

BOOK REVIEWS

S. L. Dhani, *Prachin Bharat Men Vijnan* (in Hindi). Divya Dristi Prakashan. 754, Sector 8, Panchkula (Haryana)-134 108. Second Edition, 1982. pp. 256. Price Rs. 60.00 (in India), £7.00 (outside India).

The book under review is the result of Shri S. L. Dhani's study of the *Purāṇas*. It is divided into nine chapters. Chap. 1 contains a general study of the *Purāṇas*, their origin and importance. Chap. 2 deals with science in ancient times. Chap. 3 sets out a comparative study of the Constituent Elements ("Kāreṇa-tattva") of modern science and the Ultimate Reality ("Para-tattva") of the *Purāṇas*. Chap. 4 gives the details of the *Manvantara* Theory and Chap. 5 the background of this Theory. Chap. 6 deals with the creation and destruction of the universe. Chap. 7 describes the birth of living beings and the evolution of civilization. Chap. 8 sets out the various proofs in support of the Theory. Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter. In the Appendix that follows the author gives a history of the genesis of the *Manvantara* Theory. The book ends with a bibliography and a word-index.

The special feature of the book is the author's *Manvantara* Theory. According to the *Purāṇas* a period of 432×10^7 years is called a *Kalpa*, and a period of $71 \times 432 \times 10^4$ years is called a *Manvantara*. Since the beginning of the current *Kalpa* six *Manvantaras* have elapsed and the seventh one is current. The six *Manvantaras* that have passed bore the names *Svāyambhuva*, *Svārociṣa*, *Uttama*, *Tāmasa*, *Raivata* and *Cākṣuṣa*, and the seventh one which is current bears the name *Vaivasvata*. On the basis of these names Shri Dhani has propounded a theory, the *Manvantara* Theory. The name *Svāyambhuva* (from *Svayambhū*, meaning self-born), according to him, was given to the first *Manvantara* because the primordial cosmic matter was then evolved in the solar system. The name *Svārociṣa* ("Self-shining") was given to the second *Manvantara* because the Sun then assumed the self-shining quality. The name *Uttama* ("Good") was given to the third *Manvantara* because the Sun then became golden-yellow, i.e. as good as gold. The name *Tāmasa* (from *tamas*, meaning darkness) was given to the fourth *Manvantara* because it was then the era of darkness, i.e. day and night began to occur on the Earth. The name *Raivata* (from the root *rev*, meaning to move) was given to the fifth *Manvantara* because then the oceans, rivers, clouds, etc. (endowed with the characteristic of motion) were formed. The name *Cākṣuṣa* (from *cakṣu*, meaning eyes) was given to the sixth *Manvantara* because then conspicuous life emerged everywhere in abundance, i.e. all living animals and birds having eyes came into existence. The name *Vaivasvata* (from *Vivasvān*, meaning the Sun) was given to the seventh *Manvantara*, which is current, because now the man emerged and kings of the solar dynasty came into existence. This theory, according to Shri Dhani, fits well with the Proto-planet Theory of evolution of the solar system. The *Manvantara* Theory has been fully discussed in all its aspects in the book.

The book is in Hindi and is well-written. The language is lucid and clear and easily understandable. The book is interesting throughout. That it has gone through its second edition within two years of its first printing is a proof of its excellence.

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Reference Books for the Historian of Science—A Handlist compiled by S. A. Jayawardene, Science Museum, London 1982. pp. V-XIV+229. Price not mentioned.

History of Science generally aims at three types of studies: study of progress of separate branches of science, study of the same in its relation to other sciences and analysis of scientific progress and regress in light of social, cultural and religious environs of a particular period. Studies of palaeography and linguistic need special care for easy access to the scripts of manuscripts and to terminological implications. In the preparation of bibliography, survey of sources under these phenomena is likely to be encyclopaedic and ecumenic. The bibliographer's task is obviously very painstaking and critical to represent the works, or relevant sources, worthy to report. From this standpoint the present bibliographical manual, *Reference Books for the Historian of Science* by S. A. Jayawardene is a good companion for the study and research in History of Science.

The Handlist comprises 1034 reference works distributed in different sections and sub-sections of the three principal parts:

Part I—*The History of Science and its Sources*, containing 13 sections from Guide to History of Science to different sources of History of Science,

Part II—*History and Related Subjects*, comprising 16 sections on Guides for Research, History of Several countries, Manuscripts and Archives, Societies (Historical), Chronology etc.,

Part III—*General Reference*, including 12 sections on various matters like Guide to Reference Books, Early Printed Books, Bibliographies, Official Publications, Encyclopaedias, Periodicals, Subject Indexes and Bibliographies, Information Retrieval Systems, Library Directories, Dictionaries, Authorship.

The elaborate scheme of the work evinces the compiler's arduous task in re-

porting the relevant primary and secondary sources. Omission of some references has however been admitted in the Preface where he states, "A large number of reference books of use to the historian of science which would have qualified for inclusion in a larger work, have been left out. It is hoped that they can be found with the help of the bibliographical guides listed here."

From a perusal of the entire sources however the above statement appears to be relevant mostly to the works related to oriental countries and not to the west.

Apart from some of the shortcomings the present bibliography, especially its section on "History of Science and its Sources" is an important addition to the field of History of Science.

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