

Book Reviews

Girja KUMAR: **S.R.Ranganathan: an Intellectual Biography.** New Delhi: Har-Anand Publ. 1992. 327 p. ISBN 81-24-005-5

It is to Ranganathan that the profession owes the best it has. His contributions to library science, especially to classification, are of the order of creating a new paradigm. On the international level, he received full recognition, as was manifested in the designation of his era as the "Ranganathan Age". We will remain forever in his debt. Yet after his death he has mostly been paid only lip sympathy. Not much has been done to implement and further the legacy he bequeathed to us all. As a result most of it smells stale, not being reinterpreted or updated as it is to suit present-day needs. By holding IFLA 1992 on the centenary of his birth, or a lecture, or a conference here and there we have only paid off an infinitesimally small part of the debt we owe eternally to him. The book under review is a real and lasting tribute to Ranganathan, although it by no means tends to only glorify him. His life was absolutely dedicated to work and profession. To quote from the book (p.114-5):

Work without reward was his motto... He had no vices. He never took tea or coffee... The question of imbibing alcoholic drinks must be considered far-fetched. Like Melvil Dewey, he did not approve smoking in his presence. Work, work and more work was his lifelong motto. He used to term it as work chastity in his picturesque Indian English. He worked all his working hours, seven days a week and 365 days in a year. He practised his regimen for 20 years. He took no leave. He lived and dressed simply. He went barefoot most of the time (a comfortable habit in hot climate). He was mostly clad in *dhoti* without shirt while at home.

His life was library science and its history in action. Many of his colleagues and admirers toyed with the idea of playing Boswell to him. Lack of archival resources and the controversial nature of the subject deterred them from entering the cobweb. Girja Kumar, who worked with Ranganathan and admired him critically, has courageously undertaken and successfully completed this book, which was released in the year of Ranganathan's birth centenary celebrations in New Delhi.

The book is divided into two parts of almost equal length. Part I, entitled "The Man", is an account of Ranganathan's life, activities and achievements beginning from childhood to his last days even at DRTC Bangalore. This part is at best fragmentary; gaps are visible. It reminds us that much more needs to be unearthed about Ranganathan's life, especially his childhood and youth. Not much has been disclosed concerning the author's resources: His research is based on Ranganathan's fragmentary reminiscences in "A Librarian Looks Back", on his letters to friends and colleagues, and on the author's correspondence with Ranganathan's only son T.R. Yogeshwar. The author has concentrated much more on an evaluation of

Ranganathan's work and personality presented in Part 2 entitled "The Intellect". This is a psycho-analytical study of the man and the social environment he worked in. The analysis is incisive, and the interpretations are deep and convincing. The topics covered are Ranganathan's place in world library science history, his value system, the make-up of his mind, the working of his intellect and his holistic approach, and his creativity - the latter he viewed as a mystic experience. Lastly, the author discusses Ranganathan's colonial background or intellect, academics in the Third World in general, as well as his relevance for today and tomorrow. Many may not agree with what he has to say. It may even offend a few. He is indeed opinionated. However, he has taken care not to offend the living bigwigs while some of Ranganathan's associates have been given no place in this study.

Nevertheless, the book is thought-provoking and provides food for thought and reflection. Girja Kumar has earned a reputation as an iconoclast, and through this study he has tried to keep this impression intact. The language as usual is lucid and idiomatic. Girja Kumar has been regularly writing on Ranganathan, so his regular readers may find some repetition of his ideas here. Again, within the book itself, there is repetition of ideas and phrases. Nevertheless the book is absorbing and throws ample light on contemporary India's social ethos and academic milieu. The author's wide reading in sociology, psychology, history, and Marxism and his intimate knowledge of Ranganathan shines throughout the book. Brilliance is its hallmark. It is an outstanding and unmatched contribution to Indian library history and literature. It will help to understand Ranganathan: the man, his place in history, his creativity, and the Indian academic milieu of his times and of today.

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DIETZE, Joachim: **Einführung in die Informationslinguistik.** (Introduction to Information Linguistics). Leipzig 1989. München: K.G.Saur Verlag 1991. 194p. The contents and potential readership of this book are clearly indicated by its subtitle: Linguistic data processing in information science.

"Linguistic Data Processing" has been for many years already a firmly established term indicating not only the special application field for computerized procedures, i.e. that of human language, but also pointing to a specific methodical principle, namely that of non-numerical computing technology, a branch of Artificial Intelligence. For, while all procedures to be executed by a computer of the 1st to 5th generation can be described in strictly determined fashion, the elements of natural languages do not on any level obey exclusively logical rules. This point of intersection of natural sciences and the humanities has already found the interest of many a researcher. The one now trying his hand at it, however, Joachim DIETZE, is a linguist of repute with several publications on applied