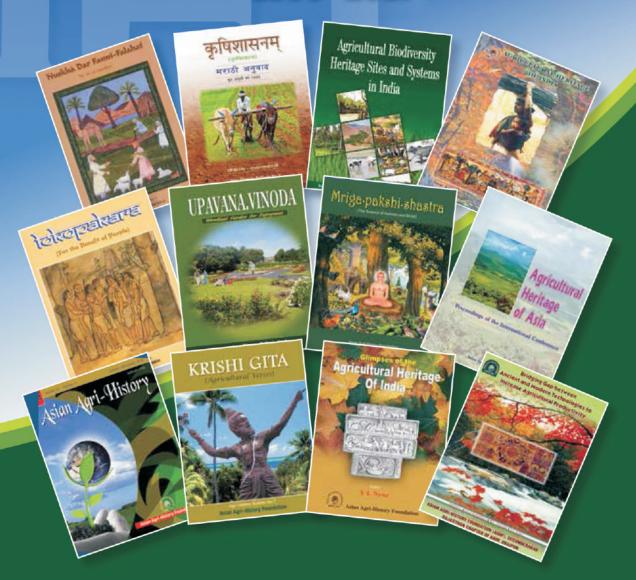


# **ASIAN AGRI-HISTORY** FOUNDATION Catalog of Publications

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A non-profit trust, was established and registered in Secunderabad, India in 1994 with major objectives to unearth original documents that contained information on ancient and medieval agriculture of Asia and disseminate such information worldwide.

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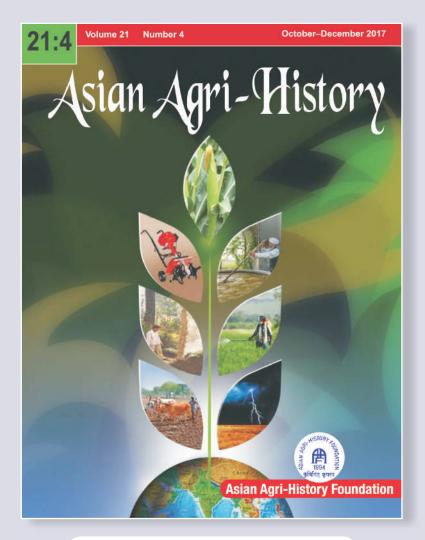
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Asian Agri-History is published as a quarterly journal by the Asian Agri-History Foundation. The first issue was published in March 1997. Since then 21 volumes have been completed. These volumes contained articles on agricultural history covering aspects such as Economics and Sociology, Engineering Education, Agroclimatolgy, Agroforestry, Agrogeography, Crop diversity, Origin and spread of crops, Intercropping, Animal husbandry including fisheries, Irrigation, Plant Protection, Seed, Soil, Systems, Women, and other topics.

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Original in Sanskrit by **Surapala** 

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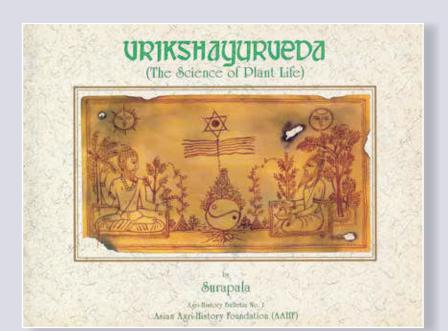
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# Vrikshayurveda

(The Science of Plant Life)

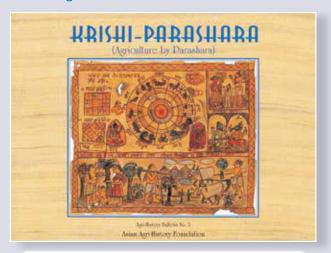
Vrikshayurveda by Surapala (c. 1000 AD), an ancient Sanskrit text on the science of plant life was a mere name until few years ago. The AAHF procured a microfiche of the manuscript of Vrikshayurveda of Surapala from the Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK. The text is an independent, full-fledged work on the subject of Vrikshayurveda.

