

BOOK REVIEWS

[A] MAHARAJA'S GAMES AND PUZZLES

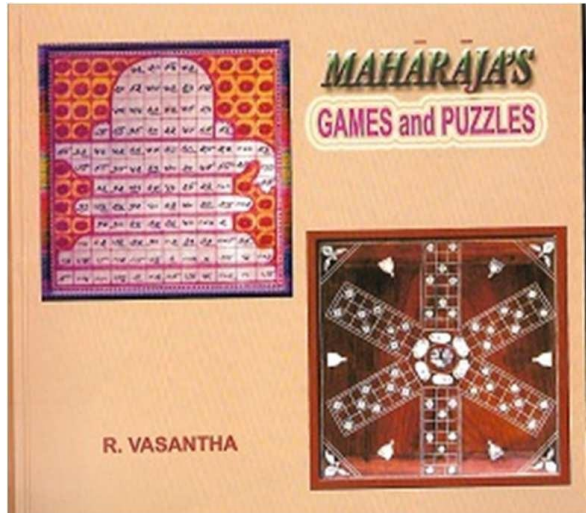
Author : R. Vasantha, Published by : Foerderkreis Schach
Geschichtsforschung e. V. , Germany,

Available from the Author: Prof. (Mrs.) Vasantha, 1089, 16th Cross,
Banashankari II stage, Bangalore-560070, India.; www.gamepandit.com,
Email : vasantha_ed@yahoo.com OR From : Sharada Publishing House,
New Delhi, 2008; **Price** : Rs. 180/- (or \$ 20.50);

ISBN – 978-3-934474-12-3

Games have played an important role in the cultural and social life of ancient Indians and continue to do so today. They are chiefly

classified as Indoor and Outdoor games. Indoor Games include several board games and such arts were developed since ancient times and also depicted in stone panels of temples. Such Board games include Chess (*Chaturanga*),



Playing Cards (*Patrakreeda* or *Ganjipha*), Snake and Ladders (*Gyan Chaupar* or *Mokshapata*), Tiger and Goats games, Manchala (*Saat Gutti* in Hindi or *Pallanguli* in Tamil) and Dice games (*Dyutkreedā*). Several such games have been discussed in ancient Indian texts such as the '*Kreedakaushalyam*' from the '*Brihat Jyotishaarnava*', '*Chaturanga Deepika*' of *Shulapani*, '*HariharaChaturanga*' by *Godavara Mishra*, '*Kautuka Nidhi*

section of *Sri Tattvanidhi* of Sri Mummudi Krishnaraja Wodeyar III of Mysore. The present work focuses on several board games chronicled by Sri Mummudi Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. The king himself has authored several such works that exist in private collections and still largely remain unpublished. These include works such as '*Chaturanga Sarasarvasva*', '*Kempu Kitaabu*', '*Chaturanga Chamatkrita Chakramanjari*' and '*Chaturanga Bannada Mane*' and so on. The king was also obsessed by Mathematical puzzles such as the 'Knight's Tour (Horse movements) in Chess which can be seen richly illustrated in the top floor of Sri Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery, Mysore. The author, Prof. (Mrs.) Vasantha is a Ph.D. in Art History and Archaeology and presently Prof. of History and In-Charge of Art and Archaeological Museum, Krishnadevara University, Anantapur. The book is richly illustrated with various panels and art pieces from the Sri Jayachamarajendra Art Gallery, Mysore. The text also gives the rules of playing, the pawns, dice pieces, cowries and number of players for several games such as the Tiger and Goats games, *Pachisi* of different types, Chess variants and so on. Some of the games illustrated include the Theory of Cause and Effect (*Karmasiddhanta*) embodying a religious philosophy directing the thoughts of players towards heaven. Such games are known by names such as *Mokshapata* (Snakes and Ladders), *Devi Sayujya Mukti* and *Shiva Sayujya Mukti* and have been illustrated in the text though the rules of game have not been elaborated. The book also discusses the Knight's tour problems in Chess that have been also described in '*Chittrakavyas*' of the Classic period. Many of these Knight's Tours appear as Magic squares (8 X 8 or as 12 X 12) or in form of *Navagraha* (nine planets) arrangements or as Coiled snakes. These Magic squares also use Cryptography to send secret Sanskrit messages in form of a religious symbol enveloped in Sanskrit verses by Horse movements or '*Shiva Ashtottara Stotram*'. The book should be read in conjunction with other such recently published works such as '*Sedentary Games of India*' by Nirbed Ray and Amitabha Ghosh, Asiatic Society, Kolkata (1999) and also '*Indian Traditional Board Games – A Guide to the Art of Play*' by R. G. Singh, H. S. Dharmendra, C. R. Dileep Kumar; Ramsons Kala Pratishthana, Mysore, 2016 to fully admire at various games prevalent in Ancient India. I strongly appreciate and recommend

