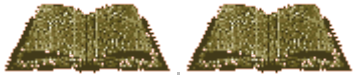
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Book Reviews: Popular Books Section

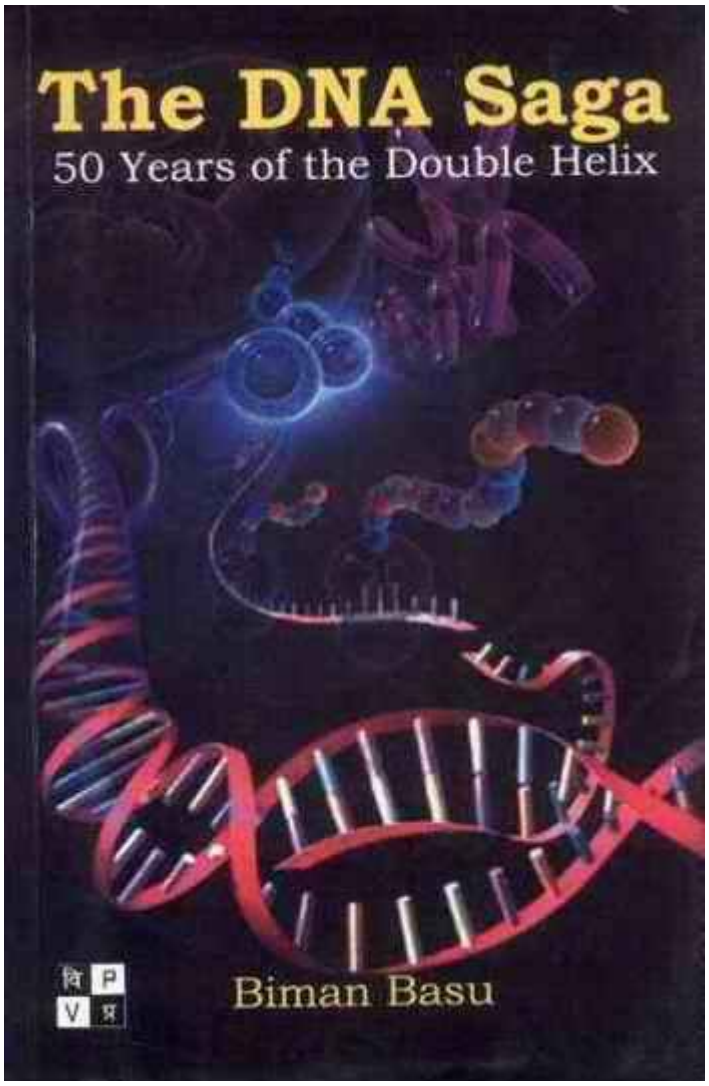




ESSENTIAL READING FOR YOUNG BIOLOGY STUDENTS

The DNA Saga: 50 years of the Double Helix, First edition, by Biman Basu. Softcover, 5.5" x 8.5". Vigyan Prasar, C-24 Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi-110016. ; E-mail: vigyan@hub.nic.in. Publication Date 2003. i-vii and 122, ISBN 81-7480-099-9. Price Indian Rupees 75.00

Buy this book online by clicking here



Just over 50 years ago Watson and Crick discovered the double helical structure of DNA. Today almost everyone seems to know about DNA and genetic modification. At least most people seem to use the words much more often and probably without much knowledge of the subject.

This book is the type that one would title **"All You Wanted To Ask About DNA But Were Afraid To Ask"**! Any one who reads this book cover to cover could attend the cocktail party at the annual meeting of bioscientists and geneticists and get away with it!

This is a concise but well written popular science type book on DNA. It is not a scholarly text and it was never meant to be one. **Vigyan Prasar** are publishers of Popular Science books in India. The author **Biman Basu** is a well-known popular science writer in India with a large number of books to his credit.

The book opens with **Gregor Mendel** who did the pioneering work in genetics. From peas we move seamlessly through fruit flies and into the double helix.

