ANIL AGGRAWAL'S
Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology
The world's first online journal devoted entirely to forensic medicine and toxicology · Published 1 January and 1 July

VOL. 2, NO. 2
Downloaded from www.anilaggrawal.com · ISSN 0972-8074 (Online) · https://www.anilaggrawal.com/ij/vol_002_no_002/reviews/pb/page006.html

Popular Books Section

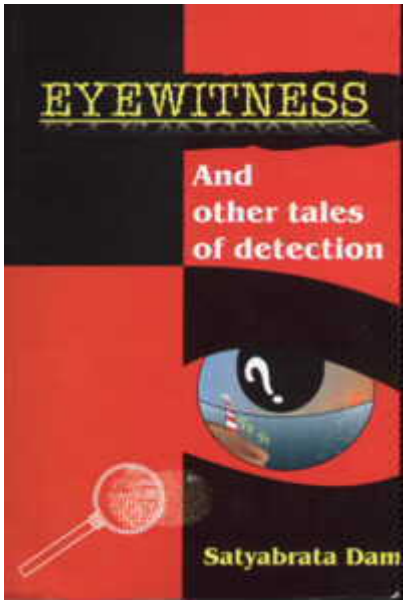
OTHER REVIEWS IN THIS ISSUE
[Technical Books Section] Pages: |1| 2| 3| 4| 5| 6| 7| 8| 9| 10| 11| 12| 13| 14| 15| 16| 17| 18| 19| 20| 21| 22| 23|
[Popular Books Section] Pages: |1| 2| 3| 4| 5| 6| 7| 8| 9|

[Animated Reviews] Pages: |1| [Software/Multimedia] Pages: |1|2|

REVIEWS IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE | NEXT ISSUE

SEVEN GREAT TALES OF DETECTION

Eyewitness and other tales of detection *by* Satyabrata Dam
Minerva Press, 13 Palam Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-110 057, India; 478 Pages: ISBN: 81-7662-165-X, 2000: Price India Rs. 395, UK £10, US $14



Satyabrata Dam



Rajat Bajpai has curled himself up inside a hammock that had recently been added to his room. His eyes are closed. Deputy Commissioner of Police Sharma enters the room from behind.

"Hello Rajat!"

No reply.

"Is he sleeping?" Sharma asks Rajat's friend Ajit, who is also present in the room.

"It's possible" Ajit replies.

"Let's see how smart our young friend is", DCP Sharma says, "Shake him up".

"Not required." The lazy drawl comes from inside the hammock," And how do you propose to test my smartness?"

"From your present position, without turning around, say something about my present visit."

"Some things are pretty obvious. You are not in uniform; you had stepped in the puddle outside our gate; and you are on your way to meet someone urgently - a lady I suppose. You want us to accompany you. If I am allowed to guess then may I add that you have once again left smoking." Rajat continues with his eyes closed.

Sharma is obviously nonplussed.

Ajit explains," Your uniform shoes have nails that make a typical sound when you walk, and often you bang your wrist against the pistol butt. Both the sounds were absent, hence it was easy to conclude that you were out of uniform. Your shoes squeaked as it does due to water ingress, and Rajat knew of the puddle outside the gate. Next; the way you spoke and the chewing noise you made was a giveaway that you had a gum in your mouth and everyone knows you resort to them only when you stop smoking....."

Rajat completes the explanation, still lying lazily in the hammock," I know the Premium Musk is your regular brand of Aftershave. Today morning, it was the distinct odour of Park Royale that hailed my nostrils. Now, why would a meticulous person like you, on a working day, at such an hour, be in plain clothes, apparently in great hurry and put on a perfume he never uses?"

Does this remind you of someone?

Why, of course. Sherlock Holmes!

