

Medical Uniqueness of Mustang District

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Besides having enriched geographical landscape, Mustang has unique characteristic in social, cultural and medical aspects. All of these have added to its attraction for foreigners as well as own national. Geographically, upper as well as lower Mustang has numerous caves where tribes settle till today and as per Dr. Harka Gurung, research of this will depict mysteries related to central Asia. Another quite interesting thing about this District is system of polyandry, which though exists in other parts of Nepal, is quite prevalent here. This system is wearing off now especially in educated family. It is quite interesting in the sense that at a given time, only one husband stays at home, one goes out in his business tour, another to jungle grazing yaks and this rotates after some time. It's mother who declares who is the father of which child.

Now, talking about the medical uniqueness of this District, there are lot of traditional medical doctors known as AMJI. The village health needs are usually carried out by these local doctors. They use MANTRAS as well as different herbs to cure a patient. These amjis are monks who are trained in herbal and traditional medicines in Buddhist monasteries and have been handed down to younger generation for centuries. Some of these amjis have been attending seminars even in Japan, China, European countries and appear very educated. However, local villagers have equal belief in allopathic medicines and welcome the service.

The topic, I am interested to describe under the given title is drinking blood from live yaks. It is quite puzzling to know that most of the people in this District (also seen in and around Gosainkunda) drink blood from the live animal in month of Baisakh and Shrawan for medical purpose. People have been drinking for years irrespective of sex, age & creed. During these times, yaks are brought down to lower altitude, where all people can walk upto or come on their horses. Here they make temporary establishments for 15-25 days. They dance, sing song, eat yak's meat and drink blood consecutively 3 days for 3 consecutive years. Yak is tied in such a way that its jugular vein is made prominent where amjis make a small nick by a small piece of iron previously sterilized by making it red hot by putting it in a fireplace. At a time about 3-5 litres. Of blood is withdrawn from a single yak depending upon it's size and strength. It is poured in a half-sized steel glass and given to people who wish to drink. The owner of the animal gets 50 rupees for each glass. After 20-25 glasses of blood is poured out, the animal is let free, gasping, some even fall down due to hypovolemia. I personally feel, it's maximum cruelty shown to the animal by human beings. Neither educated nor uneducated, all people drink this blood, they are gastritis-free, gives lot of strength to fight for all disease and become healthy. The justification given to this by these local people and amjis is - yaks graze in high altitude which is the main seat of medicinal herbs & bushes, hence their blood is enriched with all sort of factors that make a person healthy.

Upon inquiring veterinarians and going through literature about yaks, the haematological parameters of yak's blood is as follow. It's Hb - 10.2-13.2 gm.%, ESR.1-25 mm / 1st hr, R.B.C. 5.5-9.96 X 10⁶ / mm³ TLC 5.9 - 7.2 X 1000/mm³, Neutrophils 23-37% Lymphocytes 55-67% Monocytes 3-5%, Eosionphils 4-9%, Basophils 0-1% (Source - Singh, Sharma, Rastogi And Narang 1989) So. This is not much of difference with human blood however, the

blood contains different agents to cause human illnesses like Tuberculosis, Brucellosis, Flukes, Cowpox, Babesia Bovis etc. Probably, by knowing the likelihood of transmission of these diseases, the Israelics throw all the blood of slaughtered animals and eat only meat. Veterinarians have no reasons to believe the advantages of drinking yak blood and so do we.

In conclusion, without knowing what all medicinal value the yak blood possesses, it is not advisable to drink the fresh blood as there are so many harmful agents which cause disease in human beings. As far as curing gastritis and making an individual healthy is concerned, it's merely a psychological feeling, with no definite proof. Last and not the least, there is something called animal's right whose care has to be taken of.



A picture of people drinking yak's blood in Mustang