

# ***Brief History of Udaipur Zoo***

By Raza Tehsin

The Udaipur Zoo was started in the year 1878 and is one of the four oldest zoos of India. It was set up by Maharana Sajjan Singh of Mewar State. For Garden and Zoo 66.5 Acres of land was allotted by Maharana and Rs. 15,265/- annas 15 paise 3 was sanctioned by him for the purpose.

The Maharana tried to stock the garden with plants which had some medical value. For this purpose Mr. T. H. Story the then renowned specialist in horticulture was called from Madras and was employed for Rs. 300/- per month salary. He worked for this complex from 1882 to 1920. Many varieties of trees, herbs, shrubs were imported from India and other British colonies for this garden.

A pond for lotus was constructed and the cost of seed of lotus for this pond was Rs. 61 annas 2 and paise 3 was sanctioned. Amongst the most prominent trees of the garden were: many variety of Mangoes, Guava, Grapes, Lemon, Bor, Mulberry, Rayon, Pomegranate, Banana, Sapota, Tamarind, Bullock's Heart (Ramphal), Lichi, Arjun tree, Wood apple, Karonda, Camphor tree, Citron, Jamun, Pummelo, Metha Neem, Kagri Lime, Ficus species, Anola, Jack Fruit, Dhanverjia, Grandi flora, Jasmin Dawood etc.

In the year 1882 all the trees had their name-plates denoting Hindi, English and systematic, botanical names written on them, which are not seen now. The Cogenvilla was first planted in the year 1886 and within six years it attained the height of 77 feet.

There was a small pond which was destroyed when the water-works complex was constructed on it. In this pond an aquatic plant (probably *Victoria retellia*) was planted. The radius of the flower of that plant was 12 inches and the buoyancy of the leaves were so much that it could withstand a child on a chair. Photographic illustrations of this can be seen in old books.

Previously this garden was known as Gulab Bagh because near Navalakha Mahal there was a big ranch (Bari) where roses were in abundance. This garden was also called Bara Bagh but the official name of this garden is Sajjan Niwas Garden.

On August 1882 Maharashi Swami Dayanand inaugurated Navalakha Mahal; the Maharaja was elated by Swami's stay. On 1st March 1882 the Swami left Udaipur. In the year 1885-86 the boundary of the Garden was constructed and the Garden was divided into 45 parts, according to different flowers, trees, zoo complex, etc.



*Udaipur Zoo. One of the four oldest zoos in India*

Maharana Sajjan Singeji placed the foundation stone of the then Victoria Museum on 2-11-1890. It was inaugurated by Lord Lansdown. Mr. Gauri Shankar Ojha was first Curator of this museum appointed in the year 1890. This museum has many rare things and many stone manuscripts (Shila Lakhs) dating 3rd century B. C. to 17th Century A. D.

The foundation-stone of the statue of Maharani Victoria was placed by Maharana Fateh Singh at the time of Maharani's Silver Jubilee and was inaugurated by British Prince Albert Victor on 19-2-1890. The rockery near this building was constructed in 1890. Now this building has been converted to Saraswati Library.

After Maharana Sajjan Singh, Maharana Fateh Singh and Maharana Bhopal Singh also took interest in this complex and beautified it. Maharana Fateh Singh first time organised a flower and vegetable show on 24th February 1888. He sanctioned Rs. 2000/- for this purpose. Then the political agent of British Government Col. Miles inaugurated this show. Mr. Takhat Singh Mehta was awarded first prize for tomato. Maharana Bhopal Singh constructed pucca drainage in 1928 and constructed Lion Gate in 1932.

Many animal dealers were contacted and several animals and birds of different species found world-over were purchased and caged for public display. Apart from this many trappers were sent into the jungle around Udaipur to capture animals and birds for this zoo. Any person who presented some curious or rare animal to Maharanas were duly rewarded. Fights between tiger and lion or tiger and wild boar etc. were often arranged for entertainment. Just at the commencement of the

fifth decade this zoo was stocked with many rare animals and birds like pair of Black Leopard, rhino, ostrich, Hoolock Gibbons, Zebras, Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Mouse deer and other Deer Antelopes, and several varieties of birds including many rare pheasants and parrots. After Independence slowly many animals and birds were shifted to other zoos. Cubs of tigers, lions leopards etc. when they littered were shifted to other zoos. Gradually breeding pairs passed their breeding age. Fresh pairs were not introduced and old ones passed away leaving a vacuum yet to be filled. The Government of India appointed a committee to categorise the zoos of India. Three categories A, B and C were recommended by the committee, but the Udaipur zoo is not enrolled even in one of the above. From the last 12-15 years not a single big cat littered in this zoo.

