In European culture, the presence of bad energy and impurities within an individual is known to be associated with disease. Several cultures around the world turn to traditional medicine during times of imbalance or disease outbreak. These practices are thought to diagnose, treat, and prevent illnesses and are more prevalent than modern medicinal practices that are dependent on pharmaceuticals. Different categories of healers are known in traditional medicinal practices that include ritual specialists, spiritual healers, Magico-religious healer, herbal specialists, and specialists in home remedy (Bhasin, 2007). Herbal medicines, medication, massage, acupuncture and exercise are among the few healing practices used in traditional medicine (2007). We can look at this perspective of healing through an ethno medical view demonstrating how health and healing is maintained in different societies that varies from the use of modern-day medical practices (2007). Cultures from Africa, India, the Middle East, and Europe believe in traditional medicine as a treatment of negative energy that is released upon the body and results in an internal imbalance. These causes are known to be supernatural, rather than natural causes. Thus, these traditions are known to involve healing practices that are powered by spirits to relieve the individual of any difficulties within their state of being (2007). Supernatural causes are linked to an internal imbalance of the body, resulting from witches, evil spirits, and sorcerers (2007). Variations among the spirits do exist in terms of their powers, qualities, and characteristics (Abu-Rabia, 2005). Possession is among one of the other traits they are able to induce. Spirits possess victims and cause distress, which can link to disequilibrium in the individual and inhabit them with bad energy (Bhasin, 2007). In some cultures, this possession of spirits and supernatural causes of disease are believed to be a result of the evil eye. Based on Indian culture, women are more susceptible to the induction of bad energy compared to men, who are known to receive good intentions from these spirits (2007). Traditional medicine is used in both healing from the evil eye’s bad energy. This also links with the traditional use of Ayahuasca in healing rituals of bad energy to prevent disease, as well as treating drug addiction, asthma and dermatitis (Doyle, 2012). Here we will analyze the healing practices as a result of supernatural causes, specifically looking at the evil eye and comparing it to the spiritual use of Ayahuasca as a hallucinogen induced healing agent in Amazonian tribes. The healing practices used for those affected by the evil eye in European cultures and healing practices with Ayahuasca used by Native American Tribes to rid of negative energy are both similar and different. Interestingly enough, it is wonderful to see similarities in traditional medicine from different cultures having such an impact on patients as well as providing further information to physicians about the use of these medicines that could potentially be more helpful than modern medicinal practices.

The Evil Eye

The idea behind the evil eye may have a variation of interpretations within different cultures. However, the main idea is that the cause of envy towards another individual may trigger bad energy, introducing impurities to the victim. Bhasin states that the evil eye is given off because an individual is casting a spell on another through envy or jealousy, which then causes sickness (2007). Thus, envy is the most dangerous trait to have and plays a major role in giving off negative energy to another individual (Migliore, 1983). In Ethiopian culture, the buda is the individual who possesses the evil eye and among his or her own class of people, he or she is of lower status (Reminick, 1974). Abu-Rabia describes the evil eye as a supernatural cause for disease, as previously discussed, that is associated with verbal expression of envy without blessing (2005). The most common connection with the evil eye is the induction of illness, weakness, and other states of being that relate to interference with the individuals internal balance. Thus, this energy becomes a curse upon another individual (Reminick, 1974). In a way, one can see this concept to be a similarity to a type of hypnosis that releases power from one individual and is converted to harm within the recipient (Bhasin, 2007).

Abu-Rabia discusses the significance of the beliefs in the evil eye in Bedouin folk culture. The Bedouin desert environments may experience varying conditions as well as social problems that are thought to have stemmed from envy and bad luck (2005). Their culture believes that a strange gaze or admiration can result in pregnancy and reproductive issues, abnormal menstruation, mastitis, and impairment in sexual activity (2005). The evil eye can be compared to a form of witchcraft that does not require a ritual to induce harm on others (2005). Being victim of the evil eye has frightening consequences that can range from sickness to death. Three different types of power relating to the evil eye include the unconscious, the conscious, and hereditary. Individuals who possess the unconscious type give off negative energy from the evil eye, while admiring an object and not knowing that they are doing so. The conscious is aware of their possession of the evil eye power that could have stemmed from birth. The third and most dangerous type is hereditary, where any individual walking in the path of the possessor is affected. Abu-Rabia explains that anything within the path of the possessor is affected, which includes his or her children and property (2005). Also, individuals who have eye abnormalities and light skin and eyes are taken in to suspicion of possessing the evil eye (2005). The concept of the evil eye is similar between cultures; however, variations prevail within the level of susceptibility to its exposure.

