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The *Daktar* is In.

In 2009, Projit Mukharji published *Nationalizing the Body: The Medical Market, Print, and Daktari Medicine*. In it he attempts to place indigenous practices of ‘western’ medicine within the large context of the history of medicine. *Nationalizing the Body* spans the years between 1860 and 1930. Any earlier, Mukharji admits, the sources are few and post 1930 political changes influenced the practice of many *daktars*. He points out that these dates are not “impervious walls” and that much material can be found on either side.

During his long introduction, Mukharji explores the historiography of medicine in colonial South Asia, notably the absence of the *daktars*. Part of the introduction explains that the *daktar* absence from the historiography has mainly to do with the continuing interpretation of western medicine as a “system,” and that once it is medicine in South Asia can be viewed as a type of “vernacular medicine” can the revelations in South Asian history of medicine be clear. He also reveals his methodology of biographical comparisons as well as his use of mostly Sanskritized transliterations of Bengali names when not specifically important to Bengali usage, as a means to keep the book “reader-friendly.”

The first three chapters set the stage for the idea of nationalizing medicine. First, he examines the lives a several *daktars* as the worked, lived, and applied for government jobs. Following their introduction he examines numerous *daktari* medical text published

and the relationship between the world of the *daktari* and the world of the publishers. Chapter III revolves around the idea of a positive contagion. The idea that nationalism is contagious is nothing new to political historians, but Mukharji reveals that the idea of a national identity based on a collected and similar knowledge, in this case vernacular medicine, can spread as quickly as any disease.

The final three chapters are each a case study: Plague, Cholera, and *Dhatu Dourbalya*, respectively. Chapter V specifically reviewed in this case shows Cholera, an endemic malady, as an analogue to issues within South Asia itself, and how the *daktars* treating Cholera created their own understandings and treatments for it as a means of competing within “The Cholera Market.” This chapter has the strongest evidence for the indigenous cures successfully competing with those of state sponsored treatments. That competition may have been brief, but it proves what Mukharji is postulating: that the idea of any kind of permanent ‘marginality’ of *daktari* practices is incorrect.

Nationalizing the Body is a well-researched and well-organized work on the history of medicine in South Asia. Mukharji makes great use of images to explain the relationship between the *daktars* and those that published journals. His ability to use Plague, Cholera and *Dhatu Dourbalya* as analogues for changes in and around the practices allows him to present more than the commonly represented governmental sources.

The chapters usually begin with a survey of other authorship or brief concepts of change within a system. While this sets the stage for the following argument it is at times a bit distracting from the narrative. Mukharji’s paragraphs sometimes take up entire pages, making it difficult to refer back to a section or name that was mentioned earlier. While

the illustrations he used were quite good, more could be added. In fact the chapter on *daktari* prints only contained two.

By following the course of practiced medicine in South Asia between 1860 and 1930 Mukharji has shown that *daktari* medicine was not some form of hybrid of 'western' and indigenous Indian medical practices, but that it stood on its own as powerful indigenous knowledge with an extensive network of both licensed and unlicensed practitioners. The breadth and depth of Mukharji's research should allow for much more to be done on not only the subject of *daktari* medicine, but for the history of medicine in general and perhaps even provide a new lens with which to view colonial medicine.