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ЖАҢА ЖӘНЕ
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NEW AND MODERN
HISTORY

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TRADITIONS OF WATER TREATMENT IN AZERBAIJAN FOLK MEDICINE

Abstract. The article titled "Traditions of Water Treatment in Azerbaijani Folk Medicine" discusses the fact that water is an indispensable natural blessing for human health. Here, interesting information about the widespread use of water in folk medicine since ancient times, as well as its therapeutic properties, is provided and analyzed. At the same time, the article also reflects the scientific approach to the fact that water nourishes the cells in the body, ensures the removal of toxins, improves the digestive process and accelerates metabolism. As in the medicine of the peoples of the world, the existence of a large school of practice in the field of water treatment in Azerbaijan and its continued importance today gives reason to say that it is based on historical tradition.

Hydrotherapy, or water-based treatment, has been widely used to relieve muscle pain, improve blood circulation, and improve digestion. Hot water soothes joint and muscle aches, while cold water reduces inflammation and strengthens the immune system. Mineral-rich water sources are also valued for their importance in treating skin diseases, digestive disorders, and stress-related illnesses.

In addition to external use, drinking enough water every day is very important for maintaining health, as it supports cell function, regulates metabolism, and increases the elasticity of the drug. All these qualities indicate the indispensable role of water in traditional medicine and its wide importance in modern treatment practices, which has found its substantive interpretation in the article.

Keywords: Azerbaijan, folk medicine, various waters, treatment, tradition.

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Әзірбайжан халық медицинасының су арқылы емдеу дәстүрлері

Аңдатпа. «Әзірбайжан халық медицинасының су арқылы емдеу дәстүрлері» атты мақалада судың адам денсаулығы үшін таптырмас табиғи байлық екені талқыланады. Мұнда су ежелден халық медицинасында кеңінен қолданылғаны, сондай-ақ оның емдік қасиеттері туралы қызықты мәліметтер ұсынылып, талданады. Сонымен қатар, мақалада судың ағзадағы жасушаларды қоректендіретіні, токсиндерді шығаруға көмектесетіні, ас қорыту процесін жақсартып, метаболизмді тездететіні туралы ғылыми көзқарас көрсетілген. Әлем халықтарының медицинасы сияқты, Әзербайжанда да су арқылы емдеу тәжірибесі кең таралған және оның бүгінгі күнге дейінгі маңыздылығы тарихи дәстүрге негізделгенін дәлелдейді.

Гидротерапия, яғни су арқылы емдеу, бұлшық ет ауруларын жеңілдету, қан айналымын жақсарту және ас қорытуды реттеу үшін кеңінен қолданылған. Ыстық су буын мен бұлшық еттің ауырсынуын басса, салқын су қабынуды азайтып, иммундық жүйені нығайтады. Минералдарға бай су көздері тері ауруларын, асқазан-ішек жолдарының бұзылуын және күйзеліс салдарынан туындайтын сырқаттарды емдеуде аса маңызды деп саналады.

Суды сыртқы қолданумен қатар, күн сайын жеткілікті мөлшерде су ішу денсаулықты сақтау үшін өте маңызды, өйткені ол жасуша қызметін қолдайды, метаболизмді реттейді және ағзаның серпімділігін арттырады. Осы қасиеттердің барлығы судың дәстүрлі медицинадағы маңызды рөлін және оның қазіргі емдеу тәжірибелеріндегі кең маңызын көрсетеді. Бұл мақалада осы мәселелер жан-жақты қарастырылады.

Түйін сөздер: Әзербайжан, халық медицинасы, әртүрлі су түрлері, емдеу, дәстүр.

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Introduction

The use of minerals, which are natural compounds with the same physical and chemical composition, as a means of treatment in medicine, occupies a fairly important place. The tradition of treatment with minerals began almost simultaneously with the first day of the emergence of medicine. The saying “a doctor has three medicines: herbs, minerals and words”, traditionally spread among the inhabitants of the ancient world, gives reason to say that minerals have been one of the main means of treatment since ancient times.

Although there are many minerals in nature, the most important place among them is occupied by water, which is of irreplaceable importance for the life of living beings, including people who are considered the nobility of the world. It is possible for a person to maintain his body structure at the proper level and continue his life in a healthy way directly with water. Because, water performs many important functions of the human body. The normal functioning of most organs of the body, including blood flow, normal functioning of the kidneys and intestines, development of bones, muscles, etc., depends largely on water intake. If a person does not consume water in accordance with the daily norm, serious health problems will undoubtedly arise.

