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Allopathic medicine, profession, and capitalist ideology in India

Ronald Frankenberg

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Abstract

It is argued that, notwithstanding medical pluralism, allopathic medical ideology in India is of importance beyond health and medicine in the legitimation and reinforcement of capitalist state power. It is seen as the bearer of an urban, male, technological, hospital-based, cosmopolitan, curative, and individualistic world view. Three cases are presented—the use of medical terms in industry, the events surrounding the President's 1977 illness, and a so-called “epidemic” of poisoning amongst bonded Nagesia tribals in Madhya Pradesh. Finally, it is suggested that other forms of medical ideology have weaker social bases and can provide no institutional challenge even to an admittedly poorly organized allopathic profession.



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