Vrikshayurveda, which means "The Science of Plant Life", mainly deals with various species of trees and their healthy growth and productivity. The text mentions about 170 species of plants, including herbs, shrubs, and trees. There are 325 systematically arranged verses, beginning with a salutation to Lord Ganesha, followed by glorification of trees, and composition on tree planting and production. Various chapters deal with the raising of orchards, agri-horticulture, and tree planting near houses. Special references are made to procuring, preserving, and treatment of seeds and planting materials; preparation of pits for planting; selection of land (soil); methods of irrigation and ways to locate groundwater; nourishment and fertilizers; diseases of plants and plant protection; laying out of gardens and orchards; creation of agricultural/horticultural wonders; use of plant species as indicators of crop and animal production; and description of sacred plants. Several botanicals (herbs) and other materials had been identified and recommended for application on ailing plants. We know today that many of the herbs recommended by Surapala possess biocidal properties. Surapala describes a unique liquid fertilizer-cum-plant protection material called Kunapajala, which is prepared from animal wastes subjected to fermentation.

<sup>\*</sup>Hindi and Marathi editions at Rs 150 per copy.

#### AAHF Classic Bulletin 2 (1999)

International English Edition\*



#### Krishi-Parashara

(Agriculture by Parashara)

Krishi-Parashara (c. 400 BC) probably is the first-ever 'textbook' on agriculture in which the information is logically organized in chapters. Here are some highlights from Krishi-Parashara. The detailed description of agricultural implements, especially the plow, along with measurements of the various parts is a noteworthy feature of the text. Different parts of the plow are first identified by names, and measurements of each one of them are then prescribed. Emphasis is laid on the quality and strength of the implements.

Parashara has mentioned not one but several methods for predicting rainfall in the whole year or part of the year, and sudden showers. For annual rainfall prediction, he has given methods based on the 'ruling planet' and the 'minister planet' of the year, transition of the Sun in Aries with reference to nakshatras (is the term for lunar mansion in Hindu astrology; their names are related to the most prominent asterisms in the respective sectors) and some other methods. Even today in the 21st century, a very large majority of farmers in rural areas of India speaks in terms of planets and stars in relation to not only the rainfall prediction but also many other farm operations.

Parashara has highlighted the importance of good management in farming, using examples relevant to his time. We must remember that sustainable agriculture without good management cannot be achieved. The message of Parashara will hold true as long as agriculture exists. Cattle were an important resource for food and farm power. Management of cattle is emphasized. Cattle sanitation, health, and nutrition are stressed. The seed has to be dried well, cleaned from weed seeds, and kept securely in small pouches. Emphasis on uniformity of seed clearly points to the existing knowledge that varietal characteristics are inherited and the desired traits in grain can be obtained through visibly similar seeds. Storing the seed is mentioned; this reveals an excellent understanding about the importance of good seed. It is believed that Parashara must have written the manuscript prior to Kautilya's Artha-sastra, i.e., prior to 4th century BC. Parashara most likely lived in Taxila, now in Pakistan.

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Original in Persian by
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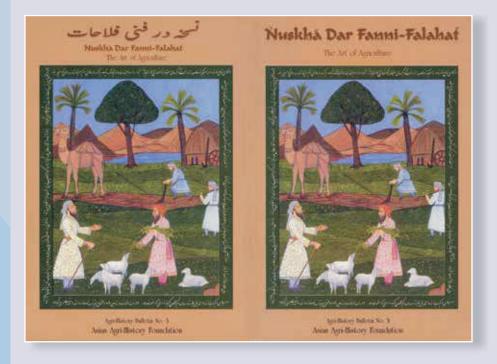
J S Kanwar

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#### Nuskha Dar Fanni-Falahat

(The Art of Agriculture)

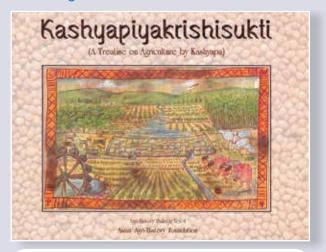
The text, written in Persian, was copied from a compendium, Ganj-e-Badawar, compiled around 1650 AD by the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh, son of Shah Jahan. This text briefly describes the "art" of growing about 100 economic plant species. These include trees (fresh fruit, dry fruit, avenue, and timber), shrubs of ornamental significance, vegetables, cereals, legumes, oilseeds, and aromatics. One of the most interesting sections of the text is "transplanting big trees". Such a procedure has not been described in any other available ancient or medieval texts of India. The recommendations made indicate considerable experience in successfully transplanting large trees. The idea of keeping "two water-filled pitchers with small holes at the bottom" to provide water-drip to the root system is most interesting and practical even today for orchardists having limited resources.