The use of water for therapeutic purposes has been widespread in all parts of the world since ancient times. And treatment with this method has intensified and become more widespread over time. That is, other therapeutic properties of water have also been discovered and high results have been achieved. The healing properties of the vast majority of waters of all different compositions have long been confirmed in the world of medicine, and it remains relevant today.

Water, which has been characterized as one of the means of treatment in folk medicine since ancient times, is also widely used in scientific medicine. Today, the sufficient number of treatment centers with mineral waters in the world, including Azerbaijan, is proof of what has been said. The increase in the number of people seeking treatment in the aforementioned centers from year to year is an expression of the intensity of the importance of mineral waters as a means of treatment. The main means of treatment of a large part of the world's most famous treatment centers, such as Heviz (Hungary), Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic), Druskininkai (Lithuania), the Dead Sea (Israel), Rogaska Slatina (Slovenia), Yessentuki, Sochi (Russia), Barjomi

(Georgia), Kalbajar thermal springs, Masalli thermal springs, Chiraggala sanatorium (Azerbaijan) and others, is precisely mineral waters (1; 2).

Along with other beneficial properties of mineral waters, which vary in composition (liquid, gas, solid, etc.), their significant effect on human health has always been in the spotlight. Since ancient times, scientists, physicians, historians and geographers have left us valuable information about this in their works. Among the authors of these sources, which are valuable both in terms of studying ancient times and comparing them with the present, we can mention the names of Ishaq ibn Hunaini (9th century), Abu Dulafi (9th century), Al Masudi (10th century), Abu Diladini, Al-Biruni (10th-11th century), Ibn Sina (11th century), Mahmud ibn Ilyasi (13th-14th centuries), Hamdullah Qazvini (13th-14th centuries), Marco Polo (13th-14th centuries), A. Bakuvi (14th-15th centuries), Yusuf ibn Khoy (13th-14th centuries), Abulhasan al-Maraghaini (18th century), Muhammad Yusuf Shirvani (18th century) and others. Also, in their modern studies, researchers who, among other things, included Azerbaijani folk medicine – A.Chelabizadeh, G.Javadov, Z.Bunyadov, F.Alekberli, S.Mammadov, A.Ahmadov and others – also mentioned that water is an indispensable blessing in eliminating various diseases (Bakuvi, 1992:185-188; Javadov, 1995; Chelabizadeh, 2009; Maraghai, 2009; Alekberli, 2013: 101-104; Ishaq ibn Huseyn, 2011; Najmaddin, 2014; Shirvani, 1990; Mustafa, 2014:409-421).

As long as life exists, water is extremely important for the human body. The therapeutic importance of water has been expressed at a very high level in the works of world-renowned scientist and doctor Firudin Batmangilinc, who spent 20 years of his life studying it, titled “You are not sick, you are thirsty” and “Your body wants water from you” (Ahmadov, 2018:20).

Material and method

In writing the article, literature materials available in Azerbaijani Turkish and other languages, as well as the knowledge of informants and the information revealed by our own observations and ideas conveyed to us, were used. The methodological basis of the study is a complex approach to events and processes, objectivity, interaction and comparative analysis, description, and reference to scientific provisions that are widely used in ethnographic research. In response to all of these, generalized scientific conclusions were drawn.

Discussion

In the Ancient East, the tradition of achieving and maintaining health with water was an important part of folk medicine. The experience of thousands of years shows that many diseases can be cured by water treatment. Ayurveda, a unique example of Indian medicine and a widespread medical system, states that “Consuming water every day is the best way to maintain health in the body” (Balkrishna, 2016:189). The Japanese have a therapy called water therapy, with which they have achieved significant achievements in the field of eliminating gastritis, diabetes, blood pressure, asthma, constipation, diarrhea, eye diseases, hemorrhoids, bronchitis, nose and throat, tuberculosis, heart problems, epilepsy, arthritis, cancer, menstrual irregularities, and kidney and urinary tract disorders (3). It is no coincidence that one of the first inventions of the genius Ibn Sina was a filter that purifies water from microbes. It is likely that the great sage considered the preparation of this device important because he attached great importance to water in treatment.

Since its composition is rich in healing minerals, water has always been characterized as an element of life and has not been compared to any mineral in terms of its importance from ancient times to the present day. The history of gaining experience in eliminating various diseases related to headaches, obesity, heart problems, asthma, bronchitis, gastritis, nose, throat, ear and eye with water is unknown. Therefore, there is an unambiguously formed idea about water in society: “Water is the source of life, water is an important means of treatment” (3).

