making a mistake in his recital of an exorcism rite in Latin, corrected his speech and mocked him
- (1778) George Lukins
- (1842-1844) Johann Blumhardt performed the exorcism of Gottliebin Dittus over a two-year period in Möttlingen, Germany from 1842–1844. Pastor Blumhardt's parish subsequently experienced growth marked by confession and healing, which he attributed to the successful exorcism.<sup>[45][46]</sup>
- (1906) Clara Germana Cele was a South African school girl who claimed to be possessed.<sup>[47]</sup>
- (1947) Salvador Dalí is reputed to have received an exorcism from Italian friar Gabriele Maria Berardi while he was in France. Dalí created a sculpture of Christ on the cross that he gave the friar in thanks.<sup>[48]</sup>
- (1949) A boy identified as Robbie Mannheim,<sup>[49][50]</sup> was the subject of an exorcism in 1949, which became the chief inspiration for *The Exorcist*, a horror novel and film written by William Peter Blatty, who heard about the case while he was a student in the class of 1950 at Georgetown University. Robbie was taken into the care of Rev. Luther Miles Schulze, the

boy's Lutheran pastor, after psychiatric and medical doctors were unable to explain the disturbing events associated with the teen; the minister then referred the boy to Rev. Edward Hughes, who performed the first exorcism on the teen.<sup>[51]</sup> The subsequent exorcism was partially performed in both Cottage City, Maryland and Bel-Nor, Missouri<sup>[52]</sup> by Father William S. Bowdern, S.J., Father Raymond Bishop S.J. and a then Jesuit scholastic Fr. Walter Halloran, S.J.<sup>[53]</sup>

- (1974) Michael Taylor<sup>[54]</sup>
- (1975) Anneliese Michel was a Catholic woman from Germany who was said to be possessed by six or more demons and subsequently underwent a secret ten-month-long voluntary exorcism. Two motion pictures, *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* and *Requiem*, are loosely based on Anneliese's story. The documentary movie *Exorcism of Anneliese Michel*<sup>[55]</sup> (in Polish, with English subtitles) features the original audio tapes from the exorcism. The two priests and her parents were convicted of negligent manslaughter for failing to call a medical doctor to address her eating disorder as she died weighing only 68 pounds.<sup>[56]</sup> The case has been labelled a misidentification of mental illness, negligence, abuse, and religious hysteria.<sup>[57]</sup>
- Bobby Jindal, former governor of Louisiana, wrote an essay in 1994 about his personal experience of performing an exorcism on an intimate friend named "Susan" while in college.<sup>[58][59]</sup>
- Mother Teresa allegedly underwent an exorcism late in life under the direction of the Archbishop of Calcutta, Henry D'Souza, after he noticed she seemed to be extremely agitated in her sleep and feared she "might be under the attack of the evil one."<sup>[60]</sup>
- (2005) Tanacu exorcism is a case in which a mentally ill Romanian nun was killed during an exorcism by priest Daniel Petre Corogeanu.
- The October 2007 mākuṭu lifting (ceremonial lifting of a sorcery or witchcraft curse) in the Wellington, New Zealand suburb of Wainuiomata led to a death by drowning of a woman and the hospitalization of a teen. After a long trial, five family members were convicted and sentenced to non-custodial sentences.<sup>[61]</sup>

