

Preface

Many universities have introduced Biotechnology in their curricula and those that have not are contemplating to do so in the near future. Although several books on biotechnology have been published in the past two decades, most are either multi-author edited volumes or deal with one or a few areas in depth rather than covering a broad spectrum of topics in a general introductory manner. Furthermore, many of these books are prohibitively expensive and beyond the reach of students in developing countries.

Having been engaged in the teaching of a Biotechnology (especially microbial) course and in research on applied phycology and microalgal biotechnology for the last several years, I have written this book to cater to the needs of undergraduate students and readers from a diverse background, with special reference to those in developing countries which are usually very rich in biological diversity but quite poor in biotechnology. It is hoped that this book may go a small way in correcting at least some of this imbalance and mismatch between biodiversity and biotechnology in the underdeveloped world.

Virtually all aspects of biotechnology and allied areas are covered concisely. I have attempted to bring out linkages and interfaces between biotechnology on the one hand, and general science, sociology, ecology, economics, environment, agriculture, industry, medicine, energy, poverty, pollution, business, marketing, biosafety, intellectual property rights and patenting issues, on the other hand. In this attempt, some overlap has crept in here and there, but the overall objective has been to make the book particularly useful for students in many countries.

I wish to thank the following for their direct or indirect support and help in the production of this book: M Ohmori (Tokyo), DL Parker (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), DP Häder (Erlangen, Germany), S. Varadarajan (Delhi), Ashok Kumar, LC Rai and JB Singh (Varanasi), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Department of Science and Technology, and Indian National Science Academy (New Delhi).

October, 1997

HD Kumar