

Book Review

Medicinal Value of Indian Spices, AMIT KRISHNA DE (Editor), Books for All, Delhi - 110 052, 1997, pp. vii + 119, Rs. 45.00, ISBN 81 7386 1988.

The book provides a general account of the medicinal values of various Indian spices. The first part of the book is divided into six chapters, each chapter depicting the role of various spices in therapeutics. The second part describes aspects on cultivation, production, processing and quality control in spices. Most of the chapters in the book are papers presented at the National Symposium on Medicinal Values of Indian Spices, held at Calcutta in 1993, as mentioned in the preface.

The first chapter of Part I describes the traditional uses of 38 spices in a simple language; no references are cited. The second chapter deals with the chemistry and physiology of the pungent principles of chilli and its medicinal uses. A majority of the references are by the author himself, which gives an impression that the subject is not widely referred. The third chapter, even though titled 'Blend from spices and medicinal plants' is more of a general nature and appears as though the author of this chapter perhaps wishes to highlight the innovations of a particular private company! The next chapter describes only one of the several medicinal properties of chilli namely, the gastrointestinal effect of capsicum. The fifth chapter on fenugreek and its

effect on cholesterol has been presented in the form of a symposia proceedings rather than a compilation. The sixth chapter lists out the therapeutic uses of a few common spices and the information given is mostly repetitive of Chapter I of the book.

Among the four chapters in Part II, the first one gives a detailed account of production, productivity and export of major and minor spices in India; however the figures pertain to 1990-91 only. The second chapter summarizes insect pests and diseases affecting spices in the field and during storage. The tables listing out insect pests and diseases and their control measures can be used as ready references. But there are certain serious omissions on many of the major spices. The next chapter on quality control and adulteration is practically a collection of references and gives only superficial information. The references on quality testing are not beyond 1982 though the symposium was held in 1993!

The last chapter of the book explains the structure and functions of various bioactive alkaloids present in curry leaf (*M. koenigii*). A mention of this important constituent would have been sufficient in Chapter I of Part II of the book, instead of unnecessarily elaborating the chemical structures, which seems out of context.

In short, the book provides some basic information for the general reader

interested in this topic, but certain chapters could have been avoided which have no direct relation with the title of the book. The editing of various chapters is of a poor standard and many

grammatical and proof reading errors throughout the publication makes reading of the book an arduous task. (B CHEMPAKAM, Indian Institute of Spices Research, Calicut-673 012, Kerala, India.)