Susceptibility to the Evil Eye

Several causes of illness resulting from the evil eye exist, but the illness mainly stems from the idea that an individual who has envy for another without a blessing has enough of a powerful glance upon the individual that it can transfer negative energy towards them and harm their well being (Bhasin, 2007). Women are able to initiate these powerful spirits on others that affect their soul (2007). The envious individual of the victim possesses a dangerous emotion that causes harm to another individual; however, if the individual with the evil eye does not have enough strength that reaches a certain level, he or she is less likely to transfer this bad energy towards whomever they envy (Migliore, 1983). Also, if an individual does not care about the superstition of the evil eye, they are less likely to be affected, compared to an individual who demonstrates fear of being exposed to it (Hocart, 1938). Another factor that increases ones susceptibility to the evil eye is expressing emotion and having an excessive outgoing personality (Reminick, 1974). Victims who express feelings of fear, anxiety, or weakness are recognized by the buda and increase their chances of being effected by the evil eye, as well. A state of illness is also a risk due to the weakened state of the body (1974). In terms of possessions, individuals who are wealthy, beautiful, and have high honor for their children also place themselves in the category of high susceptibility to the evil eye, due to the fact that they may have what another individual does not (1974).

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A Comparison of Healing from Disease and Negative Energy through Ayahuasca Use and Prevention of the Evil Eye

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believed that the evil eye is given upon individuals who are punished, because Allah is not in favor of the individual (2005). Preventative measures in children within Bedouin culture undergo a ritual where indigo is smeared on the forehead of the baby in order to make certain that they are protected (2005).

Italian culture is also aware of the negative affects on the human body that result from the evil eye. According to Pioroni and Giusti, Italian’s initiate healing by using botanical amulets in substitution of pharmaceuticals to heal from the evil eye (2002). For example, the wild species Juniperus communis, Helichrysum italicum, and Spartium juncurne are burned and release smoke that prevents the evil eye from causing any harm. This is similar to other cultures that use incense or even alum that are placed into a fire (Abu-Rabia, 2005). Also, amulets that include a small bag combined with a charm that is usually red in color is attached to clothes and if it is an animal that is suffering from the evil eye, it is usually placed on their homes (Pioroni & Giusti, 2002). This ritual is performed on Christmas Eve in Italian regions. Another protective measure against the evil eye that is practiced by Italians is the use of Allium sativum L. bulbs, Buxus sempervirens L., and Satureja Montana L. branches. B. sempervirens is used throughout rituals during Catholic Lent and the Holy week, which is a demonstration of a good omen (2002). Allium sativum and Feoncium vulgare are known to have ancient historical use by Greeks and Romans (2002). Prayers by healers are used as a way to treat the evil eye. Also clothes are boiled to kill off the bad energy that could have been transferred upon the victims clothing (2002). Compared to other cultures, it is interesting that botanicals are used for healing, which leads to our next discussion about the use of hallucinogenic plants by ancient tribes in healing practices from ailments and disease.

Medicinal use of Ayahuasca in Amazonian Tribes

Hallucinogenic plants such as Ayahuasca, Psilocybin Mushrooms, Marijuana, and Peyote have been around for decades and used by ancient tribes to heal from disease, addiction, and bad energy. These hallucinogens are smoked, ingested, or inhaled during ritualistic practices. One hallucinogen associated with healing from bad energy and disease is the Amazonian plant mixture Ayahuasca. Its primary ingredient is from the plant Banisteriopsis caapi that contains a monomamine oxidase inhibitor. The secondary ingredient is Psychotria viridis or Diplolpyers cabrerana, known as N,N-Dimethyltryptamine. These compounds are responsible for inducing hallucinogenic effects as well as vomiting, auditory stimulation, visual stimulation, increased blood pressure and excessive sweating. Westerners are dependent on Ayahuasca, because it induces an altered state of consciousness. A state of consciousness that is capable of healing from ailments and rid the body of toxic energy (Fotiou, 2012). According to Schenberg, Ayahuasca includes three domains by which it works: psychological, spiritual, and organic (2013). Westerners believe that disconnectionedness from the spiritual world and nature is the reason why illnesses occur (Fotiou, 2012). Thus, the cleansing process of Ayahuasca rituals involves vomiting in some patients, which explains the release of negative energy resulting from depression, anger, stress, and jealousy (2012). When negative feelings causing bad energy are not released, consequences involve harm and poison to the body in a spiritual sense and disease may develop (2012). Therefore, in some cases shamans may ask patients to release any hatred they have towards another individual as well as provide forgiveness to rid of the negative energy caused by such anger (2012). Other elements incorporated into the rituals include sucking, referred to as chupada that also removes negative energy and disease from the body (2012).