interested scholars to read this valuable book that may serve to research and document further such games in various regional parts of India. This will help in preserving Indigenous games and also promoting them among Modern Kids and parents.

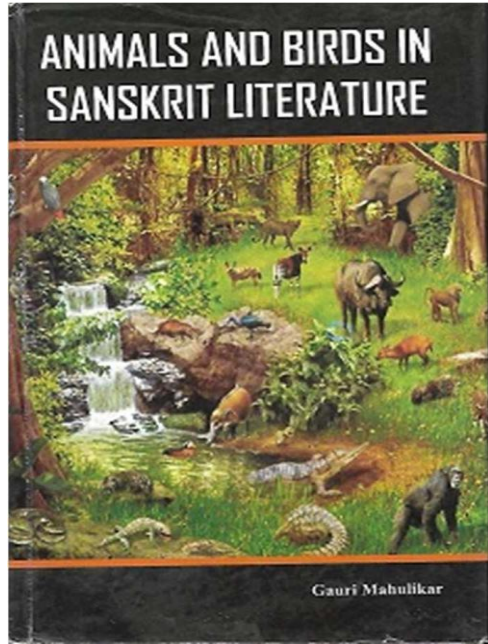
K. G. Sheshadri, Bangalore

[B] HISTORY OF MEDICAL AND SPIRITUAL SCIENCES OF SIDDHAS OF TAMIL NADU (English),

Author: P. Karthigayan, Published by : Notion Press, Old No. 38, New No. 6, Mc-Nichols road, Chetpet, Chennai-600031, 2016; **Price** : 725/- (Paperback)

ISBN – 978-93-5206-551-6

Traditions of Tamil Nadu mention about several Mystics of which 18 Siddhas are held to be prominent. The roots of Siddha cult can be traced to the following cults of *Kapalikas*, *Tantric Buddhists*, *Natha* cult and Tamil *Shaiva Siddhanta* philosophy. The 18 Siddhas are recognized for their vast contributions in Yoga, Tantra, Medicine, Toxicology, Science and Martial arts. The present book is a valuable source to enrich one's knowledge on these contributions. The author hails from a family of traditional Siddha Medicine practitioners having and interest in Siddha cult from young age and has consulted several practicing Siddhas and other reputed scholars in various fields both in India and abroad. The book has 15 Chapters and



Two Appendices dealing on various Medical and Spiritual sciences of the Tamil Siddhas. The first three chapters discuss about views of the human body, Cosmic factors influencing it, health care by various means such as control of habits, food, herbs, by metals and minerals and also views on Soul and rebirth. The next few chapters deal on Longevity and attainment of immortality and influences of Astrology. Chap. 9 is interesting dealing on various scientific aspects of Astronomy, Geography, Metallurgy, Alchemy, surgery, Aviation skills and Technology and are rich contributions of the Siddhas that need to be appreciated by Modern scholars and researched further from other untapped Tamil texts. Chapters 10 and 11 deal on Ancient History of Tamil Nadu with details of priests, kings and other archaeological evidences of ancient civilization that shows cross-cultural resemblance with Mesopotamian, Egyptian and other ancient civilizations. Chapter 12 deals on the views regarding the time when Gods ruled the Earth, the Tamil Sangam conferences, the influence of various Ages (Yugas) and Deluge. The reader would enjoy this section based on a reading of '*The Riddle of Three Oceans*' by Alexander Kondrotov, Mir Publishers, Moscow as well as modern researches on contacts of ancient Tamil Nadu with Sumeria and China. The author ends with a biographical review of the 18 Tamil Siddhas and an interesting list of works in the Bibliography. It is a remarkable work as the author has gleaned from several Tamil Siddha works that are in Tamil language of which some are published and others remain in form of manuscripts. He gives English translations of relevant passages to support his views with specific illustrations throughout the book. The Appendices deal on Western sources of Alchemy that is required to appreciate the alchemical contributions of Tamil Siddhas. I strongly appreciate and recommend interested scholars to read this valuable book though it may have some discrepancies due to spellings and mistakes owing to Tamil translation. I congratulate the author for bringing out this pious book that sheds new light on the Tamil Siddhas and that may serve to research and study further such views tapped in unpublished works.

