

# ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS AS REFLECTED IN SMṚTI TEXTS

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## Abstract

Ancient sages had a harmonious view of living with Nature. The importance of animals and the remarkable products that are available from them were known from very ancient times as evident in the Vedic texts, Epics, *Kāvya*s, *Tantra* literature and so on. The information related to various animals are spread in various sections of *Smṛti* literature also. These include details regarding their origin, use and properties of animal products for various sacrificial and domestic rites, expiations for killing them, the role of animals and birds in law of transmigration and various other aspects. Interestingly one finds specific details about various fauna that modern biologists can investigate scientifically. The merits of donating cows and other such animals are also highlighted in various texts. Some *Smṛtis* also give aspects of examining dead animals, their pregnancy conditions, fines imposed for killing certain animals. The present paper briefly describes the above aspects of Fauna as gleaned from various *Smṛti* texts.

**Keywords :** *Smṛtis*, Animals, Birds, Expiation, donating, dietary article

## INTRODUCTION

Several varieties of animals and birds have been observed by mankind through the ages. Domestication of certain animals was a significant feature of all civilizations. Human interaction with the animal kingdom goes far back in time that they were included in their myths, beliefs and rituals and so on. Glimpses of the

descriptions of animals are found in several Vedic texts, epics, *Kāvya*s, *Purāṇas* and Post-Vedic texts. Beginning from the *ṛgveda*<sup>1</sup> (RV), one finds rich descriptions of Fauna and Flora thus portraying the eco-aesthetics of our sages. The rich plant and animal diversity of the forests of *Daṇḍakāraṇya*, *Kiṣkiṇḍa*, *Laṅka*, *Chitrakūṭa* and *Saṣjīvini Parvata* have been studied by scholars attempting to learn the Flora and Fauna described by Sage *Vālmiki* in his *Rāmāyaṇa*<sup>2,3</sup>. Sage *Vyāsa*'s immortal epic, the *Mahābhārata*<sup>4</sup> is no less in enlisting such ancient instances of animal behavior in the *Vana Parva* and other sections of the text. The portrayal of birds, insects, land and aquatic fauna is also found in the *Kāvya*s. *Āyurveda* and Tantric literature are also rich in mentioning several animal products of which many are yet to be researched. The present paper explores the observations of various animals and birds, their products are religious beliefs surrounding them as gleaned from the *Smṛti* literature.

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF *SMṚTI* LITERATURE

The *Śruti* and *Smṛti* literature are two great features that reflect and reveal our ancient heritage. *Smṛtis* were composed by enlightened sages to guide mankind in all walks of life. The theme and soul of all *Smṛtis* is regarding the Dharma to be practiced in various walks of life. The *Smṛtis* are also called *Dharmaśāstras* and they generally divide their subject matter into three components namely *Ācāra*, *Vyavahāra* and *Prāyaścitta*. The extant *Smṛtis* were formulated at different times and different parts of the country. Traditionally there are 18 principal *Smṛtis*, 18 *Upasmṛtis* and various other texts by other *Smṛtikāras* (writers). However the information regarding animals and birds are found in the sections on agriculture rites (*Kṛṣikarma*), food that is allowed and forbidden for various classes of people (*Bhakṣyābhakṣyaicāra*), donation of gifts (*Dānaprakaraṇa*), expiatory rites (*prāyaścitta*), rites for the manes (*Śrāddhakarma*), sacrificial rites (*Yajṣa* or *Homa*) and rites related to

the 16 *samskāras*. Although the information related to various animals are spread in various sections of *Smṛti* literature, it may not be able to elaborate all of them in the present context. However, a brief summary of the various aspects of animals and birds in these texts is presented under the following sections.

### [A] Origin of Animals

Ancient Vedic literature offers various glimpses of the origin of various animals. The *Purāṇas* such as *Vāyu Purāṇa*<sup>5</sup> also mention the origin of different animals and birds from the lineage of sage *Kaśyapa* and his wives. The *Smṛtis* also enshrine such views. Of these the *Manusmṛti*<sup>6</sup> [I.4] broadly classifies world objects into *Sthāvara* (non-moving) and *Jaṅgama* (moving). Further while describing the origin of various species it adds that these creatures are born in accordance with their actions by force of austerities.

