Howard Gest. Microbes: An invisible Universe,  
Indian Price: Rs 495.00

During the past decade, a wide range of books has addressed the topic of the infinitesimal organisms and their  
interactions with higher beings. In Microbes: An invisible Universe, Howard Gest attempts to put this topic into a  
format appropriate for easy understanding. The book is sufficiently well done to stand as an introductory reading  
material in Microbiology, for non-scientists as well as for beginners in this branch of science.

The Microbes: An invisible Universe is relatively compact and quite informative. The book has many photographs  
and illustrations that bring the text to life, including unique photographs from field situations. In 220 pages and 24  
chapters, the author manoeuvres through the basic principles of microbiology, microbial biochemistry, and infectious  
diseases. An unusual and welcome addition is the appendices that follow these chapters, which deal with certain fascinating  
facts and details.

Within the limits of the compact framework of this book, Howard Gest has briefly but successfully dealt with the  
exciting events that lead to the development of microbiology. In the initial chapters, he has touched upon the history behind  
the discovery of microbes and the development of microbial identification and maintenance techniques. The latter chapters  
ami to acquaint the reader with various microbes that utilize diverse biochemical pathways for survival and the  
extraordinary ecology and lifestyles of these organisms. The final chapters deal with microbial infections and the methods  
to prevent these infections. A chapter has been devoted to briefly introduce the basic molecular mechanisms of the  
microbial world and the new vistas in microbial biotechnology.

The topics and organization in the book comprise characteristics well suited for a novice in the field of  
Microbiology. Through the 24 chapters, the author in a very simple way navigates through the history and development  
of this branch of science, and the text is well interlaced with historical anecdotes, priceless photographs and thought  
provoking cartoons. Students will find the “Biographical notes” as well as the “Glossary” quite interesting and useful.  
The author also provides suggestions for further reading that might be helpful for instructors.

Although this book provides an informative summary of principles that are quite useful for a basic course in  
microbiology, the abbreviated treatment is an unavoidable shortcoming. This book might prove unsatisfactory in  
situations where detailed descriptions of microbiological procedures, chemical principles, metabolic pathways or  
molecular mechanisms etc. are required. This book could well serve any science-interested audience. The text would be an  
excellent choice for schools, provided that students are given supplemental readings wherever required.

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