In our modern era, the use of mineral waters for therapeutic purposes is widespread in scientific medicine. The field that studies the origin of their healing properties and methods of use in science is called balneology (Latin *balneum* – bath, bathing). The emergence of balneology as a science in the field of world medicine dates back to the 5th century BC. In the 5th century, the ancient Greek scientist Herodotus first studied the effect of water on the human body and explained the beneficial properties of hot and cold water. The first classification of mineral waters is associated with the name of the Roman physician Archigenes (1st century) (4). In our country, it is believed that the first person to treat with mineral water outside the home was the uncle of the poet Kh.Shirvani, the prominent physician Sadiq Vakhrraddin Shirvani (12th century) (Mehraliyev, 1996: 9-49; Efendiev, 1964:88-89).

As a material blessing in the formation, development and general existence of nature, society and man, “water” has taken a firm and eternal place as an irreplaceable element. The place and role of water in the creation of the world and man as a living being is of leading importance in divine books and products of mythological thought. There is even such an idea that life, the living world, was created from water and where there is water, there is life. Therefore, when searching for living organisms on other planets, the presence of water is usually a priority issue. According to modern scientific calculations, two-thirds of the Earth and three-quarters of the human body are made up of water. The most important components of blood, which is the basis of the living world, especially the human and animal body, are formed from water, along with other components. From this point of view, water is the source of life and the living world, in other words, life itself. The belief in the sanctity of water originates from here, fetishizing its magical and divine properties.

Although the divine and magical properties of water have not been fully studied, its mythologized and deified unusual qualities have always deeply interested people throughout human history, and the water element has undergone a continuous enrichment process in mythological thinking. Such an attitude has had a significant impact on the formation of various beliefs about water, and man has from time to time sought ways to properly benefit from the qualities and capabilities of water considered divine and sacred. As emphasized earlier, since ancient times, water has been one of the most widely used means of maintaining health and treating diseases, or rather, the main one. In both scientific and religious views, water is considered the most powerful means of purification. In Islam, it is traditional to perform ablution before performing various rituals, to cleanse oneself with water, and to benefit from the healing properties of Zamzam water. In classical Eastern literature, the divine properties of the water that flows in the capital of the Muslim world, Mecca, are frequently mentioned, and it is said that it has the highest therapeutic value due to its composition (Ahmadov, 2018:29-35; Karatash, 2014:112-113).

Hazrat Ali's saying “Zamzam water is a cure for all diseases” has greatly increased the number of people who want to drink this water in Azerbaijan, as in the entire Muslim world. Even among the population, and especially among the religious, the belief that the most seriously ill will regain their health if they taste the water in question has spread widely. Interestingly, in the past, the most important

request of pilgrims going to Hajj was to bring this water. If water was brought, it was distributed to everyone around, especially the sick, like a *tutiya*. In most cases, the deep faith in water led to the speedy recovery of many patients (12).

The fact that belief in mineral waters and their immortality also occupies an important place in examples of oral folk literature gives reason to think that people are in search of one or another means to achieve eternity and longevity throughout their lives. The majority of legends about “healing waters” and “water of life” with almost the same content can be explained by the fact that people sought their desire for eternal life in water and not in anything else (Azerbaijani mythological texts, 1988:48-49; Legends, 1986:28-29, 46, 74-77, 81-82). It could not be considered accidental that people held this opinion. Most likely, ancient people were not able to experience the second most powerful means of regaining their health as water. Traditions stimulated their imagination to revive water as a means of even more powerful miracles – a means of ensuring human eternal life. One of the legends states that after creating humans, God sent the water of life to people through one of the prophets. When the prophet was tired on the road and was resting, the cup overturned and the water in it spilled on the ground. At that moment, two crows quickly came and began to drink that water. Since then, the crow has lived for 300 years, while humans have not (Azerbaijani Mythological Texts, 1988:48). We may not believe in these things, saying that they are far from reality. However, we should also be aware that the saying “there is a truth hidden in every legend” did not just happen.

When water is mentioned as a means of treatment, mineral waters are first thought of among the population. But this is not the case at all. The waters that we consider as ordinary as the waters rich in minerals, and that we use for daily drinking and washing, also have sufficient therapeutic value. The greeting “May your life be as long as water” is a sign of a clean, healthy and bright life. The fact that nervous and angry people are always told to “go drink water” also means that ordinary water helps to regulate the fluid and salt in the body and calms them down. Regardless of the elements it contains, people who understood the importance of water for life, regardless of the elements it contains, always considered it important in the past not to pollute it, unlike in the modern era. Especially drinking water sources, springs, rivers, *kahris*, and *ovdans* were always kept clean. Based on the meaning of “all impurities in life are cleaned with water,” the attitude

towards water and its sources ensured the preservation of this invaluable blessing. It was precisely as a result of this that pollution of water bodies was rarely observed throughout history and ecologically related diseases were less common compared to our modern era.