Nitre as a fertilizer was new to the Indian agriculture as no document before the present one mentioned use of nitre as a manure. This must be therefore one of the first inorganic fertilizers used in India. The recommendation to sprinkle nitre on vines must have been based on observing beneficial effects on growth of vines. A statement on baqla (Vicia faba) is noteworthy. It is mentioned that roots, branches, and leaves of baqla "have the qualities of manure and it increases the strength of the manure" and that is why it is grown as an intercrop. This is a very significant statement pointing to the beneficial effects of legumes, which we know so well today.

<sup>\*</sup>Hindi and Marathi editions at Rs 150 per copy.

#### AAHF Classic Bulletin 4 (2002)

International English Edition\*



# Kashyapiyakrishisukti

(A Treatise on Agriculture by Kashyapa)

A copy of the manuscript (No.38J8) in Devanagari script exists in the Adyar Library, Chennai, India. Being a work on an applied science such as agriculture, Kashyapiyakrishisukti has on the whole succeeded in systematically instructing the agriculturist on various issues of farming in a simple language. The present text (c. 800 AD) is a detailed one covering not only irrigated rice production in India but also other aspects such as stressing strong support to agriculture from the ruler, stressing participation of people of all castes in farm-related activities, cattle management, describing soil properties, growing pulses on uplands, growing vegetables, fruits, spice crops, and ornamental plants, growing trees, laying out gardens, marketing, and even mining. It is indeed an excellent text on agriculture.

Two verses explain clearly what Kashyapa thought about the soils. It is stated in verse 27 of Section I that "land is intended to receive excellence in every age" and in verse 55 of the same section, "A good quality land yields good results to everyone, confers good health on the entire family, and causes growth of money, cattle, and grain." Thus the importance of a good soil can never be overemphasized. A modern soil scientist studies physical properties including the texture of the soil. The procedure described in verses 51 through 54 of Section I is very similar to what is done today. Kashyapa has given details about where and how water reservoirs should be constructed (I. 61–110). He stressed construction of a reservoir near farmers' fields, ensuring source of water for the reservoir, making strong causeways and thus taking steps to avoid flooding of inhabited areas, and regularly inspecting and repairing the reservoirs, especially during the rainy season. From the description of cows and bullocks given by Kashyapa, it is likely that he was referring to the breed known today by the name Ongole, which is predominant in Guntur and Nellore in Andhra Pradesh. Kashyapa advised that changes in technologies will occur with changes in time and the king must assist in introducing such changes. The main focus of Kashyapa was the agriculture of the high rainfall area of Central-East India.

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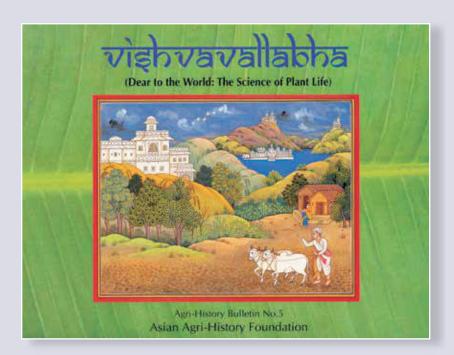
Y L Nene

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#### Vishvavallabha

(Dear to the World: The Science of Plant Life)

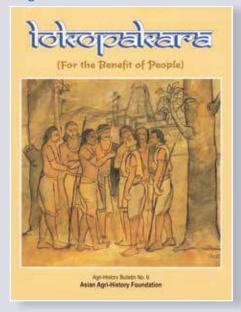
A Sanskrit classic on agriculture, Vishvavallabha (Dear to the World: The Science of Plant Life) was found in the library of the Rajasthan Prachya Vidya Pratishthan, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Vishvavallabha was compiled by a scholar Sri Chakrapani Mishra, around 1577 AD. Chakrapani worked under the patronage of the towering personality of Maharana Pratap (1540–1597) of Mewar in Rajasthan.

