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978-0-521-58548-4 - Doctors for Democracy: Health Professionals in the Nepal Revolution
Vincanne Adams

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Doctors for Democracy

In 1990 a revolution in Nepal ushered in multiparty democracy and brought to an end the great power of the Hindu Monarchy. The activities of 1990 were sparked off by a group of medical professionals. Dedicated to the principle of "Health for All," they demanded the eradication of poverty, inequality, repression, and elite corruption. By insisting that scientific knowledge must prevail over traditional institutions, and that universal principles of truth, merit, human rights, and scientific efficacy were essential to democracy, they eventually challenged the moral basis on which Nepali society was organized. But the success of the revolutionaries placed health professionals in a dilemma, with repercussions far beyond Nepal. Can medicine be politicized and still claim to be an objective science? When does the scientific method infringe on the moral foundations of a nation? On the other hand, can health professionals in a poor, undemocratic country afford to steer clear of politics? Vincanne Adams, a leading medical anthropologist, writes penetratingly about the Nepali situation, and raises questions that are fundamental for anyone concerned with public health, scientific truth, and democracy in the developing world.

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For Lydia Ke'olani

“The doctors have not politicized health . . . they have made clear the truth.”

message written in the Bir Hospital medical register by a Nepali citizen to
doctors on strike during the People's Movement, 1990

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