यथाकर्म तपोयोगात् सृष्टं स्थावरजङ्गमम्।

*yathākarma tapoyogāt sṛṣṭaṁ sthāvarajaṅgamam*।

It further describes the creation of various insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds and animals [I.39]. Classification of these species is exhaustively treated in *Āyurvedic* literature like the *Suśruta Saṁhitā*<sup>7</sup> and *Charaka Saṁhitā*<sup>8</sup> and also in *Tattuārthādhigamasūtra*<sup>9</sup> of Jain author *Umāsvati*. Animals are classified as rural or domestic (*Grāmya*) or wild (*Aranya*). The *Smṛtis* classify beasts into four broad divisions like *Ekeśapha* (having one hoof), *Dvikhurī* (having two Hooves), *Paścanakha* (having five nails) and *Ubhayatodanta* (having two rows of teeth). Birds are also classified as *Vikira* (or *Viškira*) (those that feed on insects or seeds after scratching the earth by their legs), *Pratuda* (those that peck with beaks), *Kravyāda* (carnivorous birds) and *Jālapāda* (those aquatic birds with webbed feet). Creatures are also classified in *Manusmṛti* [I.43-46] as *Jarāyuja* (viviparous - humans and beasts), *Aṇḍaja* (oviparous - born from eggs), *Svedaja* (born out of sweat- like insects) and *Udbhija* (from water).

## [B] Fishes :

A systematic body of knowledge of fishes and other aquatic creatures was known from ancient times. The *Suśruta Samhitā* classifies fishes into two types- *Nādeya* (fresh water fish) and *Samudra* (Marine fish). The *Purāṇas* also mention various types of fish. *Smṛti* writers also make various observations regarding fishes. *Manusmṛti* [I.44] includes fishes among aquatic creatures and states they are oviparous. It states that they are not to be rejected if offered voluntarily [IV.250]. *Manusmṛti* [VIII.95] states that fish bones are harmful if swallowed unaware along with its flesh. The *Smṛtis* also mention several species of fishes like *Rohita* (*Labeo rohita*), *Pāṭhīna* (*Wallago attu*), *Simhatuṇḍaka* (*Bagarius bagarius*), *Śaphara* (*Danio Barilius*), *Śakula* (*Heteropneustes Fossilis*), *Śasalka*, *Rājīva* and so on. The *Manusmṛti* permits that *Simhatuṇḍaka*, *Śasalka* and *Rājīva* can be eaten on all occasions while the fishes namely *Rohita* and *Pāṭhīna* are to be eaten after offering them to the gods. The *Rohita* and *Simhatuṇḍaka* are fit to be eaten by brahmins according to *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*<sup>10</sup> [I.177-178]. The *Śakula* fishes are forbidden in some *Smṛti* texts. The *Viṣṇusmṛti*<sup>11</sup> [V.53] states that one who kills or steals fish has to pay a fine of a ten *Kārṣapaṇam*. The *Viṣṇusmṛti* [51.21] also states that *Pāṭhīna*, *Rohita*, *Simhatuṇḍaka*, *Śakula* and *Rājīva* can be consumed. It also states that fishes give satisfaction to manes (*Pitṛs*) as a dietary article for two months [80.2]. This is also supported by the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* [I.258]. The *Gautamasmṛti*<sup>12</sup> [17.3] mentions that a brahmin can accept fish as a gift. The text [15.1] also mentions that fish as a dietary article gives satisfaction to manes (*Pitṛs*) for one year.

