The phylum Sipuncula has been adopted by the workers including Rice (1967), Cutler (1969), Florkin and Sheer (1969), Rice and Stephen (1970), Stephen and Edmonds (1972), Murina (1975), Cutler and Cutler (1979a) and Cutler and Gibbs (1985), though the group has undergone a series of changes in its systematic position during the last few decades. Lamarck (1816) placed the members under the Echinodermata due to their close affinity with the holothurians. Delle Chiaje (1823) proposed the group-name Sifunculacei. De Blainville (1827) used the term Sipunculidia and included Priapulus in it. Subsequently, Quatrefages (1847) established Gephyrea, being divided into two groups: Echiurea (Echiurus and Sternaspis) and Sipunculea (Sipunculus and Priapulus). It was Sedgwick (1898) who first gave the status of Phylum Sipunculoidea by replacing Gephyrea. Later, Hyman (1959) changed Sipunculoidea to Sipunculida. Finally, Stephen (1964) used the term Sipuncula, the most familiar name of the phylum till date and proposed "sipunculan" as common name.

The group attracted the attention of taxonomists since the later half of sixteenth century onwards. Rondelet (1555) first described and figured two sipunculans as micro- and macrorhynchoterosus worms. Later, Bohadsch (1761), Linnaeus (1766), Pallas (1774), and Montagu (1804) described several species of Sipuncula. The major contributions were made by Gray (1828), Grube and Oersted (1858), Keferstein (1862-1867), Quatrefages (1865), Grube (1868-1872), Baird (1868, 1873), Theel (1875-1911), Selenka (1875-1897), Sluiter (1882-1912), Selenka, de Man and Bulow (1883), Shipley (1890-1903), Fischer (1892-1931), Herubel (1902-1925), Benham (1903-1922), Augener (1903, 1906), Ikeda (1904-1924), Lanchester (1905, 1908), Gerould (1908, 1913), Southern (1913), Wesenberg-Lund (1925-1963), Broeke (1925-1933), Fisher (1928-1954), Stephen (1929-1967) and Sato (1930-1939).

The knowledge of Sipuncula from the Indian coast is fragmentary. The earlier works were carried out in a rather stray manner from different coastal belts of India, viz., the Lakshadweep and the Gulf of Mannar by Shipley (1903a,b), the Krusadai island in the Gulf of Mannar by Gravely (1927), Madras, the Andamans and Nicobars and the Lakshadweep Sea by Prashad (1936), Okha (Gujarat), the Lakshadweep, the Gulf of Mannar and Port Blair (South Andamans) by Johnson (1964, 1969, 1971), littoral and sublittoral waters off Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Nicobars by Cutler (1977a,b) and by Cutler and Cutler (1979a). Meanwhile, Annandale (1907), Awati and Pradhan (1935, 1936), Rajulu and Krishnan (1969), Ganapati and Subba Rao (1970) and Reddiah (1975) had also contributed their mites to the group.

Apart from all these works, the author has also published information on the group based on a series of unnamed material either lying amidst old collections of the Zoological Survey of India or collected freshly from different foregone and other areas of the Indian coast and waters \textit{vide} Haldar (1975;1976; 1977;1978;1985a,b;in press) and Haldar and Rama Rao (1975).