

BOOK REVIEWS

relationship between global health and military power, as global health can easily become secondary in the pursuit of national interests through military means. The author highlights that the mixing of health and strategic realms can put the health personnel under increased danger in the conflict zones. Overall, collaborations between health and strategic realms should be explored based on convergence in goals and priorities while being cautious to minimize the pitfalls.

Chapter 7 focuses on the various aspects of ethics and economics of epidemic control, how they are often at odds with each other, and how barefoot diplomacy can bridge the gap between the two. This chapter presents barefoot diplomacy as a challenge to utilitarianism which the author presents as being disconnected from local social and cultural settings, too theoretical and depends mainly on numbers. This is, however, a narrow understanding of utilitarianism based on its practice in global health, which projects the success or failure of the programmes, depending on some numeric parameters that often fail to capture the overall impact. In fact, the vision of barefoot diplomacy connecting people, cultures at the local and global level with health and other benefits, is much closer to the broader utilitarian concept of maximizing the well-being of the maximum number of people. The author discusses how too much focus on cost-effectiveness and short-term measurements lose sight of the long-term positive impacts of the health programmes. He emphasizes that new structures or smart programmes need to evolve so as not to abandon the sick in the interest of greater efficiency.

Chapter 8 summarizes and streamlines key ideas proposed in other chapters. The author explains some of the non-academic terms frequently used in the book: 'smart', 'cool', and 'magic' and finally defines the term 'Global health'. This last chapter seems like an attempt to tie the loose ends. The author paints the overall concept of barefoot diplomacy to be more transparent, accessible and 'cool' in contrast to the traditional elitist and secretive nature of diplomacy. However, the barefoot diplomacy approach should be taken cautiously as it might not be practical to use this approach in most diplomatic settings, except maybe in public diplomacy.

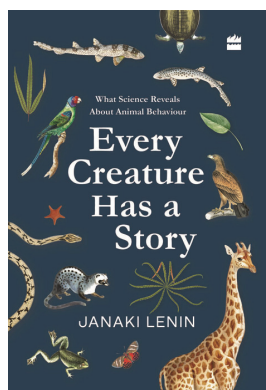
Throughout the book, one finds the interchangeable use of global health, public health, epidemic control, infectious disease control, and liberal and often unwarranted

use of the term diplomacy. Further, some technical terms are used without explanation, like: *sine qua non* and *quid pro quo*. This book primarily covers the perspective of North-South cooperation in global health; South-South and North-North perspectives are missing. Across various chapters, one finds some informative and touching anecdotes and lessons from barefoot health diplomats around the world. However, some of the essays seem out of place with the overall context of the chapters.

Overall, this book demonstrates the connections of global health with a vast range of issues affecting all walks of life. Even with its vast global scope, this book builds a narrative around the stories of individuals with diverse backgrounds working at the forefront of global health diplomacy. It is a good read and can be recommended to all aspirants and practitioners of public health and diplomacy.

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Every Creature Has a Story: What Science Reveals About Animal Behaviour. Janaki Lenin. Harper Collins Publishers India, A-75, Sector 57, Noida 201 301, UP. 2020. xiii + 282 pages. Price: Rs 599.

Charles Darwin, besotted by the variation and the ingenuity of life on earth, mused in the final sentences of *On the Origin of Species*. 'There is grandeur in this view of life,' he wrote.

This line kept ringing in my head while reading Janaki Lenin's latest book. *Every Creature Has a Story* is a compendium of fifty essays about the behaviours and the peculiar lives of the myriad creatures on this planet. The essays, first published in

The Wire, are short, varied and highly lucid, most running only two or three pages long.

In the essays, Lenin describes – in astonishing detail – how chimpanzees grieve, how amorous Pacific striped octopus mate, and how southern African python moms guard its clutch of eggs, among other such stories. Each essay uncovers the peculiarities and the secret lives of the animal, effortlessly weaving current scientific understanding with the narrative. The essays feature a diverse cast of characters – birds, animals, insects, reptiles and parasites – arranged in no particular order, rejecting any facile notion of a neat classification in nature. As Lenin writes, '[Nature] leaks, overflows, overlaps and intrudes across man-made boundaries.'

Lenin's prose is witty and casual and is sympathetic to a broader readership. Her writing has the traditional contours of science or nature writing in that she is able to wring observations and scientific studies into neat edible stories, but the essays also leave enough doors open for an overcurious reader. Lenin, in the introduction, makes the case that, 'There is a certain pleasure in delving into the disease immunity of bees and then leaping on to a fur seal beach in Antarctica,' and I agree with her. Leafing through the essays felt like watching a parade of eccentric characters, each with their unique way of navigating, surviving and revelling in this world. Even the most reluctant reader would find several essays in the book to be surprising and entertaining.

While each essay stands in and of itself, the book, in toto, is more than just a sum of its parts. Ted Chiang, the American science fiction writer, pondered why humans are so interested in finding intelligent life in the stars and yet so deaf to the many creatures who manifest it here on this planet. Reading Lenin's work puts the question in stark light. Learning about the ingenuity of the Australian firehawks, rodents that comfort their companions and feel empathy, and humpback whales who rush to the rescue of other sea creatures, makes us question our hubris. *Every Creature Has a Story*, in that sense, is an antidote to our indifference towards other creatures and a celebration of the diversity of life on this planet.

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