Since Ayahuasca ceremonies are strongly based on spirituality, patients must follow certain precautions prior to an Ayahuasca ceremony. On the day of the ritual, the patient is able to consume a light meal, fruit, and herbal tea as long as it is before noon. The following day the patient should refrain from using toothpaste and food before noon. Also abstinence from sex is preferred since the spirit of Ayahuasca is jealous and any interference with the energy of another individual can disrupt the healing process induced by the plants as well as risking punishment from the spirits (Fotiou, 2012). Schenberg describes how an Ayahuasca experience depends on both the set and setting, which is also taken into consideration when using other hallucinogens for traditional purposes, including peyote and psilocybin mushrooms (2007). The individual has a set of personal motives and a purpose to participate in the Ayahuasca ceremony as well as set intentions and beliefs taken into consideration before healing themselves (2007). The setting of the ritual is prepared before the ceremony by the shamans who guide their patients throughout the ceremony to prevent any external stimuli from disrupting the spiritual healing process (2007). It is similar to psychoactive healing by a physician used in modern medicinal practices to be certain that the patient is undergoing proper treatment to prevent any negative reactions. Thus, the state of mind, before and after these rituals, is significant throughout the healing process and plays a major role in how the rituals impact the patient’s life long-term.

The intoxication of the Ayahuasca brew can last up to ten hours. The effects that Ayahuasca has on the brain include increased norepinephrine and dopamine, increased activity in the occipital and frontal lobes, and an amplification between decision making and emotions (Fotiou, 2012). As stated before about traditional medicine, Ayahuasca is practiced among indigenous people for religious purposes in healing and spiritual ceremonies. Which hallucinogenic plants are used during these ceremonies play a major role in the healing process (2002). Ayahuasca use is based solely on purification and cleansing of imbalances present within the soul. Post-Ayahuasca use involves dietary restriction that includes refraining from spics, sugar, salt, oils, meat, stimulants, and sex (2012). The idea behind these restrictions is due to the fact that the plant brew remains in the system of the consumer days after the ceremony and it continues to heal the individual. Therefore, the individual is recommended to stay in a state of purity. Ayahuasca is known to be a treatment for drug addiction and internal imbalance since an expansion of consciousness and awareness with the spiritual world (Bhasin, 2007). Those who mimic shamans and attempt to recite the Icarios are unable to heal and protect during ceremonies.

Pharmacology of Ayahuasca

The chemical components of Ayahuasca include N, N-Dimethyltryptamine (DMT) from the plant P. viridis as well as D. cabrerana, a single major alkaloid (McKenna, 2004). The body naturally produces DMT, however, by itself it is unable induce hallucinations that are experienced during Ayahuasca/DMT use. Harmine is a major alkaloid that is present in B. caapi is responsible for inducing hallucinations post Ayahuasca ingestion (2004). Neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine are metabolized in the brain by monoamine oxidase inhibitors, such as harmine, that function in Ayahuasca use (Brierley, 2012). Since harmine inhibits monoamine oxidase, DMT is able to enter the circulatory system and initiate a physiological response (Schenber, 2013). These physiological responses include altered perceptions of color and images, enhanced emotions that can include fear, peace, and love, cognitive changes such as personal concerns, cosmic consciousness, and expanded knowledge. Due to these responses, it can be explained how the use of Ayahuasca aids in the treatment of drug addiction and internal imbalance since an expansion of consciousness occurs within the patient, allowing them to depict the root of their addiction or disease. Ayahuasca use has also been an alternative for patients who experience advanced stages of cancer and are willing to try out traditional modes of medicine to decrease tumor growth.