## [C] Insects :

Insects have been mentioned in various Vedic and post-Vedic texts that have been discussed in recent literature<sup>13</sup>. These include bees, ants, grasshoppers, mosquitoes, flies, gnats spiders, scorpions and so on. In this context the *Manusmṛti* [I.40] states-

कृमिकीटपतङ्गश्चयूकामक्षिकमत्कुणम्। सर्वं च दंशमशकं स्थावरं च पृथग्विधम्॥  
 kṛmikīṭapataṅgaścayūkāmākṣikamatkuṇam |  
 sarva ca daṁśamaśakam sthāvaram ca pṛthagvidham||

These include worms, winged insects like moths lice, flies, bugs, gadflies and gnats that are born from heat (*Svedaja*). The *Parāśarasmyti*<sup>14</sup> [VI.45-49] mentions that worms are generated in a wound or sore. Further a person bitten by worms should wash himself with cow dung, urine of cow, curd, milk and ghee for three days and also swallow a mixture of them to become pure [VI.49]. If worms or flies are there in food while eating, one must touch water in the midst of eating [VI.66] and remove that part of the polluted food. However, the text contradictorily quotes *Manu* stating that cats, flies, insects, moths, worms and frogs come in contact with both pure and impure items but their contact transmits no impurity [VII.32-33] –

मार्जारमक्षिका कीटपतङ्गकृमिदुर्दुराः मेध्यामेध्यं स्पृशन्तोऽपि नोच्छिष्टं मनुरब्रवीत्॥  
 mārjāramakṣikā kīṭapataṅgakṛmidardurāḥ medhyāmedhyam  
 sprśanto'pi nocchiṣṭam manurabravīt||

The *Manusmṛti* [XII.62-63] states that one who steals honey is reborn as a stinging insect, one who steals salt as a cricket and for stealing household utensils one is reborn as a wasp [XII.66].

#### [D] Amphibians :

Several amphibians have been reported in Vedic and *Āyurvedic* texts. Descriptions of frogs in Sanskrit texts are also discussed in recent literature<sup>15</sup>. The *Kāśyapasmṛti*<sup>16</sup> [*Prāyaścittavarṇanam*, I.9] states that if a frog is killed, one must fast for a whole night and then donate a cow. The *Manusmṛti* [XII.64] states that one who steals linen is reborn as a frog. The *Uśānasmiṛti*<sup>17</sup> states that if one kills a frog, the offender has to perform *ṣoḍhaśākhyā Mahāvratā* or sustain three nights by consuming milk only [IX.7] or walk a

distance of one *yojana* [IX.8]. The *Gautamasṃṛti* [23.6] states that one who kills a frog (*Maṇḍūka*) should perform a penance like that of *Vaiśyavadha*.

### [E] Reptiles :

Various types of snakes are reported in *Āyurvedic* texts of *Suśruta*, *Charaka* and *Vāgbhaṭa*. Rich information about snakes is also found in *Atharvaveda Saṃhitā*<sup>18</sup> and *Kāśyapa Saṃhitā*<sup>19</sup> (a text on Agada Tantra). *Manusṃṛti* mentions that serpents, crocodiles, tortoises are oviparous [I.44]. The qualities of *Tamas* leads to the lowest conditions of immovables such as being an insect, fishes, snakes and tortoises according to the law of transmigration [XII.42-43]. The *Kashyapasṃṛti* states that if a lizard (*Kṛkālāsa*) and serpent are killed, the offender must fast for three nights and donate metal (*Loha*). The *Manusṃṛti* [XII.64] states that one who steals a cow is reborn as an iguana (*Godhā*). The *Parāśarasṃṛti* [VI.3] states that a killer of a snake or crocodile attains purity by fasting at day time and eating at night. Elsewhere it states that from sin of killing a snake, lizard or tortoise one attains purity by living on egg fruit (*Vṛntākaphala*) for entire day [VI.10]. The *Parāśarasṃṛti* [VI.9] states that one who kills a python (*Ajagara*) and water snake that is non-venomous [*ḍuṇḍubha*] should feed a brahmin with *kṛsara* (rice boiled with sesame) and donate him an iron rod.

### [F] Birds :

Birds have been described in several ancient Sanskrit texts that they have been treated elaborately by eminent scholars<sup>20</sup>. The *Sṃṛtis* mention several birds that are tabulated in **Table 1** and quoted in different contexts.

