

disadvantaged throughout their career just because they were women.

None of the women in *Lilavati's Daughters* regrets her decision to opt for science and contemplates that if she has to restart her career today, she will choose the same profession again. Put plainly, these women scientists have enjoyed their lives in science and are proud of their accomplishments and the success of their young colleagues/students. Throughout the book, quotes such as 'Research for me is a way of life' (Renu Khanna-Chopra), 'Even on a bad referee report day I am happy I do science' (Rama Govindarajan), 'All the gender-biased adversities have made me stronger and even more ambitious to succeed, and I do science without regret and apology' (Bindu Bambah) and 'I cannot remember a time when I did not want to go to my lab – it is my dream place and I never feel bored' (Chitra Mandal), sum up their joy in doing science.

The book has no specific agenda, no conclusion and the short essays have not been organized in any particular fashion, but many stories do point towards the issue of gender bias in the positions of power within the scientific community and emphasize the importance of having female role models in this arduous profession of science. This book provides tangible examples of career paths of successful women scientists, which will certainly inspire young girls to achieve their dreams.

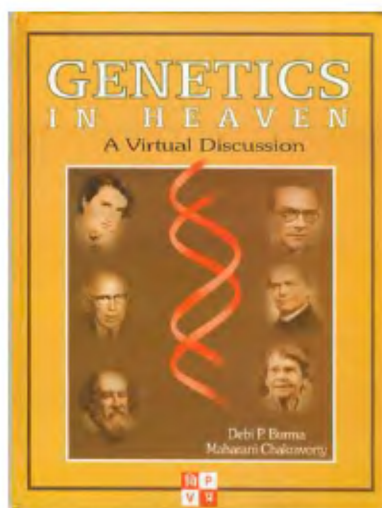
The book does have some typographical errors here and there, but you tend to neglect them as you cruise along. The only reservation I have about the book is the lack of representation of women scientists from the industrial sector. Success in industry and academia is measured by different yardsticks; while it is a team achievement in the industry, academia focuses on individual accomplishments. Reflections on the career paths and the challenges faced by women scientists employed in the industry would have offered more food for thought. Despite this, the book serves its purpose by bringing visibility to the unsung heroines of Indian science and by acknowledging their contributions to science, both as researchers and as mentors.

Overall, the book is well indexed, well composed, easy read and highly inspirational and deserves a place in your personal collection as well as on the bookshelf of every college and university

library. The book is a must-read for future generations of scientists who will be inspired by the lives of these remarkable Indian women scientists. Despite having no manifesto, *Lilavati's Daughters* successfully drives home the point that a more conducive work environment for women researchers will help them reach their full academic potential and will allow the nation to tap the entire scientific talent pool.

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Genetics in Heaven: A Virtual Discussion. Debi P. Burma and Maharani Chakravorty. Vigyan Prasar, A50, Institutional Area, Sector 62, Noida 201 307. 2008. 95 pp. Price: Rs 100.

This little book of about one hundred pages presents a historical account of the development of genetics from the times of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel, up to the period when the human genome was sequenced, spanning little more than a century and a half. The unusual feature of this book is the novel style of narration. It is written in the form of informal conversations between Darwin and Mendel, imagined to take place in Heaven. Other luminaries of the past (also imag-

ined to be in Heaven) such as Barbara McClintock, Oswald Avery, Erwin Chargaff, Francis Crick, Rosalind Franklin, Rene Dubos and J. B. S. Haldane are brought in to participate in the conversation, as and when necessary. Some who have not made it to Heaven yet are contacted through an ingenious device called the Time Telescope (with its audiovisual attachments!), invented by none other than Galileo Galelei (another Heaven-dweller), whom Darwin and Mendel are imagined to meet in Heaven. These doyens include Joshua Lederberg (an earthling at the time of writing of the book), James Watson, Paul Berg, Frederick Sanger, John Sulston, Craig Venter and others. Through their conversations the story of genetics is unfolded. This style is indeed novel and many basic concepts and anecdotal tidbits are presented. Even professionals could find bits of information that they may not be aware of. Although it is claimed that the book could be read and understood even by laymen with some interest in and exposure to science, the language is technical and esoteric, very much so in places. I wonder how much a lay reader would gain by reading this book. However, serious students and teachers of genetics might find this book a good supplement to regular textbooks. A major drawback of this book is the complete absence of illustrations, which could have been of great help in grasping the concepts. In a lighter vein, I wish Darwin and Mendel had bumped into another illustrious 'swargvasi', namely Leonardo Da Vinci who, with the help of Galileo and his gadgets, could have located the source of necessary material and come up with excellent illustrations. As everyone knows, Da Vinci was good at scientific drawings when he was an earthling!

The authors could have been less complimentary towards Watson and Crick (W-C) and refrained from calling them (through the words of Rosalind Franklin) as Mr Wicked and Mr Crook (p. 30). Even Darwin and Mendel (who meet Watson just a few pages earlier in the narrative) are depicted to describe him as arrogant and upstart (p. 47). All this could have been avoided. The authors (again through the words of Chargaff and Franklin) are critical that the W-C duo got the Nobel Prize without doing any experiment. True, Chargaff and Franklin provided information on base equivalence in the DNA and the possibility of a

