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**Muligaikappu: Life Forces and their Protection in Tamil Siddha Pharmacology.
Perspectives from a Family Tradition**

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Abstract

The following paper wants to make an ethnographic contribution to the study of Siddha medicine by focusing on one case study.

In this talk I will focus on the life-giving dimension of plants in Siddha pharmaceutical practices. Drawing from ethnographic data I will look at the conceptualization of medicinal plant efficacy as part of Siddha pharmacology, which centers around the life-giving property of medicinal plants.

Plant life forces are accessed and protected in a variety of steps, which are both related to spiritual practices as well as to pharmaceutical processes. In the talk I will compare parallels between life-force-management in tantric as well as pharmaceutical practice and argue for their crucial interrelation in the presented case study. To do this I will focus on the concept of "uyir" or life and the related terms of "kappu" or protection and "kattu" or control. In this way I will sketch human plant relationships as interwoven and emerging from a contemporary Siddha cosmos and their importance in the understanding of the specificities of Siddha pharmacology.