**Table 1 : Birds mentioned in *Sṃṛti* texts**

Bird name (Sanskrit)	English name	Zoological name
<i>Dātvyūha</i>	Moorhen	<i>Gallinila chloropus</i>

<i>śuka</i>	Parrot	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
<i>ṭiṭṭibha</i>	Parra Jacana or Francoline partridge	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i> or <i>Metapigius indica</i> or <i>Francolinus species</i> .
<i>Sārasa</i>	Egret or heron	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i> or <i>Ardea cinerea</i>
<i>Haṁsa</i>	Swan	<i>Anser anser</i>
<i>Koyaṣṭi</i>	Water cock / Lapwing or Pond heron	Unknown
<i>Plava</i>	Comorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
<i>Chakravāka</i>	Ruddy Sheldrake	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
<i>Balākā</i>	Common Teal	<i>Nettion crecca</i>
<i>Baka</i>	Egret/heron	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
<i>Biṣkīra</i> or <i>Chakora</i>	Greek partridge	<i>Perdix rufa</i>
<i>kalaviṅka</i>	Sparrow	<i>Passer species</i>
<i>Kākola</i>	Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
<i>Kurava</i>	Tree Pie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
<i>Rajjudālaka</i>	Wild fowl	<i>Gallus species</i>
<i>Khaṣjariṭa</i>	Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
<i>Cāṣa</i>	Blue jay	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
<i>Grāmyakukkuṭa</i>	Domestic fowl	<i>Gallos domestias</i>
<i>Tilāṭa</i>	Spotted dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
<i>Tittiri</i>	Francoline Partridge	<i>Francolinus species</i>
<i>Krauṣca</i>	Crane/heron	<i>Grus species</i> or <i>Ardeola grayii</i>
<i>Bhāsa</i>	White backed vulture	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>
<i>Jālapāda</i>	A type of swan / goose or duck	<i>Water bird species with webbed feet</i>
<i>Pārāvata</i>	Blue rock pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
<i>Sāri</i>	Common myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
<i>śyena</i>	Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinata</i>
<i>Śikhi / Mayūra</i>	Peacock	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
<i>Ullūka</i>	Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>
<i>Chaṭaka</i>	Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
<i>Kokila</i>	Cuckoo	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>
<i>Lāvaka</i>	Bustard Quail	<i>Perdix chinensis</i>

<i>Raktapāda</i>	A variety of <i>Pārāvata</i> having red feet or White stork	<i>In case of stork (Ciconia ciconia)</i>
<i>Kāraṇḍava</i>	Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
<i>Piṅgala</i>	Small kind of owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>
<i>Kurara</i>	Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
<i>Bhāradvāja</i>	Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
<i>Ḡṛdhra</i>	Vulture	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>
<i>Dāruvaka</i>	Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium bengalensis</i>
<i>Vārdhrīṇasa</i>	Type of bird having nose resembling leather	<i>Hornbill species</i>

These birds are enumerated in almost several *Smṛtis* in context of specifying the expiations for killing them and their flesh being used as a dietary article to give satisfaction to the manes (*Pitṛs*) in *Śrāddha* rites. These are elaborated especially in the *Manusmṛti*, *Parāśarasmṛti* [Chap.VI], *Gautamasmṛti* [Chap. 23], *Śātātāpasmṛti*<sup>21</sup> [II.54-56], *Uśānasmṛti* [IX.10-IX.12], *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* [I.172-I.175], *Viṣṇusmṛti* [51.28-51.29], *Uttarāṅgirasasmṛti*<sup>22</sup> [X.16]. The *Manusmṛti* has some interesting observations regarding transmigration caused due to sin of stealing of certain items by a person. These are tabulated in **Table 2** as stated in the text [XII.62-67].

### [G] Animals :

The *Smṛtis* mention several domestic as well as wild animals that are enumerated in context of specifying expiation for killing them, the flesh being used as a dietary article to give satisfaction to the Manes (*Pitṛs*) in *Śrāddha* rites, the law of transmigration due to various sins committed as well as in the context of specifying gifts to be given on various occasions. These animals are as tabulated in **Table 3** and are chiefly mentioned in the *Manusmṛti*, *Parāśarasmṛti* [Chap.6], *Gautamasmṛti* [17.2 and 15.1], *Śātātāpasmṛti* [II.45-54], *Uśānasmṛti* [IX.7-9; IX.12-13], *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* [I.170-171; I.175; I.258-260], *Viṣṇusmṛti* [51.3;51.6;51.26;51.33;80.3-14], *Uttarāṅgirasasmṛti* [X.15-17], *Prajāpatismṛti*<sup>23</sup> [*Śrāddhatyājyavastuvarṇanam.* 138-143],

*Kāśyapasmṛti* [Section on *Prāyaścittavarṇanam*], *Vṛddha Hārītasṁṛti*<sup>24</sup> [6.253-255] and *Kātyāyanasmṛti*<sup>25</sup> [27.11].