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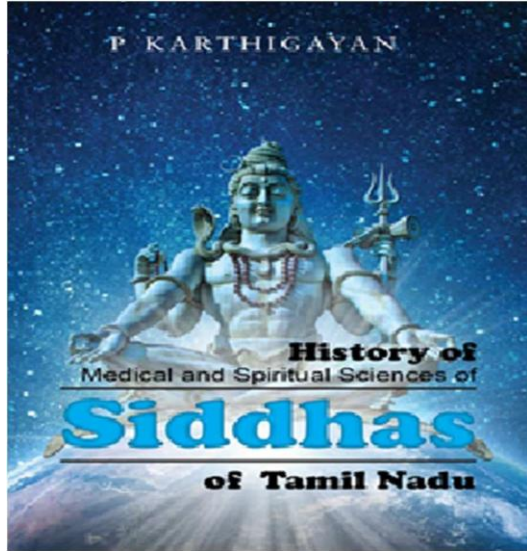
[C] ANIMALS AND BIRDS IN SANSKRIT LITERATURE

Author and Year : Gauri Mahulikar (2015), Published by : New Bharatiya Book Corporation, 208, IInd floor, Prakashdeep Building, 4735 /22, Ansari road, Daryaganj, New Delhi -110002. Ph : 011 -23280214 / 23280209, **Price** – Rs. 600/- ;

ISBN – 81-8315-277-5

This is a Volume brought out as collection of articles presented in National Seminar on *Mrigapakshishastra* – A scientific and literary study organized by Sanskrit Department, Mumbai University in September 2014. The Author of *Mrigapakshishastra* was *Hamsadeva*, a Jain poet of 13th c. A. D. He describes the qualities of animals and birds,

their species, types and gestation periods and life span. The present book combines features of this text along with descriptions of Fauna that occur in other Sanskrit literature as well as Veterinary texts that have been presented by various authors. It begins with a lengthy and



informative Key-note Address by Dr. Siddharth Y. Wakankar, IIT Gandhinagar giving details of various ancient texts on horses, elephants, cows and birds. The present book has 19 articles with two Appendices and Bibliography with suitable diacritical marks throughout the text to highlight Sanskrit passages. Various authors have presented papers related to Ayurveda for horses, elephants and cows. Some papers deal on domesticated animals like dogs, goat, sheep as well as on birds such as Crow, pigeon, scavenger birds. There exist few papers dealing on specific animals such as primates (monkeys and their cousins), porcupines, frogs, aquatic

birds. Animals and birds that have been described in Epics, *Puranas*, Sanskrit *Kavyas* and Dramas, prose texts and other such Post-Vedic texts of *Kautilya*, *Hamsadeva* and so on that have been also included as descriptions in several papers along with some comparison of features in text of *Mrigapakshishastra* of *Hamsadeva*. Appendix-A gives a synopsis of animals and birds, their colour, gestation periods, life span and main food. Appendix-B gives a list of '*Dutakavyas*' (Messenger poems) depicting several birds. The book is a rich source for beginners as well as scholars to study Zoology in ancient Sanskrit literature. One would appreciate the reading of two other published works namely '*Birds in Sanskrit Literature*' by K. N. Dave (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 2005) and also '*Fauna : Animal and Bird kingdom in Sanskrit literature*' by Abha Kulshreshtha (Saujanya Books, New Delhi, 2007) that serve the reader with a delightful description of various birds and animals. I congratulate the author for bringing out this wonderful book as Proceedings of the National seminar held in Mumbai University and recommend scholars to read this book and promote further such research on Fauna of ancient India.

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