During treatment, they kept it in an earthenware jar and filtered it to obtain clean water. They used it at different temperatures (hot, warm, cold, ice, steam, etc.) both alone and in mixed forms. Very few treatments were found that could be used without water. The traditions of using all types of water (spring, well, river, lake, sea, rain, snow) for treatment purposes, mainly by drinking, bathing, showering, washing, applying compresses, taking baths, patting, steaming, rinsing, rubbing, gargling, “hopping”, “talking”, “scares”, etc., have existed both in the home (household) and outside the home.

There are a number of rituals that are performed among the peoples of Azerbaijan, Iran, and Central Asia in connection with the arrival of Novruz, and we still observe them in our modern era, which are performed with the belief of achieving and preserving recovery. One of the most important of these is the custom of “hopping” over running water. According to the custom, people jump over running water three times, saying “my weight-failure, my pain-discomfort, my baldness-baldness into this water”, and believe that by doing so, there will be no problems with their health.

When they have a bad dream, they believe that by “talking to water,” the thoughts that will disturb them will be “washed away.” Sometimes, these thoughts actually help to end their anxiety, and they find comfort and relief (Ahmadov, 2018:18; 9).

In medicine, clean, clear, and warm (lukewarm) water is considered more beneficial. Our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Kidney pain is due to the nerve there. When it moves, it causes pain to the owner. In this case, warm water and honey should be used” (Karatash, 2014:110). Hazrat Ali’s advice “Boiled water is useful for everything and does not harm anything” has always been a saying that is remembered by the people (Ahmadov, 2018:35). In the past, in order to get rid of a headache, a bowl of water was considered a remedy in ordinary everyday life. To get rid of certain pains, it was considered beneficial to drink half a cup of warm water (this is how a copper water bowl with a handle was called in Guba-Khachmaz) every night before going to bed (10). The main way to get rid of a severe headache for a patient was to boil any stone in plain water and expose the head to the steam (inhalation). During a

khanazir (a disease caused by goiter), a towel was soaked in boiling water and placed on it to “scare away” it (11).

In medicine, mineral spring water has gained special importance for treatment purposes compared to ordinary water. Because of its many healing properties, its use has always been preferred. Until the emergence of scientific medicine, temples of worship were built near mineral springs. Those who came to worship also received balneological treatment. When they recovered, they attributed this to prayers rather than baths with healing effects. In particular, hot springs are often associated with the sanctity of the place, holy spirits, and saints, and as a rule, they were used to treat various diseases. Historically formed beliefs and traditional beliefs among people sometimes concealed the fact that the composition of healing waters is extremely rich in microelements. For example, in the village of Khaltan in Guba, there is a spring whose water is hot all four seasons of the year and whose saint is next to it. Since ancient times, many people from all over the world have come here to drink, bathe, and take baths from this water. After recovering, most of them believed that they had been cured of their illness and found healing not only because of the spring water but also because of the divine power of the holy spring (Chelebizadeh, 2009:324). However, the elements contained in Khaltan water remove salts accumulated in the human body from the body. And it has a positive effect on wind diseases, skin diseases, cleansing of the gallbladder, gastrointestinal system, kidneys, and movement-related problems – pain in the legs and joints. It should be noted that Khaltan sulfur hot water is considered the highest-quality natural treatment in Azerbaijan after the Istisu spring in Kalbajar due to its mineral content. The deep imprint of primitive religions on people’s minds has conditioned the acceptance of healing mineral springs as holy springs from time to time. This tradition also existed in Azerbaijan. There would be no separate tombstone or tomb of any saint around the holy waters. People simply associated the healing they found with its “divine power” rather than with the elements in it, and considered it a sacred place. In general, in many peoples, including the beliefs of Turkic-speaking peoples, it was often found that water, which was sworn, sought for help, and a place of refuge, was praised as holy (Ahmadov, 2018, 17-18).

There is no doubt that mineral springs, distinguished by their various flavors, colors, temperatures and extremely valuable healing properties,

which exist in the territory of Azerbaijan, which is rich in nature, have created ample opportunities for people living here to use them since ancient times. However, the greatest skill was to use the created opportunities at the necessary level.

