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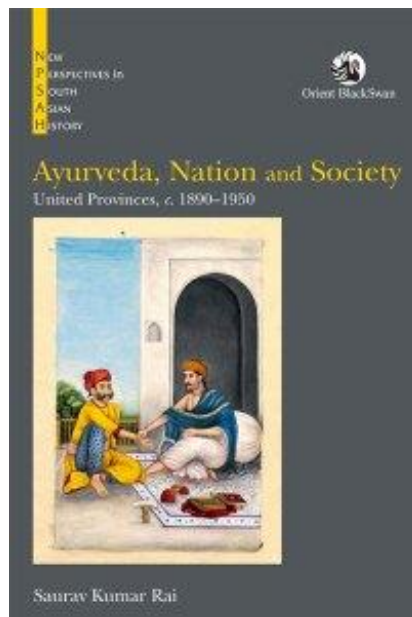
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New Book Announcement: “Ayurveda, Nation and Society: United Provinces, c 1890–1950” by Saurav Kumar Rai



Ayurveda, Nation and Society: United Provinces, c 1890–1950,
Saurav Kumar Rai (Orient BlackSwan, December 2023)

Ayurveda enjoys a growing global appeal, and is often touted as ‘true’ and ‘time-tested’ by contemporary political actors, governments, social groups, practitioners and NGOs in India. With “indigenous” healing systems enjoying increasing state support today, an examination of the socio-political aspects of medicine, in particular Ayurveda, and its role in nation-building is critically important.

Ayurveda, Nation and Society, the latest in Orient BlackSwan’s “New Perspectives in South Asian History” series, captures the late 19th- and early 20th-century growth of “medical nationalism” through the Ayurvedic revivalist movement in the United Provinces, and observes the ensuing change and continuity in the attitude towards “indigenous” medicine in independent India. The volume critiques the casteist, communal, class- and gender-biased social culture inherent in Ayurvedic discourse of the period under discussion, and notes how the constant blaming of the “Other” for spreading diseases detrimental to the “Hindu” male reveals that proponents of Ayurveda were actively involved in both the “reconstruction of a tradition” and of the society and “nation”.

The volume also examines the Ayurvedic print and drug market to study the commercialization of the health discourse and healing practices, with the help of diverse sources such as hitherto untapped vernacular texts like Ayurvedic journals and pamphlets, literary interventions, along with field interviews of practicing Ayurvedic healers and shopkeepers. The author also demonstrates how, despite co-opting several traits of Western medicine, Ayurvedic practitioners have often failed to imbibe one of its central tenets—the spirit of rigorous enquiry/experiment.

This volume will interest scholars of the social history of health and medicine in colonial India and South Asia, as well readers curious about Ayurveda’s evolution, leading to its present-day form.

Ayurveda, Nation and Society: United Provinces, c 1890–1950

by **Saurav Kumar Rai**

Orient BlackSwan, December 2023