The present tragedy of the garden is that many Government offices have been accommodated in this complex and because of this the area has a high traffic all the time. There is no restriction on public movement which gives a crowd scene to this garden. There is no entry fee. This zoo is under the supervision and financial responsibility of the wildlife wing of Forest Department, whereas the garden as a whole is maintained by the P. W. D. who has a Garden Superintendent deputed for it. There exists no proper coordination between them. It is a big garden and it fetches the highest revenue collected from the similar gardens of Rajasthan.

A proposal is being seriously considered by Government to shift this zoo to a recently constructed Deer Park near Udaipur. However this Garden

functions as a recreation spot for the citizens. It has a micro climate of its own and it is a beautiful green patch in the heart of the town which is very beneficial in maintaining the environmental quality. Therefore it has a very special value with regard to the dry climate of this city. Shifting of the zoo will soon result in other justifications and we will be forced to see it converted into a concrete jungle of government buildings and offices which will be a sure aesthetic and environmental loss to this city. □

**List of Animals in Udaipur Zoo as per the information submitted by wildlife department in the recent session of the Rajasthan assembly.**

Tiger-1 (sub adult-recently acquired), Lion-3, Leopard-3, Hyenas-5, Jackals-3, Indian Foxes-2, Himalayan Black Bear-1, Wild Boar-9, Monkeys-10, Sambar-7, Cheetal-40, Blue Bull-5, Black Buck-7, Chinkara-3, Porcupine-2, Rabbits-44, Guinea Pig-2, Ladakhi Goat - 11, Crocodile - 41, Ghariyal-4, Parakeets 5, Budgeriger-62, Peafowl-4 Pigeon-37, Partridges-7, Flamingo-1, Pelicans-3, White Ibis-1, Painted Stork-1, Bar headed Goose-3, Egrets-2, Domestic and other Ducks-53, Domestic Fowl-9, Turkey-1, 108 Birds yet to be identified.

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'Mr. Raza Tehsin is a Member of the Wildlife Advisory Board, Government of Rajasthan and serves as a Member of the Advisory Board of Udaipur Zoo'.

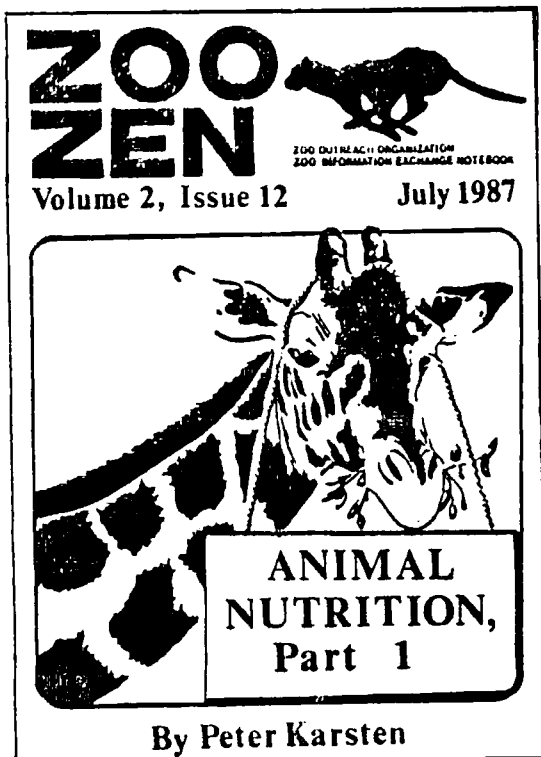
## JULY AND AUGUST ZOO ZEN

The July and August issues of ZOO ZEN (Zoo Outreach Organization, Zoo-information Exchange Note book) are entitled "Animal Nutrition" Parts I and II. They consist of the sections on Nutrition of the now famous Training Manual for Zookeepers by Peter Karston, Director of Calgary Zoo, Canada.

Part I includes the following subjects: "Principles of Nutrition, the Nutrients, Commissary Guide, Preparing and Improving Foods, Food Intake Requirements, Changing of Diets, Vitamins and Minerals, Food Analysis and Tables, and Diet Balancing and Food Selection".

Part II consists of "Poisonous Plants and other Quality Aspects of Food, General Feeding Techniques (Individual and Group Feeding), Mixed Food and Pelleted Food, Special Feeding Techniques for Animals (in Taxonomical Order), and Food Selection Tables".

One copy of ZOO ZEN is sent free to every zoo in India C/O Director and Vet. If you want your own copy you can order them for Rs. 15 each unless otherwise specified. Send cheque outstation (+ Rs 5) or Money Order to Zoo Outreach Organization.



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