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**BOOK REVIEWS**


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**Ladakh: A Report on an integrated Survey, 1980**, edited by P. Kachroo, (Ladakh Laboratory, University of Kashmir, Srinagar 190 006). Pages 53. Price Rs 30/-.

To many of us, in the Sub-continent, Ladakh conveys no more than being an inaccessible part of Kashmir with winter temperatures that can make life uncomfortable. The newly established Ladakh laboratory in Srinagar has undertaken a challenging task of educating us on the natural resources of the region, the changing floras, ethnobotanical status and history of the influences of great religions like Buddhism, Islam and Christianity on the inhabitants of the area. Many other cultural problems typical of regions where men and mountains meet could now be expected to be unravelled. This is only the beginning.

The introduction gives in detail some very interesting facts of the physical geography of the vast treeless district of about 96 thousand sq. km. at an elevation ranging from 3,600 to 5,500 m., above sea level. The Chapters to follow on Ethnobotany and Social Fabric, Geomorphology and Glaciology, Solar Thermal Technology, Hydrobiology and Floristics have been written by specialists and make for interesting reading. One thing seems clear that the region abounds in wild medicinal herbs. The question is, how soon can we cash on this knowledge by planned cultivation of some of these herbs as also gear our machinery for introduction of some of the rare and endangered species from other parts of the Himalayan region into the Ladakh valley.

It is interesting to read through the Chapter on Solar-Thermal Technology and get to know of the many possibilities of harnessing not only solar energy but also hydraulic and wind energy. The Chapter on Floristics runs into many pages and contains much new and interesting material. The statement that the rich plant collections made by many foreign agencies during the last century were all sent to different world herbaria, leaving nothing to the host country, makes sad reading. It is now for our systematic botanists to make good this loss by starting *de novo* and arranging national expeditions to this difficult terrain with the assistance of the members of the Ladakh laboratory. Their pioneering work now included in this report can well be the starting point for such exploration.

It would be most gratifying to see that with the new trend set by Professors Reyat Khan and P. Kachroo and their colleagues, their efforts could be strengthened by larger inputs of men and financial resources in making further purposeful explorations. However, it should not just end up with explorations. Plant

introduction and the preservation of endangered species of plants must receive top priority. It has to be organized by multi-funding and in this task aid-giving agencies should come together and make a common cause of it. One wishes that the price of the publication is kept low by subsidizing. Academic institution dealing with taxonomy could be provided with gratis copies.

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**Annual Review of Medicine: Selected topics in the Clinical Sciences (Volume 32)** Edited by W. P. Cregar, C. H. Coggins and E. W. Hancock (Annual Reviews INC 4139, El Camino Way, Palo Alto, California 94306 U.S.A.) pp. 594, Price USA \$ 20.00; Elsewhere \$ 21.00.

Like the previous Annual reviews of Medicine, this 1982 Annual review contains excellently selected, written reviews of thirty nine topics in clinical medicine and allied subjects. The very first article is a historical review of the working of the Rockefeller Foundation Virus program. It is heartening to learn that work done at the Virus Research Institute of Poona is mentioned in this article.

The present status of our knowledge in the understanding of the spread and morbidity of leprosy has been well covered by Olaf K. Skinsenes in the article Infectious Granulomas (Pages 47-67). Detailed study of human transmission of this disease as well as the progressing morbid changes due to *Lepra* infection and the immunological processes have been well written. Even though there is an optimistic note in the article showing the decline of Leprosy in selected centres, it is disheartening that there is still a large pool of unrecognized and untreated patients all over the world. A similar article on Malarial immunity by D. W. Taylor and W. A. Siddiqui also discusses the problems of developing an effective vaccine against human Plasmodium infection.

Surgeons in topical countries who deal with abscesses in various parts of the body will benefit from the article on the role of anaerobic bacteria by D. F. Zalezmik and others. The importance of recognizing the need to do anaerobic culture routinely in the case of abscess formation has been brought out in this article. Both local effects of abscess and the systemic bacteraemia which determine the outcome of an infection and

the need to use effective agents to fight anaerobes in conjunction with usual antimicrobials has been clearly brought out in this article.

Transplantation of the Pancreas, if perfected, will be a boon to innumerable patients of Diabetes Mellitus. But, the technical and immunological problems of transplantation of pancreas have made the procedure extremely difficult and the failure rate has been rather too high.

The articles on major drug interactions, the role of lithium in medicine and also and adverse effects of lithium have to be read by all the practising clinicians and psychiatrists. The clinical disorders of Hyperkalemia by R. A. DeFranz *et al* is excellently written with an extensive Bibliography.

The ways and means of Myocardial protection during open heart surgery, the biology of thrombosis and embolism in mitral valve prolapse will be of use to cardiovascular surgeons.

The enigma of Autoimmune mechanisms which cause Haemolytic anaemias and the problem of red cell transfusion for such patients and also the article on the Thalassaemia syndromes make interesting reading. The need to do extensive screening of donors for transfusion to patients with auto immune haemolytic anaemias has to be understood by all the clinicians who order blood transfusions to their patients.

The present Annual Review of medicine has maintained the past reputation as an eagerly awaited book.

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"Major Weeds of Rice in South and Southeast Asia" by Keith Moody, International Rice Research Institute, Philippines pp. 78, Price not given.

The booklet is a good illustrated publication of some of the widespread weed species infesting rice fields in the major rice growing regions of South and South East Asia. This would prove to be a reference book for those associated with rice farming — scientists, researchers, extension workers and farmers, to identify these weeds as the first step towards weed control. The author has given the morphological characteristics of the weed with the name of species and their families. Thirty two species of the weeds belonging to twelve families have been described. Among these, fifteen species belong to the most obnoxious group, the grassy weeds and another four to sages. The coloured photographs of each of these weed species along with plant description make the job of identification further easy and the author appears particularly conscious of these as he has also provided illustrated glossary.

However, additional information about some of the typical aquatic weeds of rice field (algae and ferns like *Chara* sp., *Nitella* sp., *Najas* sp., etc.) common to lowland rice ecosystems, would have further enriched the publication. Nevertheless, the authors' contribution through this book to the weed science is praiseworthy.

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