It is clear from the research that the Azerbaijani population has sufficient experience in terms of using water for healing purposes. Our ancestors, who were able to determine the healing properties of the boiling springs in the areas where they lived, gave them names such as wind water (varov), stomach water, skin water, salt water, fresh water, eye water, spleen water, etc. due to their power. Intensive use of these waters to get rid of diseases led to the construction of new settlements here. There are hundreds of such settlements in Azerbaijan. For example, Sirab, Badamlı village in Nakhchivan, Ilisu village in Gakh, Khaltan village in Guba, etc. are of this type.

The use of mineral spring water to cure diseases has been characteristic of all parts of Azerbaijan. Information about the use of the water of the springs in the area where Tabriz is located, such as Bostanabad hot spring, Azershahr, Sofiyan, and Kandovan, by the population for therapeutic purposes dates back to the distant past (Bakuvi, 1992:87; Mammadova, 2016:31). Academician Ziya Bunyadov, referring to medieval sources, wrote: “There are sulfur baths near Tabriz that have amazing beneficial properties. Those who are sick and those with chronic diseases go there. There was a spring in one of the villages of Tabriz. If they cooked something in its water and drank the broth, then the cooked water had an excellent effect on the stomach as a laxative” (Bunyadov, 2007:187-188).

Hot springs and healing springs, considered to be sacred, can be found in the mountainous and foothill areas of Azerbaijan – Kalbajar, Lachin, Jabrayil, Shusha, Guba, Shabran, Shamakhi, Gabala, Masalli, Lankaran, Gakh, Zagatala, Oghuz, Nakhchivan, Gadabay, Ismayilli, Gazakh and Lerik, as well as in a number of places in South Azerbaijan (Tabriz, Ardabil, Selmas, Khoy, Maragha, etc.). Mineral springs with a mixture of water and oil, which are also observed in the plains of Kurdamir, Naftalan, Tartar, Barda and other regions, have also been widely used in the health of the population since ancient times.

There are hundreds of springs in Azerbaijan whose water treats the human body, that is, has unusual properties (sodium, calcium, magnesium, chlorine, sulfate, hydrocarbonate, etc.). The history of their use is as old as the age of these springs. The

information about the healing springs in our country in the writings of early medieval Arab geographers allows us to trace the rules for using their water and which diseases it has a positive effect on (Bakuv, 1992:105-132; Bunyadov, 2007:187; Nafisi, 1990:28; Velikhanli, 1974:73-88).

In general, the rich nature of Azerbaijan conditioned the existence of healing springs that are a cure for a thousand and one ailments. "Istisu", Turshsu, Yelsu, Gotursu, Charektar, Ilgsu, Bedo, Galaalti Suyu, Amsar, Khaltan, Pir Bahya, Jimi, Khashi, Khanegah, Haftoni, Havzavu, Donuzutsan, Surakhani, Chukhuryurd, Bum, Khalkhal, Ilisu, Moksun, etc., located in various regions. The population of Azerbaijan has been using its natural hot and sulfuric waters for centuries in various forms – drinking, bathing, and applying mud to certain areas (Azerbaijani Ethnography, 2007:370; 1; 7).

Just as nature has not spared any blessings from our land, it has not deprived us of springs with sulfuric water. However, our folk healers have had great experience in obtaining this water artificially and using it for treatment. The author of "Tibbname" noted the positive effect of this water on the body and wrote: "Bathing in warm sulfur water is very beneficial for kidney and bladder diseases, especially for wounds, ulcers, scabies, cholera, paralysis, and diseases of mucus and black bile. For this, 200 g of sulfur is crushed, tied into a piece and boiled in 600 g of fresh water until a certain part of it evaporates. Then, this water is removed from the heat and washed with it. Washing in such water has the same effect as washing in natural sulfur water" (Shirvani, 1990:152-153).

In many parts of Azerbaijan, natural sulfur waters such as Ilisu bath, Moksun (Gakh region), Ashagi Salahli (Gazakh region), Barda water, etc. are often found. There has been a tradition among the local population to use these waters, especially Ilisu bath and Moksun water, for rheumatism (wind), salinization, scarlet fever, joint, skin and other inflammatory diseases, and even rabies, by bathing. The existing tradition continues today.

Treatment with sulfur waters is mainly practiced externally, because drinking it weakens the stomach and vision. However, Ashagi Salahli sulfur water is considered to have therapeutic properties in healing and preventing liver, biliary tract, nerve pain and gastrointestinal diseases, that is, it is also considered acceptable to drink it.

