

An International Conference
Medicine, Religion and Alchemy in South India
Resources and Permutations of Siddha Traditions and Siddha Medicine
25 – 27 July 2019 | Hohentübingen Castle | Tübingen University

**Indigenous (Ayurveda and Siddha) Clinical and Pharmaceutical Research
in Twentieth-Century Madras State, India**

Gary Hausman

Abstract

I present a comparative survey of Madras government clinical and pharmaceutical research projects focused on better understanding indigenous medicine in Madras State. Highlights include use of Pandit Gopalacharlu's Siddha plague medicine in a government dispensary (1917); Dr. Koman's investigation of indigenous drugs (1924); deputation of a civil assistant surgeon and chemist from Madras to investigate indigenous drugs of South India in the School of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta (1925-1928); appointment of medical registrars to pursue Indian medicine clinical research at the government Indian Medical School (1933-1940); a scheme of research into indigenous drugs used in veterinary practice with reference to their toxicology (1939-1951); permission for R. Chengal Raju of Putur to treat bone cases in the government hospital of Indian Medicine (1943-1949); deputation of an Ayurveda Lecturer to Cochin for visha vaidyam (poison medicine/snakebite) training (1945); the opening of a Research Institute of Indigenous Medicine in Madras (1947); and clinical trials of *Rauwolfia Canescens* (1960). I focus especially on the period of the 1940s, leading up to Independence. Debates between more sympathetic Indian medical school lecturers and local researchers who advocated greater engagement with indigenous practitioners, and Indian Medical Service administrators who were mostly opposed to a wholesale endorsement of the indigenous medical systems of Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani, set the tone—in post-Independence Madras State—for still ongoing disputes over the appropriate relationship between the “science,” as well as the “culture,” of Indian indigenous and Western medical practice. I rely mostly on archival documents collected at the Tamilnadu Archives, Chennai.