

ABSTRACT

Integration of āyurveda in Kerala: An ethnography of a family-based tradition

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The contemporary health-political discourse about the integration of āyurveda in India derives from the global biological perspective of the WHO and its biomedical Primary Health Care concept, whereas local actors and socio-cultural aspects are hardly considered. Forced to meet the postcolonial health expectations of its clients in biomedical terms, Ayurveda must “biomedicalize” and redefine itself. This project therefore investigates the local concepts and strategies of integration of āyurveda by assessing the adaptive changes of an old ayurvedic family-based clinic and factory in the contemporary socio-cultural context of Kerala.

The main objectives of the research are: 1. to document ayurvedic practice and its postcolonial dynamic in Kerala: the family history, its local prestige, the ayurvedic training and social hierarchy of the *vaidya*/B.A.M.S.-doctors/nurses, the division of work and resources, the privatization, standardization, hybridization of treatments (ISO-clinic, GMP-factory, regional agencies), the changing values and aims. 2. to trace the socio-cultural illness behaviour of ayurvedic patients and their relatives: social/financial status, definition of health and illness, illness history and its social impact, strategies of coping and resort to treatment, the efficacy of different medical systems. 3. to identify/discuss both local and global health-politics, their impact on the local illness behaviour and the response of local ayurvedic actors to both of them.