**Table 2 : Observations of *Manusmṛti* in regard to transmigration in form of birds**

Items stolen	Reborn as a bird such as
Yellow metal	Swan
Water	Cormorant / Black cuckoo
Milk	Crow
Meat	Vulture
Fat	Cormorant
Sour milk	Common Teal
Silk	Partridge
Cotton cloth	Crane
Vegetable consisting of leaves	Peacock
Fire	Heron
Dyed clothes	Francolin Partridge

Among the different *Smṛtis*, the *Parāśarasmṛti* contains instructions about atonement for killing birds, quadrupeds and other animals it enumerates more than 30 species of birds and 21 species of quadrupeds. The *Manusmṛti* and other *Smṛtis* mention that flesh of several animals can satisfy Manes (*Pitṛs*) and gods. The *Manusmṛti* and *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* are of the opinion that flesh of rhinoceros (*Khadga*) can cause satisfaction of the manes (*Pitṛs*) for an indefinite period. The *Viṣṇusmṛti* [51.59] states that meat properly sanctified by *mantras* may be consumed by mortal men. It adds that the following categories of meat such as *Anarchita* (not sanctified by *mantras*), *Vṛthāmāṁsa* (meat not used to satisfy gods/manes - 51.20), *Ajṣātaṁ* (not determined as edible), *Sūnāsthā* (left in abattoir), *Śuṣkamāṁsa* (dried meat - 51.27) are not to be consumed. The *Manusmṛti* [V.31-40] also gives various dietary rules regarding meat. Both the *Manusmṛti* [V.38] and *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* [*Ācārādhyāya*, V.180] advocate that those who kill animals which are to be actually protected, live in *Ghōra Naraka* (Hell) for the days

equal to the number of hairs on the body of the animal. The *Manusmṛti* while discussing the law of transmigration in regard to stolen items mentions the list of animals by which a person is reborn [XII.62-67]. These are as tabulated in **Table 4**.

**Table 3 : Animals mentioned in *Smṛti* texts**

Animal name (Sanskrit)	English name	Zoological name
<i>Siṃha</i>	Lion	<i>Panthera leo persica</i>
<i>Vyāghra</i>	Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>
<i>Tarākṣu</i>	Hyena	<i>Hyaena hyaena</i>
<i>ṛkṣa</i>	Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
<i>Gaṇḍaka / Khaḍga</i>	Rhinoceros	<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>
<i>Gaja</i>	Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus indicus</i>
<i>Aśva/ Turaga</i>	Horse	<i>Equus caballus</i>
<i>Uṣṭra</i>	Camel	<i>Camelus dromedarius</i>
<i>Gardhabha/ Khara</i>	Ass	<i>Equus hemionus</i>
<i>Varāha/ Sūkara</i>	Boar /Hog	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
<i>śvāvid / śalyaka</i>	Porcupine	<i>Hystrix indica</i>
<i>Mahiṣa</i>	Buffalo	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>
<i>Vṛṣabha/ Vṛṣa/ Balīvarda</i>	Bullock	<i>Bos taurus</i>
<i>Go /Dhenu</i>	Cow	<i>Bos taurus</i>
<i>Aja / Chāga /Meṣa</i>	Goat breeds	<i>Capra falconeri / Hemitragus jemlahicus / Hemitragus hylocrius</i>
<i>Mṛga</i>	Deer –Chital	<i>Cervus axis</i>
<i>Kuraṅga</i>	Four horned antelope	<i>Tetracerus quadricornis</i>
<i>Hariṇa</i>	Chinkara	<i>Gazelle bennettii</i>
<i>Kṛṣṇasāra</i>	Black buck	<i>Antelope cervicapra</i>
<i>Nyaṅku</i>	Swamp deer	<i>Cervus duvauceli</i>
<i>Ruru/ Raṅku/ Gokaṛṇa/ Eṇa</i>	Nilgai (Blue bull)	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>
<i>Chamara</i>	Yak	<i>Bos grunniens</i>
<i>Kapī/ Vānara</i>	Nilgiri Langur / Common Langur	<i>Presbytis johni / Semnopithecus entellus</i>

