



# Mirrored Views on Healing Systems in India:

## Merging Policies, Politics and Practices

International Workshop, 19-20 April 2004  
French Institute of Pondicherry, India

Indian medicines are a matter of concern for a variety of actors ranging from practitioners and users, to social scientists, activists and governmental planners. Each of them have specific views on, and positioning in, the health system and play a certain role in its configuration and dynamics. Indian medical plurality is thus closely interlinked in the social field, an examination of which would prove expedient for the understanding of medicines in their contemporaneity. Each of the following themes will be discussed :

- *The commoditization of scholastic medicines*

Indian medicines are characterized by an increasing urbanization of the erudite great traditions and an expanding market for “traditional” health care. These contemporary trends apprise of the constitution of spaces of socio-medical vulnerability and inform on the social, epistemological and practical transformation of medicine. This further informs on the production and ideologies of modernity, and the way the latter are transcribed into medical practice and expressed through medicines.

- *Issues pertaining to the legality of medical practice*

Deeply embedded in social and identitarian fields, the legal recognition of a given medicine is today an imperative to reach social and medical institutional legitimacy. It does, however, exist a number of tolerated practices which both nurtures and derive from the classical (legal) medicines, and for which the legality needs to be questioned. This panel will explore the social challenges, the national strategies and the normative implications of making a medicine legal.

- *The social role of the healers*

Beside their medical activities, such individuals detain non-medical role in their community due to their status of healer or, say, birth attendant. Then, what is the social dimension and practice of a healer in today's India when his or her practice has been supplanted by the emergence of biomedicine? How do the practitioners negotiate their position within a dominated medical system?

The workshop, conceptually designed in a reflexive anthropological fashion, puts all actors at the center of the question, each of them being both subject and object. It will enable of an encounter between selected anthropologists, sociologists, researchers belonging to medical traditions and policy-makers so as to facilitate cross-fertilization and reciprocal understanding. It will finally examine, through both the structure of the workshop itself and the themes developed therein, the social construction of medicine and the appropriation, or not, of biomedical models. The abolition of inter- (and intra-) disciplinary boundaries is part of the heuristic approach of this workshop, which helps—through multiplying the angles of research—in acquiring an unfragmented body of knowledge.

Provisional programme to be sent soon  
Limited number of participants

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