



Topics in the History of Pharmacology.

Popat N. Patil *et al.* (eds). R. K. Goyal, B-3 Sthapatya Apartments, Memnagar, Ahmedabad 380 052, 2005. 351 pp. Price: Rs 400.

The book contains seventeen chapters, which have concise presentations of various important areas as seen by the eminent experts. The editors of this book (P. N. Patil, O. D. Gulati and R. Balaraman) are three distinguished pharmacologists who have provided an integrated assessment of the historical aspects of pharmacology, status reports and biographical perspectives through information compiled by eminent pharmacologists, pharmacists, and toxicologists from India and USA.

Historical aspects of pharmacology have been dealt in an exceptionally competent manner. The chapter 'Historical perspectives on molecular chirality and its sig-

nificance in pharmacology' by Patil records in lucid detail the significance of chirality in pharmacological practices. 'The origin of receptor theory of drug action' by John Parascandola takes us to the period when landmark concepts evolved. Both these chapters make interesting reading by providing an explicit account of the history of these concepts, the backbone of pharmacology.

This book owes its origin to the symposium 'The History of Pharmacology', organized during the Annual Meeting of the Indian Pharmacology Society at Delhi in December 2003. It therefore, contains several chapters covering the Indian scenario. Worth naming are 'Ayurveda through ages', Balaraman and Gulati; 'History of pharmacology in the Indian scenario' G. V. Satyavati; 'Contributions of CDRI to drug development in India' B. N. Dhawan and 'History of clinical pharmacology in India', by N. A. Khirsagar. These chapters together give an excellent overall account of pharmacological developments in India related to plant products. 'History of pharmacology in the Indian Scenario' by G. V. Satyavati and 'Contributions of CDRI to drug development in India' by B. N. Dhawan record an authentic and demi-official account of all the major developments made in the country.

Bhopal MIC disaster has affected the lives of lakhs of Indian citizens. In the absence of any prior knowledge of MIC toxicity and treatment thereof, the initial post-disaster management was therefore

only symptomatic. The chapter 'Bhopal MIC – disaster' by V. K. Vijayan records major inferences from major studies conducted on MIC victims. 'Toxicology studies in India with emphasis on environmental chemicals' by P. K. Seth and F. N. Jaffery summarizes Indian researches on environmental toxicants.

The book has several biographical chapters, which might help the reader to understand the scientific milieu and journeys of these great pharmacologists in India, but in my personal opinion, they hold limited interest to young researchers.

Overall the strength of this book lies in the honest efforts by experts to present a status summary on pharmacological studies in India and linking the present concepts to the historical beginning. Loss of interest in young researchers to pursue pharmacology as a career possibly due to the high impact of molecular approaches in medical sciences, has pushed this classical discipline towards decline; this is a matter of global concern. With this backdrop, the book is welcome and makes an interesting appraisal of the history of pharmacology and may be useful in kindling the interest of young researchers.

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