The text contains a wealth of information on detection of groundwater, construction of water reservoirs, planting, disorders and treatments, and plantations inside a fort. Since water is scarce in the Mewar and Marwar regions of Rajasthan, Chakrapani has given in detail the indicators for the presence of groundwater. Also for the same reason, methods to harvest rain water and to construct reservoirs are given in detail. Information on growing horticultural crops and management of their disorders is more advanced than given in Surapala's Vrikshayurveda (1000 AD). Chakrapani has claimed that all techniques described in Vishvavallabha were successfully tried by him.

<sup>\*</sup>Hindi and Marathi editions at Rs 150 per copy.

#### AAHF Classic Bulletin 6 (2006)

International English Edition\*



# Lokopakara

(For the Benefit of People)

The Lokopakara, which meant "for the benefit of common people", is a vade mecum of everyday life for commoners and describes topics such as astrology, portents, vastu (architecture), water divining, vrikshayurveda (the science of plant life), perfumery, cookery, veterinary medicine, etc. In this bulletin, we have selected those topics that are of interest to farmers residing in rural areas. The Western Chalukya Kings, with their capital at Kalyani (near Bidar, Karnataka, India) had a tradition of supporting scholarship and Chavundaraya II was one such poet-scholar in the court of Jaisimha II (1015–1042 AD). Chavundaraya has summarized the subject of detection of groundwater in 40 verses. Criteria for detecting groundwater are: (i) the presence of trees as bioindicators, (ii) termitoria, (iii) colored rocks, (iv) fauna such as frogs, (v) grasses, and (vi) emergence of smoke from the ground. All these are relevant. As expected, presence of certain trees and termitoria was the most common indicators.

The chapter on Vrikshayurveda relates to health management of trees, bushes, creepers, etc. Chavundaraya has put the contents, relevant to southern India, in 60 verses in contrast to 300 verses that Surapala had compiled. Verse II contains a key recommendation for insect pest control. The base used is cow urine, for one-week fermentation, in which anti-insect herbals, such as asafetida, sweet flag, atis (Aconitum heterophyllum) root, black pepper, vidanga (Embelia ribes), marking-nut (Semecarpus anacardium) seed, indrayan (Cucumis pseudo-colocynthis), and black mustard were used. Kunapajala, the liquid manure based on fermenting flesh in water, after boiling, also figures in Chavundaraya's text. He describes variants of kunapa in several verses. These variants offer considerable flexibility to farmers in preparing kunapajala.

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Valmiki S Ayangarya

#### Commentaries

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# KRISHI GITA (Agricultural Verses)

#### Krishi Gita

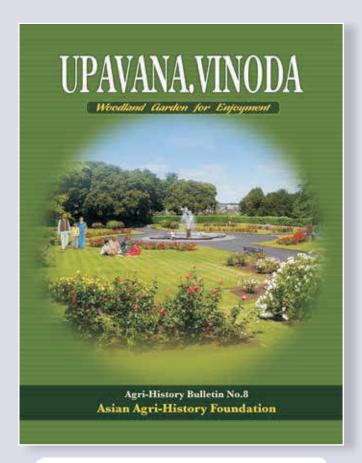
Asian Agri-History Foundation

(Agricultural Verses)

The Malayalam printed text was procured from Adyar Library, Chennai, India. It is edited by Vidwan C Govinda Warriar. Krishi Gita is a treatise on indigenous farming practices of Kerala (Malayalam desam) in South India. This text refers to cultivation of coastal region crops prior to introductions by Arabs and Portuguese. Soil management involved tillage, manuring, and avoiding water stagnation and iron toxicity. Agronomy covered optimum seed rate, time of planting, depth of planting, and spacing between plants and rows.

