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Book review

S. Nagarajan, 1983. *Plant disease epidemiology*. Published by Mohan Primlani for Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi. XV+267 pp. Rs. 80.00.

The author won early recognition when he participated as a junior scientist at an epidemiology top conference in Wageningen, 1971. He has kept his promise and presently he is one of the outstanding epidemiologists from the developing countries. As he chose to spend his career in India, except for a post-doc position in the Federal Republic of Germany, he has become an authority on the application of epidemiology in developing countries. His long fostered desire to publish a book on plant disease epidemiology for an Indian public finally materialized.

The book is somewhat unconventional in design. After an introduction (Ch. 1) it discusses the pathogen with emphasis on population behaviour (Ch. 2) and variability (Ch. 3). An exposition of pathometry is delayed to Ch. 7. The host is discussed in Ch. 4, but the concomitant non-chemical control is postponed to Ch. 10. Weather effects are dealt with in Ch. 5. Mathematical aspects of epidemiology, in Vanderplank's way, are treated in Ch. 8. The more speculative chapters are Ch. 6 on space, time and chance, and a lengthy Ch. 9 on systems approach. Exercises, a subject index, and a – quite incomplete – list of errata are given.

The author writes most convincingly where he discusses aerobiology, the area in which he has attained international excellence. The book ends with an epilogue containing some peppered remarks on the Indian way of teaching phytopathology, which is said to overemphasize taxonomy and mycology at the neglect of disease control by cultural methods, resistance breeding, and so on. The author offers a well-considered curriculum proposal. Hopefully, his book will help to change the criticized emphasis of phytopathology teaching in India. The western reader will be interested in the author's selection of topics, from simple logarithms to sophisticated remote sensing.

The book contains some 220 references, 24 per cent of which refer to India or Indian authors. This is not a low figure, considering that the body of epidemiological theory is of western origin. Though more examples might have been taken from Indian sources, the book gives the western reader a fair impression of the state of the art in India. The prospects for useful applications of epidemiological insight, as – for example – gene deployment, seem to be very good indeed.

J.C. Zadoks