

**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**

**Mercurial Medicines: Is Siddha Medicine without Mercury possible?**

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**Abstract**

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev recently stated that “Siddha Vaidya cannot operate without mercury. Mercury is the most essential ingredient in Siddha Vaidya”, thereby expressing a notion that many Siddha experts, including apprenticeship-trained vaidyars and colleged-trained Siddha doctors alike, share. This is to be seen against the backdrop of strict international regulations on mercury trade and usage, such as the Minamata convention, ratified by India last year, and critical voices raised in reputed journals against use and import of traditional Asian medicines and their potential contamination by heavy metals. Still, popularity of mercury in Siddha medicine seems to be on a rise. This paper hence attempts to update the results of earlier work on mercury and metal and mineral substance use in Siddha medicine (Sébastien 2015). Paying attention to the role and usage of mercury in Siddha medical preparations and its status as a medical resource, it asks: What role does mercury play in Siddha medicine today, for what reasons and how is it used? For many proponents, mercury in its various forms plays a crucial role in Siddha medicine., which will be depicted in this paper, among others, by the production of iracamanis –amulets made from mercury, which are accredited with medicinal and spiritual powers – and by the heightened interest in research studies at Siddha institutes, such as a recent randomized controlled trial (RCT) on rats, studying the effectiveness of mercury-based drug Poorna Chandrodaya Chenduram for dementia and more specifically Alzheimer’s disease. By thus contextualizing Siddha mercurial procedures and preparations through pulling together therapeutic, historical and global frames, this paper attempts to chart out the specific role of mercury in Siddha traditions and why and how it is seen to constitute such a vital aspect of Siddha medicine.