A significant part of the springs used for treatment purposes are located in Absheron. The local population had special experience in the purposeful

use of mineral waters from Surakhani, Sabunchu, Boyuk Shor, Masazir and Shikh capes, which are rich in iodine, bromine and other substances with healing properties.

One of our places rich in very valuable mineral springs is Nakhchivan. Analogues of most of the mineral waters known in the world can be found here. This richness has even led to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic being called a hydrochemical museum. The water of more than 200 mineral springs with different compositions (hydrocarbonate and sodium ions, magnesium, calcium and sulfate ions, radon, etc.) ("Sirab", "Gahab", "Vaykhir", "Gizilburun", "Daridagh", "Bichenak", "Navi", "Badamli", "Gijdasar", "Karvansara", "Selesuz", "Dinga", "Nasirvaz", "Ashabi-kahf", "Sary bulag", "Nahajir", "Dash bulag", "Goy bulag", Hamyud, etc.) has been widely used for therapeutic purposes since ancient times. Ancient healers, who knew the healing properties of these waters well, achieved high results in the treatment of many diseases (nerve, cardiovascular and rheumatism, gastrointestinal, skin, kidney, etc.). Elderly residents of Nakhchivan, as well as now, witnessed people turning to the "Nahajir" spring in the past to find healing from dental, gastrointestinal, nervous and nervous diseases. (Sultanov, 1964:15; 8; 6; 14).

The first information about the healing properties of Daridag silver-rich mineral water dates back to the 16th century (Sultanov, 1964:15). This water has been widely used since ancient times in a traditional way for treating bone-joint and muscular system diseases, including pathologies called "salting" and its various complications. In the 19th century, this tradition became even more widespread. Since it emerged from the ground warm, people who had the opportunity to use it at all seasons of the year came here and bathed in this water to get rid of the diseases they suffered from (wind, joints, skin, etc.) (13, 14).

One of the healing mineral waters of Azerbaijan is the famous "Galaalti" water in the Shabran region. The local population called this water "Naf-tsu" because it smelled of oil. Information about the healing properties of this water, which contains hydrocarbonate-calcium, chloride-sulfate-sodium and a large amount of hydrogen sulfide, is found in 16th-century sources. Since it had a pungent odor, the local population did not consider this water suitable for daily use. It was mainly used to treat kidney and biliary tract diseases. The tradition of receiving treatment from this water is widespread among the population of our northeastern regions. They came

here and drank this water to get rid of colds, kidney and gall bladder pain. Since the use of the water was not carried out in accordance with certain norms, sometimes it caused various complications (11). During the research conducted during the Soviet period, it was determined that the use of this water is possible only for one day. Because if this water is left for more than one day, ammonia compounds are formed in its composition. Studies have also shown that the chemicals in this water have a laxative effect, as well as an anti-inflammatory effect. It is precisely because of these properties that this water has been widely used in the treatment of inflammatory diseases of the liver, bile ducts, kidneys, bladder, urinary tract, and gastrointestinal tract, dissolving stones and crystallized sand. It has achieved very good results. It normalizes metabolism in the body, has an alkalizing effect on blood and urine, reduces stomach acidity, weakens the permeability of cell membranes, gradually prevents bleeding, has an anti-inflammatory effect, increases diuresis, removes excess fluid from the body, restores the body's defenses, eliminates inflammatory processes in organs and tissues, removes metabolic products and toxic substances, etc., thereby preventing premature aging of the body.

As a result of all this, a resort-sanatorium has been established in the area since 1975, and every year hundreds of patients apply here for treatment, not only drinking mineral water, but also mud, baths, physiotherapy, electrotherapy, ultrasound examination, etc. (5).

One of the regions where the tradition of treatment with mineral spring water is widespread is Guba. The water of the springs of Amsar, Khaltan, Pir Bahya, Jimi, Khashi, Khanegah, Sabatlar, Budug, etc. was used for rheumatism (colds), colds, fever, skin (rash, itching, scabies), and women's diseases. People went to these springs for treatment at all seasons of the year. Until the middle of the last century, there was a tradition of bathing and giving water to childless women and those suffering from rheumatism in the spring of "Germe o" (hot water) in the village of Sabetlar in Guba, Pir Bahya (fever) in the south of the village of Nugedi, and "Varov" (wind water) in Budug. According to the old people, as well as to the literature, those suffering from these problems would come to the spring, pitch a tent and stay there for 10 days. The patient would be bathed or bathed according to the recommended procedure every day. For this purpose, the patient would be undressed and placed in wooden tubs (baths) filled with spring water and kept there for a while. After

achieving the expected result, they would take him out of the tub, put him on a warm blanket or mattress, and wait until he sweated. If he sweated a lot, they thought he was already cured (Cavadov, 1995:78; Chelebizade, 2009: 325; 12). Unfortunately, in the last 30 years, quarries operating in the rivers flowing near these springs have accelerated their drying up, and the local population is deprived of these natural resources (11).

