

Traditional medicine

Traditional medical knowledge and practices are a part of intangible cultural heritage of the Tajik people. Ethno medical knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation and in the course of the time new methods and means are discovered, documented, preserved and practiced. The most common aspects of the traditional medicine are traumatology, herbal medicine, clay therapy, honey and *mumiā* (mummy). Traditional medicine of Tajiks also includes spiritual-ritual methods such as *ruhfarori* when a healer invokes prayers dedicated to certain spirits and saints or exorcism. In traditional medicine the core of the illness is determined to be attached with the natural elements such as cold, heat or physical effects of the environment.

Traditional healers prior prescribing the treatment would inquire about the symptoms and conditions of the sick person to determine

the cause of the illness. They also by means of questions determine the physical or natural typology of a sick person. The knowledge of the four major substances of the environment that is air, soil, fire and water and also the animal cycle calendar in which the person is born are important in determination of illness and the required treatment.

According to the traditional medical knowledge the healer is able to determine the typology of physical structure of a sick by touching; if he senses the hot energy the person is of warm nature or cold etc. The examination of the sick person's skeleton, hair, skin etc. also informs of his natural original typology.

Determination of the sick person typology helps in prescription of the medical herbs or other substances. Usually the opposite elements are prescribed. If the sick person is of a warm na-





ture than he cannot consume the herbs or other eatables of the same nature, this includes also animal products such as meat, fat or dairy products.

The division of the warm and cold nature also applies to entire natural products. For example, sour-sweet apple is of neutral nature whereas sweet apple is first degree warm and also humid in nature.

Phytotherapy is distinct from homeopathy and anthroposophic medicine, and avoids mixing plant and synthetic bioactive substances. Phytotherapy is regarded as a main aspect of the traditional medicine. In this plants are used in different forms such as dried, fresh, cooked or burnt. Traditional healers prepare medical properties from various parts of the plants that is

roots from certain plants or leaves from certain plants etc.

In medicine, traumatology is the study of wounds and injuries caused by accidents or violence to a person, and the surgical therapy and repair of the damage. Traumatologist in the Tajik traditional medicine is called *shikastaband* that is one who bondages the broken. The traditional practices in folk traumatology are not very different from the mainstream medicine.

Honey is a natural product that has been widely used for its therapeutic effects. It has been reported to contain about 200 substances. In Tajik traditional medicine it is used to cure the illness caused by the cold both taken internally and applied on the skin.

Therapy involving substances extracted



from animals is also widely practiced. Usually the healer depending on the illness prescribed different properties from the animals, wild and domestic alike. For example, the freshly taken out skin of rabbits or sheep is used to as bond-

age on the parts of the body or the whole body for someone who has sever cold. It is believed the warm skin would absorb all the cold related effects to itself. In similar manner the fat from various animals are also used.

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