<i>śṛgāla / Jambuka</i>	Golden jackal / Red fox	<i>Canis aureus / Vulpes vulpes</i>
<i>Biḍāla / Mārjāra</i>	Leopard cat /Domestic cat	<i>Prionailurus bengalensis / Felis domestica</i>
<i>Mūṣaka / ākhu</i>	Indian bush rat / Soft furred field rat	<i>Golunda ellioti / Millardia meltada</i>
<i>Vṛka</i>	Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>
<i>Śvāna / Kukkura</i>	Domestic dog	<i>Canis lupus familiaris</i>
<i>Valgulī</i>	Bat	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>
<i>Gavaya</i>	Wild ox	<i>Bos gaurus</i>
<i>Nakula</i>	Ichneumon / Mongoose	<i>Herpestes auropunctatus / Herpestes edwardsii</i>
<i>Viḍvarāha</i>	Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
<i>Urabhra</i>	Sheep	<i>Ovis ammon / Ovis orientalis</i>
<i>śāśa</i>	Hare /Rabbit	<i>Lepus nigricolis</i>

**Table 4 : Observations of *Manusmṛti* in regard to transmigration  
in form of Animals**

Item stolen	Person reborn as
Grain	Rat
Condiments	Dog
Clarified butter	Mongoose
Cow	Iguana ( <i>Godhā</i> )
Molasses ( <i>Guḍa</i> )	<i>Valgulī</i> (flying fox)
Perfumes	Muskkrat
Cooked food of various kinds	Porcupine
Uncooked food	Hedgehog
Deer or elephants	Wolf
Horses	Tiger
Fruit and roots	Monkey
Woman	Bear
Vehicle	Camel
Cattle	He goat
Gold of a brahmin	Spiders, snake or lizards, aquatic animals

The rules regarding the expiation for killing various animals as well as their use as dietary articles to give satisfaction to manes (*Pitṛs*) are well documented by Priyadarsan Sensharma in his articles<sup>26-33</sup> and not elaborated in the present context. The species features of certain *Smṛtis* with regard to various domestic and wild animals may be briefly summarized in following sections -

#### [A] Cows :

Veterinary lore about cows are found in ancient texts beginning from Vedic period and have been documented in recent literature<sup>34</sup>. The use of urine, milk, ghee, curds and dung of cows has been mentioned in Vedic texts and their efficacies are elaborated in *Āyurvedic* texts. The *Mahābhārata* (*Anuśāsanika Parva*, Chap 79) enumerates different colors and varieties of cows. The characteristics of various cows and bulls are also enumerated in the *Smṛtis* in the context of gifting cattle for various occasions or their use in agricultural and sacrificial rites. Among these *Smṛtis*, chiefly the *Parāśarasmṛti* [Chap. IX, *Gosevopadarśanam*] and *Bṛhatparāśarasmṛti*<sup>35</sup> [Chap. V and Chap. X] are well discussed in literature<sup>36</sup> and not elaborated in present context. The *Parāśarasmṛti* and *Nāradasmṛti* give several interesting features of tending cows. Since ancient times, there were elaborate rituals associated with taming and grazing of bulls. These rituals have been documented in recent literature<sup>37</sup>. The rites for welfare of cows as enunciated in Vedic *Sūtra* literature have also been described<sup>38</sup>. The *Smṛtis* add certain interesting features to these rituals. The *Parāśarasmṛti* gives different expiations for hitting or killing a cow that are enumerated in **Table 5** and enlisted in the same text [Chap.9]. The *Parāśarasmṛti* [IX.33-34] and *Uttara Āṅgirasasmṛti* [X. 5-6] interestingly enlist the ropes that are to be used for cattle. They must not be made of coconut fibers, flax or hemp, hair, *Muṣja* grass, bark of a tree or iron chains. Ropes made of fibers of husk, *Kuśa* grass should be used with beast's face turned to the south. Similar expiations for killing of cows are also given in the *Āpastambasmṛti*<sup>39</sup> [Chap. I],

