Book Reviews

History of Animal Science in India : Volume IV, Part II: Animal Science

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This book consists of 11 Chapters and an Appendix. The first chapter, 'Introduction', briefly states the objectives and scope of the book. The second chapter very briefly deals with developments in the field during the pre-historic period. The third chapter then goes on to highlight developments in animal science during the Vedic and Post Vedic period, collectively called as *Ancient* period. The first three chapters together are covered in 15 pages. Next two chapters attempt to cover studies on the natural history of animals during the historical and medieval periods. Chapter 6 highlights European influence on the animal sciences in India. From here onwards reading becomes somewhat interesting as the chapters talk about how colonial masters influenced the study of animal sciences, foundation of Asiatic Society (Chapter 7), preparation of Indian fauna volumes during British and post-independence era (Chapter 8). Chapter 9 sheds light on the pioneering contributions made by Ram Brahma Sanyal, especially his studies on captive animals and role in the establishment of zoos. A tribute to Mr Sanyal is a worthy documentation. The Chapter 10 has two components: *Faunastic survey and new frontiers in Zoology*. The first part is reasonably well written. However, the second part is weak. It is difficult to cover developments in diverse fields (e.g. taxonomy, ecology, physiology, cytogenetics, developmental biology etc) of animal science by authors having limited background in these diverse fields. In the process, contributions of many eminent zoologists has been either ignored or undermined. The last chapter is titled "Post Script: Footprints of Animal Science in India". Not a very exciting chapter either.

The Appendix section provides a list of Presidential Addresses in animal sciences given at the Indian Science Congress. However, subject and author indices are missing.

In short, the book is an attempt to catalogue information in a rather superficial way with scant regard to spelling mistakes, developments in various fields of animal sciences. For instance, on the Content page 'animal' is spelled as 'animla'; likewise, 'Vishwanath' becomes 'Vishwa Nath' at some places. These are only representative examples. Several references cited in the text are not quoted under 'References'.

I do realize that writing history of animal sciences is not easy. Tangential reference, if not omission of history of how different branches of animal sciences progressed in this country, is not appropriate. For instance, areas like cytogenetics, ornithology, fish biology, entomology and parasitology, physiology, comparative endocrinology, reproductive biology and chronobiology deserved more coverage. In summary, I find that the book is incomplete in many ways and thus of limited use and authenticity as far as the history of animal sciences in India is concerned. At best, the future writers of history of animal sciences may find it useful as a starting point.

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