

The Piss Principal
UDAIPHUR TO JODPHUR
(Abbreviated Chapter)

From Yakety Yak: Bombay to Beijing by Bicycle
by Russell McGilton

I had no reason to visit Shergarh other than that it was there and on the way to somewhere else, namely Jaisalmer, the Golden Fortress. I may have had no reason to visit Shergarh but that did not stop me from being very happy that I had.

Sand swam in the streets, and children played in it. It had not rained here in Rajasthan for the past four years and sub-arterial bores had gone deeper and deeper as the drops refused to fall. Although, while talking to Mr Prakash, the principal of the local high school, one wouldn't think one needed to drink water at all.

'Drinking your urine,' said the principal, a squat, rolling man in his early fifties, leaning back on his chair against the wall behind his desk, 'is very beneficial for your health.'

'You're drinking your own urine?' I dipped my stale biscuit in my tea, hoping that he had given me tea.

'Yes,' he smiled, clasping his hands around his generous belly. I looked at his teeth and tried to get a glimpse of signs of uric contamination.

'You're taking the piss!' I teased, but he didn't get me.

'Yes. I am taking the piss since 1994 and I feel much better for it. I am stronger, much vigour, and I have not been sick once since the treatment. You

should try it yourself. It will help you with your cycle trip. Give you much stamina.'

'Well, I don't know ...'

He ruffled through his draw and flapped out a rough copy of The Golden Fountain by Coen Van Der Kroon.

'It is all in here. Go on. Read it.'

But what got my attention was the author's dedication to the publisher, who had 'unexpectedly died'. Was he also a 'night drinker' and perhaps overdosed? I pointed this out to Mr Prakash, who countered proudly with, 'Our prime minister was also a urine drinker and he lived to the age of ninety-nine!'

He smiled then hit a button on the desk.

'Would you like to have some lunch with me?'

'Sure.'

Moments later, a manservant walked in, was given some orders and disappeared.

'You must drink the urine first thing in the morning. Four a.m. is the best time to drink it, and you must drink the portion halfway through.'

'Halfway?'

'Yes. Don't drink the beginning but when you are in the middle of it and not the end.'

'That's going to take a lot of timing.'

'Ah, but you will get used to it.'

‘What does it taste like?’

‘Depends what you eat. Mine is bitter.’

I ground my teeth. I didn’t even want to think of what my own urine tasted like, let alone his.

The room fell silent again. I flipped through the book and went to the index. Urine could cure anything: herpes, athlete’s foot, skin problems, sunburn, indigestion, diarrhoea and, according to the text, cancer and AIDS.

‘There is this woman,’ Mr Prakash’s finger lit up, ‘who was close to death. She has the leukaemia. She tries everything but nothing works. But then she is given the urine treatment – no food, just urine – and she is cured.’

‘What is she doing now?’

‘Oh, she is dead. Hit by a bus.’

My eyes darted to something in the text. ‘It says here it can cure baldness!’

‘Yes, it can cure baldness. You put old urine on the scalp and the hair should grow.’

‘Old urine?’ I thought of having to milk a pensioner.

‘The urine has to be four days old and left out in the sun, then applied to the affected area,’ he said, making a rubbing motion on his scalp.

‘Yeah ... but the smell.’

‘Sure, but if you want the benefit, then this is a small price.’

Later, and to my surprise, I would take on the principal's suggestion. The next day, out in the quietness of the desert heading toward Jaisalmer on a deserted lonely road, I started to get painful rumblings in my stomach. I pulled over to the side and in my haste, punctured the front tyre on a thorny branch. I searched around in my front pannier for my tools when *The Golden Fountain* flopped out.

Now, I hadn't been overly impressed by the principal's suggestion of drinking my own piss, but something in *The Golden Fountain* made sense. It said that urine, being a natural antiseptic, would kill germs in the digestive tract. Hmm. And I needed to pee ...

I took my drink bottle from its cage on the bike, drank the rest of the water and looked around. No one. Furtively, I whizzed away and felt the warm urine crawl up the bottle. I looked inside; it was a light-amber colour and bubbles floated around the edges.

I can't be serious.

But I was. I closed my eyes and, with a sigh and a gulp, took in the hot 'Golden Nectar' ... then spat it straight out!

'Corr!'

But I was determined to give it a go. I knocked it back once more.

'Corr!' I washed my mouth out with a fresh bottle of water.

Within minutes my stomach settled. I stretched out on my tarp and relaxed. I heard a jeep approaching in the distance. And in my stomach I felt something else approaching.

'Christ!'

My insides lurched and I puked a jet of yellow vomit across the bike just as the jeep sailed by. I looked up. A 'Friends of Gujarat' banner waved across the jeep, which had now stopped.

'Are you okay, my friend?' A thick German voice reached out.

'Fine. WHHHARRRPPP!'

'You sure?'

'Absolutely. WHHAARR-RRGGAHH!'

'You eat somezing bad?'

'Well ...'

How could I tell a man who had been saving the lives of hundreds of people torn from their crushed homes that I had been drinking my own piss?

'I'll be fine,' I said. 'Really.'

He gave me a bemused look and motioned to his driver, and they drove off. I watched the scarf of dust head towards Shergarh, and imagined the principal smiling and laughing to himself, fooling the mad foreigner into another mystery of India.

Who indeed had been taking the piss?