Cases of Ayahuasca use have been reported for cancer treatment purposes due to the property of DMT as a sigma-1 receptor agonist. Studies have demonstrated that DMT is able to enter the intracellular space in cancerous cells via serotonin (SERT) and Vescicular monoamine transporter 2 (VMAT2) transporters (Schenber, 2013). The receptor is most prevalent in the brain, lungs, and the liver as well as cancer lines of the colon, ovaries, breast, prostate and lung (2013). This receptor plays a role in mitotary nerve terminals as well as inhibition of ion channels, via protein-protein interactions (Fontanilla, 2010).

DMT’s role as a sigma-1 receptor agonist regulates sodium channels in mammalian cells (Fontanilla et al., 2009). It induces a hallucinogenic state similar to that experienced by LSD (Smith et al., 1998). On a cellular level, the consequences of DMT binding to the sigma-1 receptor at low levels regulate the calcium flow from the endoplasmic reticulum to the mitochondria (Schenber, 2013). Crottes et al., discuss the regulatory
function that the sigma-1 receptor plays in cancer cell electrical plasticity (2013). The receptor is associated with central nervous system diseases, cocaine addiction, Alzheimer’s, retinal degeneration, and cancer (2013). Reports of expression in lung, breast, and prostate cancer cells using Sigma-1 receptor antagonists were found in binding experiments, compared to normal cell lines (2013). DMT plays a significant in cancer treatment due to the fact that inducing calcium flow from the ER to the mitochondria may balance the energy flow during cytosolic aerobic glycolysis and mitochondrial oxidative phosphorylation in cancerous cells (2013). Thus, the imbalance in cancer cells is due to the hyperpolarization of mitochondrial metabolism. With the addition of DMT, the metabolism of the cell can be controlled (2013). The other substance, harmine, also has beneficial effects linked with cancer treatment. In cells, harmine inhibits tumor specific vessel formation and initiates apoptosis (2013). The use of Ayahuasca in cancer treatment is significant, because it gives an alternative healing practice other than common modern medicinal practices that may not be in full effect for certain patients.

Comparison of Ayahuasca and evil eye treatment from bad energy

With the constant social interaction between individuals in society, cultures previously mentioned describe that these social interactions can induce harm on others through strong feelings of envy without blessing, anger towards others, stress induced situations, and spiritual possessions. Thus, in cases of Native American tribes and European cultures, it is vital to participate in rituals and healing practices to eliminate the negative energy from the body since this can be relatively poisonous to the internal balance of an individual. These two phenomena demonstrate the idea of negative energy and how it affects the body of the individual, whether it is caused by the self or imposed by another individual. In terms of ayahuasca, quero beliefs and evil eye healers, envy, negative thoughts, and jealousy can trigger disequilibrium within the individual, altering the mental and physical state of being. Similar beliefs that occur between cultures who believe in the evil eye and Amazonian tribes about the cause of disease both stem from the idea that sorcery and bad spirits alter the internal balance of the individual who is the victim of the forces. With the use of spirits, prayers, charms, and amulets, tribal cultures are able to call upon spirits that enter the soul of the victim, possessing the impurities or harm from the evil eye in order to change the individuals behavior, which is similar to Ayahuasca use where the spirits are open to enter the body of the participant, healing them of bad energy and preventing the progression of their illness. The state of mind before and after these healing practices are vital to long-term internal balance within the body as well as continued prevention of disrupting equilibrium.

Interestingly enough, similar ritual practices are present between healing from negative energy in Amazonian tribes and Europe. Some shamans use objects throughout ceremonies that aid in establishing energy balance. One of these is known as the schacapa. It is similar to botanical amulets used by Italians to prevent bad energy and how it affects the body of the individual, whether it is caused by the self or imposed by another individual. In terms of ayahuasca and evil eye beliefs and evil eye healers, envy, negative thoughts, and jealousy can trigger disequilibrium within the individual, altering the mental and physical state of being. Similar beliefs that occur between cultures who believe in the evil eye and Amazonian tribes about the cause of disease both stem from the idea that sorcery and bad spirits alter the internal balance of the individual who is the victim of the forces. With the use of spirits, prayers, charms, and amulets, tribal cultures are able to call upon spirits that enter the soul of the victim, possessing the impurities or harm from the evil eye in order to change the individuals behavior, which is similar to Ayahuasca use where the spirits are open to enter the body of the participant, healing them of bad energy and preventing the progression of their illness. The state of mind before and after these healing practices are vital to long-term internal balance within the body as well as continued prevention of disrupting equilibrium.

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