A large number of rice varieties (124 varieties) for different areas are recommended, indicating availability of genetic variation. Other crops (1 to 19 varieties) discussed are arecanut, amaranth, ash gourd, banana/plantain, chickpea, betel leaf, bitter gourd, brinjal (eggplant), chili, coconut, cotton, cowpea, elephant foot-yam, fenugreek, yam (Dioscorea spp), cocoyam, beans (Dolichos lablab), ivy gourd, lime (Citrus spp), maize, oriental pickling melon, pigeonpea, sesame, snake gourd, sugarcane, taro, tobacco, turmeric, and watermelon.

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The editor, Peter Peterson, has dedicated the text to Mahrao Raja Ram Singh, Rao of Bundi, Rajasthan. It is Implied in the dedication that the Rao of Bundi was genealogically related to King Hammira (1283–1301 AD ) of Shakambhari-desha (Bundelkhand-Rajasthan region). Sarangadhara was a courtier, probably the Chief Minister, of King Hammira , who was a powerful monarch, a great patron of learning, and himself a writer.

Alauddin attacked Ranthambore and killed Hammira (1301 CE).

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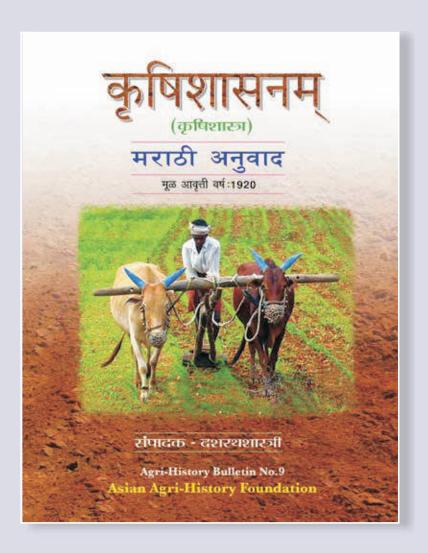
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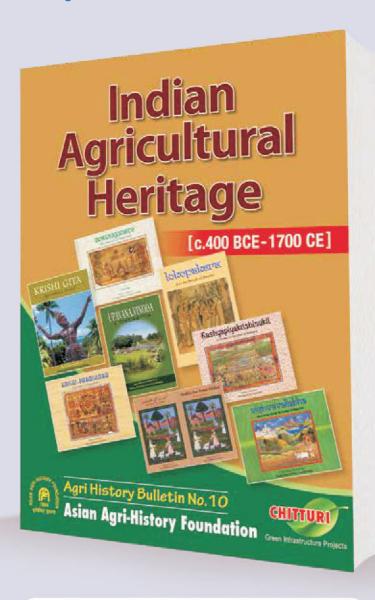


#### Krishishasanam

(Agriculture Discipiline)

Sri Dashrath Shastri of Savner village near Nagpur , India, published Krishishasanam both in Sanskrit and Hindi in 1920. the text refers to ancient farm practices including those by Parashara (c. 400 BCE), copies of the original book are no more available. Dr Rahudkar, (translator) had a hand written copy in Hindi which was used for this publication.

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**B M Jawalia**Original author **Anonymous** 

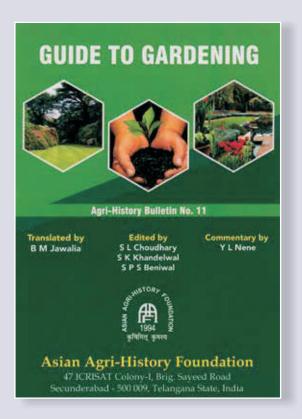
Translation in Marwari of Vatika Tatva Prakas by Raghunath Ray

#### Editors

S L Choudhary S K Khandelwal Y L Nene

Commentary

Y L Nene



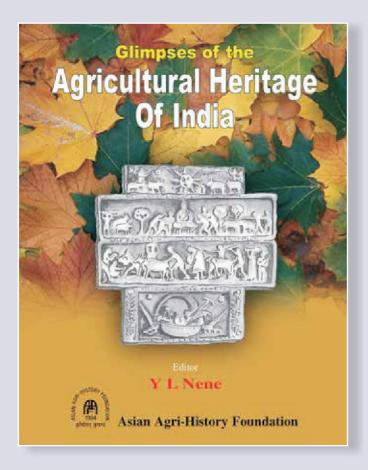
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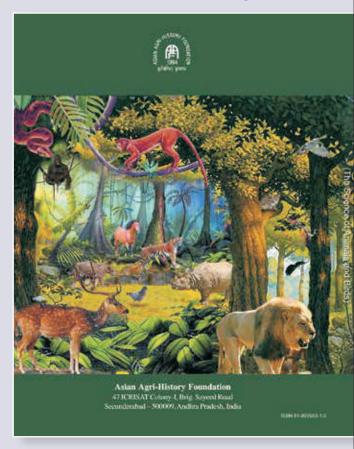
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# Mriga·pakshi·shastra