*Laghuśāṅkhasmṛti*<sup>40</sup> [I.50-58], *Vasiṣṭhasmṛti*<sup>41</sup> [XXI.9-20], *Dālabhyasmṛti*<sup>42</sup> [91-110]. The merits of donating cows and bulls are upheld by the *Bṛhaspati smṛti*<sup>43</sup> [18-25], *Gautamasmṛti*, *Samvartasmṛti*<sup>44</sup> [*Dānaphalamahatva-varṇanam*, 71-80] and *Kapilasmṛti*<sup>45</sup> [*Nānāvidhadānaprakaraṇam*, 887-890].

**Table 5 : *Parāśarasmṛti* on expiations on harming, hitting, injuring or killing cows and bulls**

Action performed	Explanation
Killed by an instrument larger then a stick	Twice the expiation
Bull hit by stick, falls down, gets up and walks few steps or eats mouthful, drinks water and dies	No expiation if affected by disease
Hit with stone or stick breaking its horn	Quarter penance by shaving hair all over limbs and gift pair of clothes
Fracturing a bone	Two quarter penance by shaving beard and donate a vessel made of bronze
Injury to the ear	Three quarters - penance by shaving all fair except coronal lock and gifting a bull
Death is caused by hitting	Shaving all hair including coronal locks and donating a couple of cattle
On breaking a horn, bone, spine about the waist if it lines for next 6 months	No penance
Bulls is unduly burnt on occasion of cauterizing injured part	Quarter of penance
Bull loaded beyond his strength	Two quarters penance
Death caused by piece of wood	<i>Santāpana Vrata</i>
Death caused by a clod	<i>Prājāpatya</i> penance
Death by stone	<i>Taptakṛcchra</i>
Death by cutting instrument	<i>Atikṛcchra</i>
Death in a well, embankment or tank	No expiation

Confined cows killed by tigers, snakes, burnt to death or killed by lightning	No expiation
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The *Devalasmṛti*<sup>46</sup> [*Prāyaścittavarṇanam*.61-64], in the context of describing expiations for contact with *Mlecchas* gives the merits of *Paṣcagavya* (five products of cow) enlisting the deities and the color of cows from which they are to be obtained. These are tabulated in **Table 6** and enlisted in the text.

**Table 6 : Cow products in *Devalasmṛti***

Product of cow	Deity	Color of cow
Urine	<i>Varuṇa</i>	Copper colored
Dung	<i>Agni</i>	White
Milk	<i>Soma</i>	Golden hued
Curds	<i>Vāyu</i>	Bluish dark
Ghee	<i>Sūrya</i>	Black

The *Bṛhaspatismṛti* [7-9] describes the characteristics of hide of a cow (*Gocharmalakṣaṇa*) to be donated. The *Nāradasmṛti*<sup>47</sup> [XI.28] mentions that if grain be damaged by cow breaking a fence, then the herdsman is liable to punishment if he did not restrain them. Several other rules regarding punishment to herdsmen based on cattle straying into a field, or one who does not take care of cattle properly are mentioned in text [XI.31-37].

#### **[B] Other domestic and wild animals :**

The *Smṛtis* also give details about the hides of various animals. The *Manusmṛti* [XI.117-118] prescribes as punishment for a *brahmacharin* who commits sexual intercourse called *Avakīrṇin* and advocates expiation so as to cover the body with hide of an ass. The *Vasiṣṭhasmṛti* [XXVIII 18-22] states that he who has given as gift the skin of black antelope, hooves which are attached to the skin, navel adorned with gold, covering skin with *Til* seeds (*Sesamum indicum*) has given away the equivalent of earth with its mountains and forests. Several *Smṛtis* also advocate that among the five nailed animals only the following five (*paṣcapaṣcanakhā prāṇinaḥ*) can be

consumed namely *śalyaka* (hedgehog -*Hystrix indica*), *śaśa* (rabbit-*Lopus nigricellis*), *śvāvit* (porcupine - *Hystrix* species), *godhā* (Iguana - *Varanus* species), *khaḍga* (Rhinoceros - *Rhinoceros unicornis*), *Kacchapa* (tortoise -*Testude* species). The *Bṛhatparāśarasamṛti* [VIII. 160-174] gives the expiations for killing various wild animals.

