

Appendix: Traditional South Asian therapies^{1,2,3}

- ▶ Religious healing involves individuals or groups praying or reciting religious texts to seek cure. Individuals may drink holy water, fast, or undertake pilgrimages to seek forgiveness of sins and alleviation of illness.
- ▶ Religious healers, such as Muslim *pirs*, are consulted with the aim of seeking cure for illnesses that are perceived as having a spiritual cause. Specialist *pirs* may carry out exorcisms of *jinn*s (see below). Famous *pirs* from India or Pakistan may be invited to the UK to provide religious healing.
- ▶ The Arabic word *jinn* is derived from the verb *janna*, which means to hide or conceal. Muslims believe that *jinn*s are spiritual beings — created from smokeless fire rather than the spirit of dead people — that live on earth in a world parallel to mankind. Thus they are physically invisible to man. *Jinn*s have the ability to possess and take over the minds and bodies of other creatures, including humans, and to behave in either a good or evil manner. Muslims believe that *jinn*s possess people for different reasons. Most of the time possession occurs because the *jinn* is simply malicious and wicked.
- ▶ *Taweez* are amulets that contain verses from the Koran that are worn next to the body to act as a defence against the evil eye (*huri nazaar*) and achieve good health.
- ▶ A *hakim* is someone, who is learned and wise, who offers treatment that takes into account social and religio-spiritual contexts. Treatment is based on a combination of medication (*dawaa*) and lifestyle changes or abstinence (*parhez*).

1. Friedson E. Profession of medicine. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970.

2. Ballard R. Desh Pardesh: the South Asian presence in Britain. London: Hurst, 1994.

3. Philips AAB (ed). Ibn Taymeeyah's essay on the jinn (demons). New York: International Islamic Publishing House, 1989.