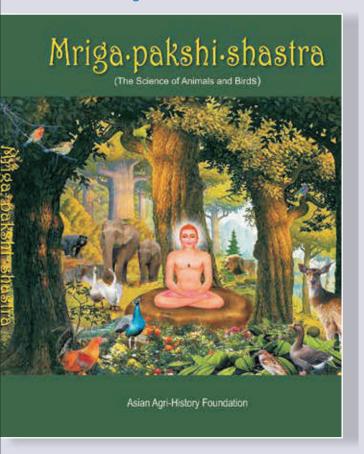
(The Science of Animals and Birds)

Text of Mriga.pakshi.shastra first came to our notice in the form of a printed book by Chitampalli and Bhatkhande (1993). This book contained the text along with translation by the learned scholars in Marathi. As the book did not give any clue to the original source of the text and considering the importance of the subject that deserved a wider dissemination, AAHF commenced a search for the original source. This ended successfully with the procurement of a transcript (Accession No. 13516) by Nalini Sadhale from the Oriental Institute, MS University, Baroda (Vadodara) in Gujarat. This was copied by an epigraphist of Tirupati, V Vijayaragavacharya from the original. The transcript mentions 4<sup>th</sup> July 1930 as the date and Tirupati as the place of its completion.

How the original text of Mriga.pakshi.shastra was saved for posterity is described in the foreword (note) written by T Srinivasaraghavacharlu, a litterateur from Bezwada (Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh). It is stated, "In the 13th century AD, Zoology or the Science of animals and birds was first composed, so extensively, in India by the famous Jain poet, Hamsadeva in Sanskrit language comprising nearly 1700 Slokas in Anushtup metre."

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"I think it is not out of place and exaggeration if I am permitted to say that a few authors of the Western countries, Messrs A.D. Imms, M.A., D.Sc., and Alexander Macalister, M.D., and others, have fully described the natural qualities etc., of lions and a few other animals, but none of them have given age limit of animals and birds. It is, therefore, very gratifying to say that Hamsadeva has given age limit to all animals and birds even to hen and other smaller birds. It is also complimentary to note with unbounded joy that this Zoology is an asset to India – in which country this work and myself are born – nay, it is a gem to be adorned by the other parts of the world."

"The original work was about to disappear from this world, when Pandit Sreeman Vijayaraghavachariar (Epigraphist), who has the broad mindedness to see its translation and original text published and broad-cast in India and other parts of the world, saved it from its death and supplied copies of the original text (in manuscript) to His Highness The Maharaja of Travancore for the use of the State Museum and to Dr. Caseywood of McGill University of Montreal city (in N America)."

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Original in Sanskrit by **Hamsadeva** 

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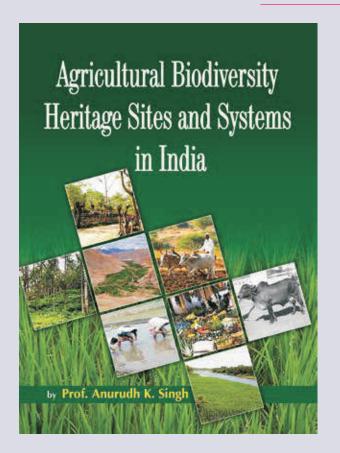
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Y L Nene

