Articel categoryy - Reviews

**Title - Pill, pillage and pilferage**

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**Abstract-**

The review of a recent book revealing grey area of workings within a leading pharmaceutical company and how unethical conduct in all its undertakings ultimately led to its fall from grace. The exhaustive mission taken by the protagonist and the author is highly engaging, unsettling and commendable.

**Pill, pillage and pilferage**

**Bottle of lies, Ranbaxy and the dark side of Indian pharma, Katherine Eban, New Delhi; Juggernaut Books; 2019, Hardcover,pp.482, price INR 699: ISBN978-93-5345-004-1**

The book ‘Bottle of lies, Ranbaxy and the dark side of Indian pharma’ by Katherine Eban is not for faint hearted and those on medication (pun intended). The punchline on the cover ‘Your medicine could be killing you’ serves as the pretext of what to be expected of a masterfully written book about ugly face of Indian pharma industry growing by leaps and bounds. We have all known for now that health research data is not sacrosanct and is a cooked broth that stinks more if brewed in our own backyard. News headlines from all over the world about data frauds from all sorts of places including top institutes, companies and journals are not alien. A lot of, if not all, basic science data is falsified but that affects larger populace in handful of instances whereas data crucial to directly affect the health of unwary millions of patients requires authenticity to say the least.

A whistle-blowing account of Dinesh Thakur, an ex employee of Ranbaxy India operations, who was critical in voicing concerns of large scale data fraud and fabrication at every level of production process within an emerging pharma behemoth resulting in suboptimal medicaments that it produced for world markets and thus endangering millions of potential buyers is no less an epic. The author’s believe that Ranbaxy is not the only rotten fish in the market and possibly such forgeries in production and surveillance exist in most pharmaceutical companies is nauseating fact.

Katherine Eban takes no-frills, investigative journalism to newer heights showing us the dark underbelly of bad pharma, which many believe exists but is kept beyond reach, for series of unsettling revelations on every chapter. The long drawn and hard fought battle of a determined conscientious citizen who continues the fight despite facing shortcomings on personal and family fronts and emerges as David against Goliaths of the world is not only inspiring but worth accolades for the painstaking work of Thakur, his associates and the writer herself.

It also educates about nuances of workings inside pharmaceutical company and the FDA (Food and Drug Agency as well as familiarizes readers with educative jargons like ‘current good manufacturing practices (cGMP)’, abbreviated new drug application (ANDA), ALCOA (acronym for data being Attributable, Legible, Contemporaneously recorded, Original or true copy and Accurate), Lefuarer-Harris amendments etc. The fast paced narrative makes for an easy read even against seemingly dark and boring backdrop. It reaffirms the notion how circumventing the ethical practices can uproot anything however big shark that is the same way it went for the invincible ‘Pharaoh of Pharma’. The company went bust gradually fighting external and internal tribulations and its fall may serve as lesson on ethical business practices for its peers. Ethical adherence is not an option but only option for longevity in any business undertakings the policy which is aptly recalled by one character in the book “the wheels of justice turn slowly but they do turn”. This book should accompany a statutory warning that this is a serious reading with risks in the change in readers’ behavior as they might take any drug information with a pinch of salt after shaking it well thereafter.