

The Charak Festival in India: A Review and a Case Anil Kishore Sinha

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ABSTRACT The festival of *Charak* is known, in the actual use of the world, mainly from West Bengal. However, the period, timing and practices – primarily of the inflicting of tortures on the body – are common for many regions in India. As result, the researchers have decided to call them all *Charak*. Local names are given where possible. The review given here is not encyclopedic. Rather, it is selected for completeness of description, in order to show trends and similarities. It could be that the researchers have missed out certain major works. In case the reader is aware of any such work, the researchers would be grateful to have them pointed out to them. A lack of previous reviews has led to the writers having written in isolation from others who have written on the issue. Initially, then, an account from pan-Indian cases are given. Later, an account of the festival as celebrated by Bengalis from Delhi is given. This leads to a description, however preliminary, on certain similarities and practices. The authors are continuing their researches on the issue and it is hoped that further issues will emerge with time, especially in association with fire-walking.