

Vernacular Medicine in Colonial India

Conceptualised in opposition to ‘orthodox’ medicine, homoeopathy, a western medical project originating in eighteenth-century Germany, was reconstituted as vernacular medicine in British Bengal. India went on to become the home of the largest population of users of homoeopathic medicine in the world. Combining insights from the history of colonial medicine and the cultural histories of family in British India, Shinjini Das examines the processes through which western homoeopathy was translated and indigenised in the colony as a specific Hindu worldview, an economic vision and a disciplining regimen. In tracing the localisation of German homoeopathy in a British Indian province, this book analyses interactions between Calcutta-based homoeopathic family firms, disparate contributors to the Bengali print market, the British colonial state and emergent nationalist governments. The history of homoeopathy in Bengal reveals myriad negotiations undertaken by the colonised peoples to reshape scientific modernity in the subcontinent.

Shinjini Das is a Wellcome Trust Research Fellow at the Faculty of History, University of Oxford. She received her PhD from University College London and has previously held a postdoctoral fellowship funded by the European Research Council at the University of Cambridge.

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Family, Market and Homoeopathy

Shinjini Das
University of Oxford



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For my loving parents,
Samar Das and Urmimala Ghosh

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Note on Translation and Transliteration

All translations from Bengali are mine unless otherwise noted.

I have devised and followed my own code of transliteration, keeping in mind that many of the non-English terms mentioned here appear in at least three, if not more, South Asian languages: Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit. To mark their specificities in words, texts and names of people and places, I have abided by the following general rules:

1. Diacritics have not been used.
2. Non-English terms are italicised and put in quotes when they appear for the first time. Also, a translation is provided following their usage in the main text, following the first appearance. If it is a significant historiographic concept, it is footnoted in its first usage.
3. Names of non-English monographs and articles are translated and provided in the text when they appear first. They are provided in parentheses in the footnote when they only appear in the latter. Further, the translations of non-English monographs are attached with the Bibliography at the end.
4. The final 'a' has been done away with while transliterating Bengali terms, unless it is pronounced; hence, Brihat, Samaj, Paribar and Kayastha, Vaisya, Amiya. However, for widely prevalent terms like ayurveda I have retained the spelling that is used in standard historiography.
5. In general, for the Bengali terms I have followed the standard norms of Sanskrit transliteration and not their phonetic use in Bengali. Thus, Paricharak and not Poricharok, Svasthya and not Swastha, Sahitya and not Sahityo. An exception is made in the use of the term 'swadeshi' and the widely prevalent translation has been retained.
6. For the most part, I have used 'b' instead of 'v' while transliterating Bengali terms; hence Baidya, Bhishak and Byabshayee.
7. In transliterating the names of books that are written in Sanskrit, I have followed the standard rules of Sanskrit transliteration. Hence, *Purana*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.