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**Kaya Kalpa Yoga: Popularizing an Esoteric Siddha Tradition through a Hindu Guru Organization**

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Abstract

Kaya Kalpa Yoga is the signature method of the World Community Service Center (ulaka camutāya cēvā caṅkam), a Hindu guru organization located in the Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu. It is a set of yoga practices with the threefold objective to slow the ageing process, maintain health and youthfulness, and postpone one's death. The organization's flagship method refers unmistakably to the Tamil Siddha rejuvenation tradition (kāyakaṛpam) which features prominently in the medico-alchemical literature (Kędzia 2017). While in the Tamil Siddha literature knowledge about the preparation and use of kaṛpam substances has a distinctly esoteric and secretive character, one of the stated key goals of the guru organization is to simplify the practice and to make it accessible to all. This goal echoes the inclusivist stance axiomatic for Hindu guru organizations. In this paper, I examine the refashioning and popularization of the Tamil Siddha kāyakaṛpam regimen through the World Community Service Center (WCSC). I explore how the WCSC promotes Kaya Kalpa as a simple bodily technique and how it packages its Kaya Kalpa Yoga in highly scientific and rationalist language. I give special attention to the translation of cryptic and abstract ideas found in the Tamil Siddha medico-alchemical literature into clear-cut and unambiguous instructions devoid of alchemical references. I argue that the streamlining of the kāyakaṛpam regimen serves the organization for branding purposes. Kaya Kalpa Yoga can be understood as a symbolic resource for the guru organization to differentiate itself from other, similar Hindu guru organizations with which it competes for recognition and members. Moreover, I suggest that the remaking and popularization of the Tamil Siddha kāyakaṛpam regimen through the WCSC exemplifies the relevance of Hindu guru organizations in contemporary south India for the reshaping and continuation of the Siddha tradition.