The procedure for using cold mineral springs was different. Thus, they would collect large stones from around them, heat them in a furnace, and throw them into the cold water in the tank to warm it. Then the patient would enter here and stay there until the water in the tank cooled. These procedures were repeated several times for it to be beneficial. In this way, they believed that they were cured of rheumatism.

In the western regions of Azerbaijan, in the mountain zone of the Lesser Caucasus, Yuxary Istisu, Ashaghi Istisu, Gotursu, Charaktar, Iligsu, Turshsu and other such mineral springs are considered a cure for a thousand and one ailments. Considering the vital importance of the Istisu mineral water source located in the Kalbajar region, it was decided to establish a health center here during the Soviet period.

The mineral spring called "Gotursu" in the Zangilan region was considered one of the most valuable means for the treatment of skin diseases. According to the local population, the identification of this water as a medicine for skin diseases was known as a result of the recovery of scabies animals after entering and exiting the water. Such observations of the local population prompted them to conduct an experiment on themselves, and the results obtained led to the conclusion that this water is a medicine for skin diseases. Since then, this water has been used effectively. The establishment of a recreation and treatment center here, like other healing springs during the Soviet period, was a manifestation of the continuation of an ancient tradition. It can be said that the population of the southwestern regions of Azerbaijan, suffering from scabies, ringworm and other skin diseases, came to Gotursu and took a bath in its water and found healing (9).

Turshsu mineral water emerges 17 km southwest of Shusha city, in the valley of the Zarisli River, at an altitude of 1700 m. Its water is rich in microelements (carbon dioxide, hydrocarbonate, magnesium, sodium, calcium). Local healers were well aware of the healing value of water. Therefore, they recommended its use in the form of drinking and

bathing in the treatment of cardiovascular, anemia, liver, biliary tract, gallbladder, etc. diseases (13).

We would like to note with heartache that for about 30 years, these healing springs, which number more than a hundred, were under Armenian occupation. Our people were deprived of these healing springs. The invaders destroyed all the infrastructure built here during the Soviet era and left the surrounding area in a state of disrepair. It is gratifying that as a result of the bravery of the victorious Azerbaijani army, the occupied lands were liberated, the aggressors were expelled from our country, and the opportunity to use the water of these healing springs arose. The Azerbaijani state is carrying out important work to quickly improve these places, which once welcomed countless guests to seek healing, and to rebuild and put into operation the resort sanatoriums that once existed here. We believe that the tradition of using minerals in these regions, which is considered an important means of treatment in Azerbaijani folk medicine, will be continued again.

The benefits of river water, as well as spring water, are widely characterized in medicine. The information of the great Hippocrates and Ibn Ilyas about the use of rushing, strong, north-flowing river water, as well as pebble and stony places, for therapeutic purposes reveals the fact that people have had experience and a tradition of using it since ancient times (Najmeddin, 2014:643-644).

It is clear from ancient information about the healing properties of river water in Azerbaijan that, in addition to healing springs, there were also many rivers in our country, the water of which made it possible to get rid of a number of diseases. The water of these rivers did not heal patients indirectly, but directly. According to Abu Dulaf, a river flowed through a city known as Ar-Ran, four farsakhs from the city of Ash-Shiz (ancient Gazaka). Anyone who drank its water could get rid of kidney and bladder stones. Another Arab source reports that a large river flows below the Bazz Castle, where our glorious hero Babak was stationed, near Ardabil, and that people with severe fevers recover after bathing in this river (Valikhanli, 1974: 73-88; Nafisi, 1990:28). Such information was also included in the writings of A. Bakuvi. He wrote: "They say that a large river flows from that place (Bazz Castle), and if a person with fever bathes here, the disease will leave him" (Bakuvi, 1992: 118).

River waters with snowy mountains as their source and a rocky bottom were considered more beneficial. River water was considered clean be-

cause it flowed quickly between the stones. Those who believed that "running water does not carry dirt" initially used it to prevent certain diseases. Since it was considered unsuitable for use in a cloudy state, it was recommended to use only settled and usually boiled water for treatment. The saying "Boiled water is very useful, it does not harm anything" probably arose in connection with this.

