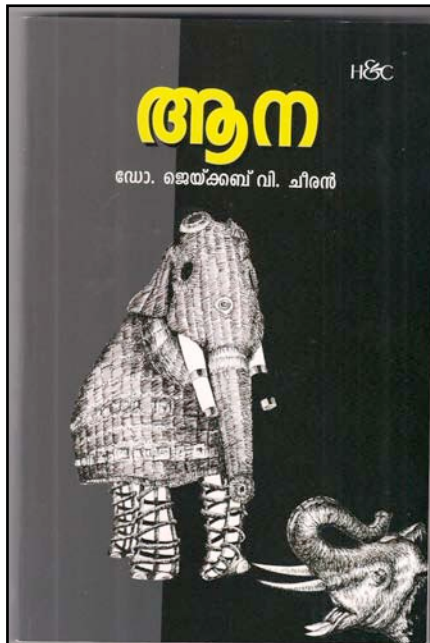


Elephants love liquor, cry when sad, says new book

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Thrissur (Kerala): Did you know the elephant loves the sweet and sour taste of country liquor and is perhaps the only animal that sheds tears when sad? These and many more interesting nuggets about the pachyderm form the subject of a new book by Asia's foremost elephant expert Jacob Cheeran. Written in Malayalam, the book is titled "Aana" (elephant) and runs into 155 pages. It has been published by Kerala-based H&C Publishers and is priced at Rs.80.

Cheeran, 70, retired in 2000 as Head of the Department of Pharmacology and Chairman of the Elephant Study Centre attached to the Kerala Agricultural University. He is also a member of the Asian Elephants Specialist Group of the World Organisation for Animal Health. Speaking to IANS, Cheeran said the sole objective of his latest book is to educate the common man about elephants. "Hence, I went for a low cost publisher and through this, my objective of making elephants more popular has been satisfied. By now, I have got many offers for translations in other languages," he said.

The book contains interesting anecdotes which the author came across in his nearly five-decade-long career of studying jumbos. He said elephants like liquor, and have many opportunities of indulging in this hobby in the jungles of Kerala, where illicit liquor is brewed by gangs. "Most of the elephants like to consume sweet and sour foodstuff, and the illicit brew tastes just like that," said Cheeran. "Deep in the forests, elephants often come across illicit brew and they drink it. When it comes to captive elephants, many mahouts even give hard liquor to these elephants and just like humans, the elephants also get intoxicated." He also writes in the book that elephant is perhaps the only animal which cries when it is sad.

But the animal is not crying every time it is teary-eyed. "The moisture and the wetness one sees around the eyes of an elephant should not be mistaken for tears every time. Unlike in human beings, elephants do not have the duct that connects the eyes and nose, and the wetness one sees around the eyes is caused by lubrication of the eyes," he said.

Cheeran also said jumbos are killed not only for their ivory tusks but also meat, which is consumed in parts of Africa and even northeastern India. "In Africa, a single tusk fetches around Rs. 7,200 while the elephant meat (bush meat) of a tusker weighing around 3,000 kg fetches a handsome amount up to Rs. 3 lakh. "After the animal is killed and the tusks are removed, the meat is cut and wrapped with herbs. The meat is then dried and taken to the cities to be sold," said Cheeran.

"Aana" is Cheeran's fifth book. His earlier works include "Captive Elephants in Range Countries for Doctors and Veterinarians" and "Zoo and Wildlife Management", used as a textbook by veterinary science students across the country. Cheeran says there are around 21,300 elephants in 11 elephant ranges in India, according to the last census in 2005. The country also has 4,000 captive elephants, 800 of which are in Kerala. The data for 2011's elephant census has been collected and the figures will be out by the year-end.

The book also contains other information about the animal, including details like its pulse rate, which is around 25-30 per minute when the tusker is standing, and around 98 when it lies down. The trunk of an elephant can hold 8.5 litres of water.

On an average, it urinates up to 10 times a day, and each time it urinates more than 10 litres. Each elephant dung weighs up to 2.5 kg on an average. A jumbo poops close to 20 times in a day.



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