Welcome to the world of Indian Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Satyabrata Dam, a 36 year old Indian Naval Officer based in Mumbai weaves seven incredible tales of detection in the book under

review. The stories reek so strongly of Sherlock Holmes that were it not for different names, you would imagine you were reading some yet unpublished tales by the Old Master. Rajat Bajpai dons the mantle of Sherlock Holmes. A typical disheveled person, he sports short cropped hair, wears faded jeans and rides one of the cheapest automobiles in India - a scooter. Forever shabby, he would often accompany DCP Sharma on his errands in a crumpled shirt, loose trousers, and unkempt hair - a stark contrast to DCP Sharma's impeccable turnout. Often Sharma would mumble feebly," You are not coming with me like this!", and pat comes the reply," Why? What's wrong"? Sharma, who just can't seem to manage his affairs without him, prefers to keep him in good humor and plays along.

...Rajat Bajpai - the fictional sleuth in this book - discusses autopsy findings with a forensic pathologist as if he were himself a pathologist. He is quite comfortable with terms like postmortem lividity, vagal inhibition, cerebral anoxia and so on, which he frequently uses in his discussions. He has a great sense of smell, and is an expert toxicologist. He would often insert his nose inside the mouth of a cadaver and tell everybody around which poison had been given to him. He is an expert microscopist. He almost appears like the next incarnation of Sherlock Holmes...

Not that Rajat can not earn much. Indeed he can earn millions, but the contempt with which he holds money, he would rather use his cheques as bookmarks than put them in a bank. In one of the stories (Wager), his billionaire client is so happy with his work, she gives him a blank cheque. He could have virtually filled any amount, but to the astonishment of all, fills up an amount of Rs 10 (less than quarter of a dollar). Reason - This is the amount he spent in solving the case. He hired a video from a video library to solve the case, and the rate of that library was Rs. 10. And while his friend looks at him in disbelief, he immediately goes to sleep and starts snoring peacefully.

The place of Dr. Watson is taken up by his friend Ajit Pandey. In addition, two additional characters often crop up in the stories. One is DCP Sharma, and the other is the Inspector General of Police Kishore Saraf, both of whom senior police officers, who hold him in great awe.

The book is a collection of seven tales of detection, each averaging about 50 pages in length. And each tale is extremely gripping. Dam has done his homework well. As far as matters of forensic pathology are concerned, he draws heavily from Professor Keith Simpson, and our very own Modi's Medical Jurisprudence & Toxicology (Butterworths India).

Take for example the first story entitled "Day of Judgment". In this story, a young married woman is found hanged in her bathroom bolted from inside. There is only one window in that bathroom which is about 18"x18" in size situated at about 8 feet from the ground. Not even a child can crawl through it. Everybody thinks it is an open and shut case of suicide. But by applying his uncanny Sherlockian deduction Rajat comes to the conclusion that it is a case of murder. In fact the story doubles up as a locked room mystery and is sheer pleasure to read - especially the explanation how the murderer managed to bolt the door from inside, after coming out.

Dam's Forensic knowledge is sound. At page 38-39, Rajat Bajpai discusses autopsy findings with a forensic pathologist as if he were himself a pathologist. He is quite comfortable with terms like postmortem lividity, vagal inhibition, cerebral anoxia and so on, which he frequently uses in his discussions. He has a great sense of smell, and is an expert toxicologist. To the surprise of all, he would often insert his nose inside the mouth of a cadaver and tell everybody around which poison had been given to him (he does that in the very first story). He is an expert microscopist. He would examine the suspension material under the microscope and from the appearance of fibers would

be able to say if that material was used to haul a dead body up. He is an expert forensic knot analyst. Indeed there is hardly a branch of forensic science which he is not expert in. And he continues to amaze us at every page.

Telling more about his feats would be spoiling the fun for all. Though expert pathologists can often spot weak points in some of his stories, the overall impression is good enough for the book to be recommended to all.

Order this Book by clicking here.

Request a PDF file of this review by clicking here. (If your screen resolution can not be increased, or if printing this page is giving you problems like overlapping of graphics and/or tables etc, you can take a proper printout from a pdf file. You will need an Acrobat Reader though.)

Contact the author by clicking here.