

ABSTRACT

The workings of disciplinary power: (re)turning to biomedicalized Ayurveda

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This research will explore the process of the biomedical disciplining of institutionalized Ayurveda in India. It will examine contemporary clinical research in Ayurveda, which has seen a qualitative shift in its conduct in the last four decades. The general standards of appraisal, the procedure in which conclusions are drawn, the assumptions they are based on, and the language used for communicating the results of research, are derived from the organization of research in western medical science. In my study, I became increasingly aware of the limitations of the dominant approaches to understanding medical pluralism in India. While most such theoretical perspectives continue to work within the framework of power and domination, coercion and persuasion, struggle and resistance, this project will seek out how institutionalized Ayurveda has redefined its relationship to itself and to its 'dominant' other in an almost liberating, 'scientific' and 'progressive' way.

This research also intends to look closely at collaborative research studies in medicine, research that gains from the medical knowledge base of scientists trained in two distinct traditions of medical thought – the Ayurvedic and the biomedical – and that culminate in multi or co-authored journal articles. Biomedical doctors have, for a very long time, been present as invisible interlocutors in Ayurvedic discourse and Ayurvedic research. The crucial difference in collaborative research, however, is the presence of biomedical doctors as visible and material actors and not as imagined or absent subjects of address. What is the nature of the biomedical influence on Ayurvedic research that is collaborative, and how does this new way of conducting science form an important practice in establishing an Ayurvedic elite in India, while marginalizing other forms of Ayurvedic practice and research?