Biman Basu



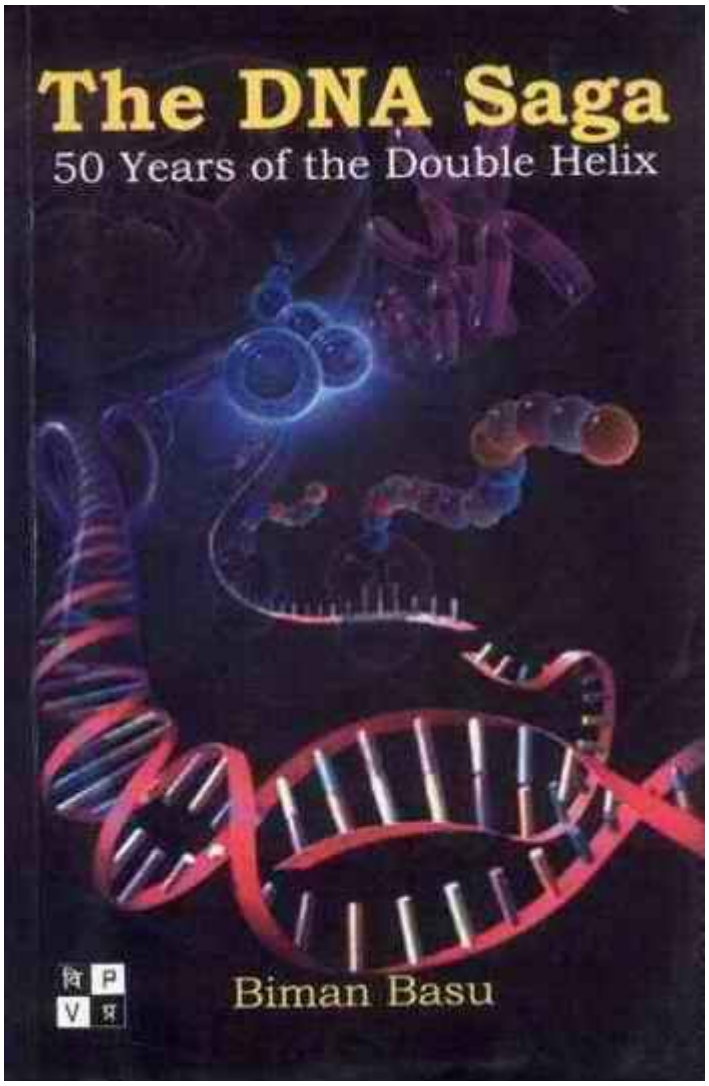
Biman Basu, the author of this book, is a very prolific science writer, having a special knack of communicating complicated science concepts to the general public. Known widely as the Indian Isaac Asimov, he has authored more than 30 books on science and has been editor of major Indian science magazines. More information about him can be had by clicking here. He can be contacted at basu_biman@yahoo.com.

Basu doesn't forget to mention **Rosalind Franklin** who never got her due share of fame. **Watson and Crick** are there of course and from that point most readers would expect to move on to Alec Jeffreys and DNA Fingerprinting.

But wait a minute! What about the guys who worked on bacteriophages? And what about RNA and mRNA? What about the guys who broke the DNA code? They are all here and what a fascinating story!

Most people associate DNA with detective work and I suspect that young readers would probably jump straight into the chapter entitled **"Detective DNA"**. Hopefully, they would then go back to read the preceding chapters.

QUICK NOTES



Some major highlights of *The DNA Saga: 50 years of the Double Helix* at a glance:

& A good read and essential reading for young biology students.
& It is a pity that such readable books were not available when I was a student!
& Any one who reads this book cover to cover could attend the cocktail party at the annual meeting of bioscientists and geneticists and get away with it!
& "All You Wanted To Ask About DNA But Were Afraid To Ask"!

The last chapters of the book cover the mapping of the **Human Genome** and the **Dolly the Sheep saga**.

There is a chronological summary, a glossary and a standard index in the last few pages.

The book is illustrated throughout with colour illustrations and photographs. Some of the historical photographs are of course in black and white.

The book is printed on good quality coated paper. The print and binding qualities are excellent.

A good read and essential reading for young biology students. It is a pity that such readable books were not available when I was a student!

-Gyan Fernando



Dr. Gyan Fernando is a Forensic Pathologist in the West Country of England. He has a vast experience in forensic DNA typing.

Other reviews of this book:

1. Review in *RESONANCE* (March 2004 issue) by S Mahadevan of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 560 012, India. Email: mahi@mrdg.iisc.ernet.in
http://www.ias.ac.in/resonance/March2004/March2004BookReviews.htm (html version)
www.ias.ac.in/resonance/March2004/pdf/March2004BookReview1.pdf (pdf version)

2. Review in *The Hindu* (Tuesday, Jul 22, 2003) by R. PARTHASARATHY
http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/br/2003/07/22/stories/2003072200280300.htm

Order this Book by clicking here.

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Related links

1. The DNA Story
http://www.chemsoc.org/chembytes/ezine/2003/aldridge_apr03.htm