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**Emergence of ‘Siddha System’: Nature, Ambiguity and Contest in Colonial Tamil Region**

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**Abstract**

The present paper attempts to study the nature of medicine and, ambiguity and contest of Tamil physicians during the construction of the medical identity of Siddha ‘system’. Plural medical practices which shared the boundaries of various other regions and ‘systems’ were brought under the monolithic identity called ‘Tamil Siddha Medicine’ when Tamil physicians contested against the marginalisation of their practices by the practitioners of Western medicine and Sanskrit-centric Ayurveda during the late nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. In historiographical studies, the emergence of Siddha medicine was presented as it became a ‘system’ without any internal crises. But the present study concentrates the embryonic period of the formation of Siddha medical identity and brings the state of ambiguity and contest among Tamil physicians. The work reveals that language, religion and territory played prominent role in the discourse.

**Key Words:** Siddha Medicine, Ayurveda, Tamil Physicians and Colonial Tamil Region