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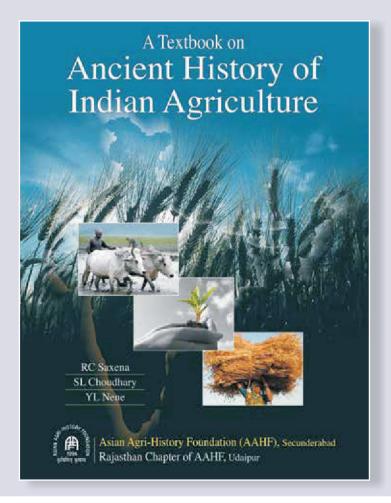
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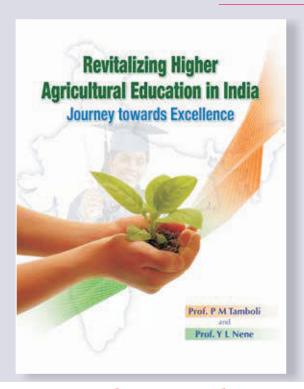
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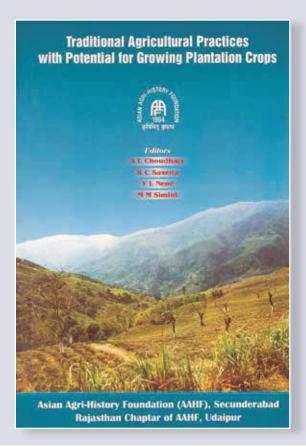
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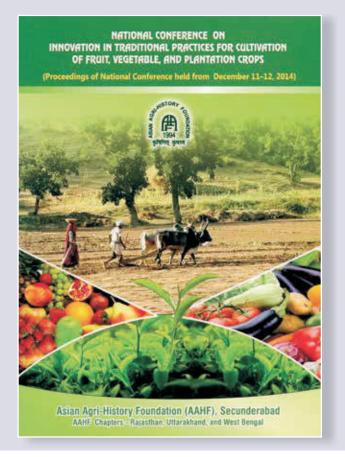
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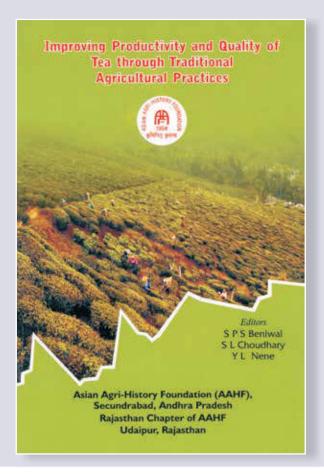
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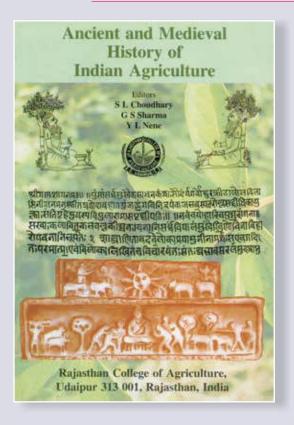
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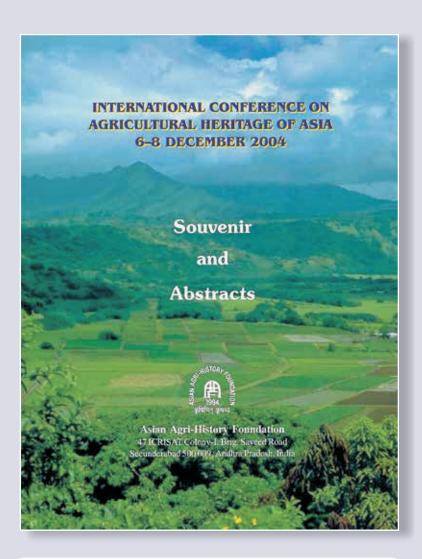
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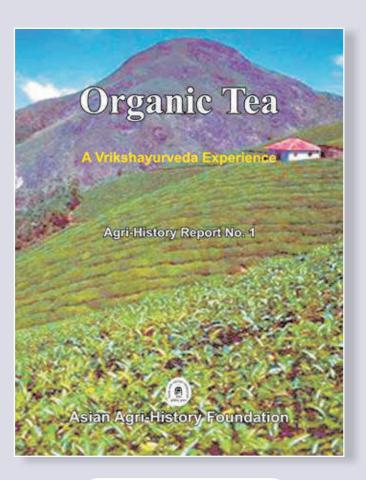
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