Compared to spring water, the softening properties of tea water allowed for better cleansing of the hair and body from impurities. For this reason, in areas where spring water was available, people who were seriously ill for a long time would travel long distances to bring tea water and bathe them in it to relieve themselves and purify their bodies. In this way, the patient would feel light and comfortable for a certain period of time. At the same time, it was believed that tea brewed from this water was more complete and would not form sediment in the kidneys (10). It should also be noted that other main ingredients in spring water are salt (hydrocarbonate, sulfate), calcium and magnesium. And the predominance of these substances allows spring water to be significantly hard. Although hard (calcium-containing) water is considered an important element in terms of bone and tooth health, it is not beneficial in terms of fulfilling the external hygienic requirements of the body. Therefore, in the modern era, as well as in the past, due to the lack of numerous detergents for washing hair and body, river water, which was characterized as "soft water", was considered more useful.

As a result of experiments, it became clear that the therapeutic importance of sea water in Azerbaijan has been evident since ancient times. The empirical knowledge that medical representatives have acquired from time to time has given rise to the tradition of using sea water for treatment among Azerbaijanis, as well as the population of other countries living on the Caspian coast (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran).

Intensive use of sea water for treatment in domestic conditions is more widespread among the population living in coastal regions. However, on the advice of our folk healers, who are aware of its antiseptic and antibacterial properties, there were many people who came from distant areas to seek healing from this water. Sea water was considered an important treatment for wind, skin, joint diseases, hair loss, and colds. It was mainly used in the form of bathing, taking baths, rubbing, gargling, rinsing, and enemas. Especially in the summer months, those suffering from the listed diseases were brought to

the seashore with their riding animals and received treatment for a while.

Rainwater, which is richer in oxygen, has been characterized as one of the most beneficial waters since ancient times. Although it resembles ordinary distilled water, it was considered much superior to it in terms of its benefits. The treatment with this water, which is considered the best and purest of waters among the people, called “soft water” and “water from God”, was mainly applied in the direction of bathing, taking baths, and drinking methods. In order to obtain water from spring rain, a large container was placed on the roof of the house so that the rain falling from the sky would fall directly here and then be heated and washed. In addition to purifying the body, rainwater is also important in softening the hardened areas of the abdomen and legs, as well as revitalizing the hair, ensuring its softness and elasticity, and preventing dandruff and hair loss (From the Treasury of Folk Medicine, 1994:144; 10;11).

The tradition of using spring rain as a source of healing has been traced not only in the northern part of Azerbaijan, but also in the Shabustar district of South Azerbaijan, as well as in materials collected from the Mardin and Van provinces of Turkey.

In Islam, rainwater is also given special importance. The Prophet Muhammad considered rainwater to be the most beautiful and sacred blessing of God. Hazrat Ali used to say: “Drink the water that comes from the sky, because it purifies the body and removes ailments” (Ahmadov, 2018:35). Ibn Ilyas wrote that rainwater that falls after a thunderstorm in the summer is of better quality, lighter, sweeter, and healing, and that it has beneficial and expectorant properties against coughs (Najmeddin, 2014:645).

In Ayurveda, rainwater was considered the purest of waters (Balkrishna, 2016:189; Ahmadov, 2018:16-17).

Conclusion

In general, the intensity of the tradition of using such a resource as water, which nature has not spared the Azerbaijani people, for therapeutic purposes stems from the fact that it is considered an indispensable tool. It is no coincidence that even in the Soviet period, when attempts were made to limit the therapeutic possibilities of folk medicine, water treatment did not go unnoticed and became the object of serious research. As a result, new and more convenient forms of their use were identified. It was simultaneously discovered that it was important for the treatment of other diseases that were unknown to our predecessors at that time (From the Treasury of Folk Medicine, 1994:144; Velikhanli, 1974:112). In the treatment of fever, rheumatism, eye, spleen, kidney stones, skin diseases, female infertility, liver inflammation, etc., as in the past, water treatment methods are considered important along with various ointments. As in the medicine of the peoples of the world, the existence of a large school of experience in water treatment in Azerbaijani folk medicine and its continued importance today indicates that we have rich traditions in this field. In this regard, it is necessary to especially appreciate the work of our informants and researchers who have preserved the experiences passed down from generation to generation in their memories, collected them, scientifically filtered them and made them available to the general public for the benefit of the new generation.

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