### Expiations for bites of animals

The *Parāśarasamṛti* has some interesting observations regarding bites of certain animals these are enlisted in the text [V.1-9] and tabulated in **Table 7**.

### Views regarding sexuality with animals :

The *Parāśarasamṛti* [10.15-16] mentions methods of expiation for sexual intercourse with animals such as *Mahiṣa* (buffalo), *Uṣṭrī* (She camel), *Kapī* (female monkey), *Kharī* (Female Ass), *Sūkarī* (female boar) such as *Prājāpatyavrata*.

**Table 7. *Parāśarasamṛti* on Expiations for bites of animals**

Bites of animals	Expiation
Wolf, dog, jackal	Wash himself and recite <i>Gāyatri</i> verses in audibly
Dog	Wash himself with water touched by horns of cows or at confluence of two big rivers or visit the sea.
Woman bit by a dog, jackal or wolf	Observe rising stars and planets
Elderly Brahmin bit by dog and there is no Brahmin in the village	Circumambulate bulls and bathe
<i>Dvijā</i> who either leads a religious life or not bit by a dog	Number of Brahmins to be saluted by him cast their eyes on him.
Bit by dog while performing <i>Vrata</i>	Fast for 3 nights, swallow ghee. Then drink water touched by <i>Kuśa</i> grass and continue the rite
Brahmin versed in Vedas bit by dog	Wash himself with water touched by gold and drink ghee.

### Views regarding death of domestic and wild animals -

Some *Smṛtis* offer various views regarding death of animals. According to the *Parāśarasmṛti*, killing of cows and bulls is a sin. It however adds that the killing of animals may be caused by any of the following four way such as confinement, tethering, yoking and hitting –

रोधबन्धनयोवक्राणि घातश्चेति चतुर्विधम्।

*rodhabandhanayovaktrāṇi ghātaśceti caturvidham* [IX.4]

Elsewhere it states that death may be caused in six ways such as -

रोधनं बन्धनं चैव भारः प्रहरणं तथा। दुर्गप्रेरणयोक्त्रं च निमित्तानि वधस्य षट् ॥

*rodhanam bandhanam caiva bhāraḥ praharaṇam tathā |  
durgapreranaṇayoktram ca nimittāni vadhasyaṣaṭ* || [IX.31]

“Death may be caused by confining to a place, tying, yoking, forcing to carry heavy load, hitting and sending the animal to some inaccessible place after securely fastening it.”

The *Parāśarasmṛti* [XI.38-45] also mentions that if a Brahmin sees a carcass of a dog, jackal or monkey that has fallen into a well; or the carcass of a cow, a Hog/boar, ass, camel, Gavaya, elephant, peacock, rhinoceros, tiger, bear or lion and if the dead body sinks into the well or reservoir, he becomes pure by fasting for three nights. In case of a *Kṣatriya*, he becomes pure by two day's fast, a *Vaiśya* by fasting for one day and a *Śūdra* by fasting for one night. The *Parāśarasmṛti* [IX.50] also mentions about blood tests so as to ascertain how a cow has been killed –

हते तु रुधिरं दृश्यं व्याधिं ग्रस्तः कृशो भवेत् लाला भवति दष्टेष्वेवामन्वेषणं भवेत् ॥

*hate tu rudhiram drśyam vyādhiḥ grastah kṛśobhavet lālā bhavati  
daṣṭeṣvevamanveṣaṇam bhavet* ||

“By seeing the blood, it is inferred that a cow has been killed; leanness shows disease; saliva around the teeth indicates bite of some animal as the cause of death, injuries other than death inferred by fact that animal is averse to take its food”.

Thus, the *Smṛtis* flourish various aspects of animals and birds that have been discussed as above.

## CONCLUSIONS

The importance of animals and animal products are available from ancient times as evident in Vedic texts, epics, *Kāvya*s, *Tantra* literature and so on. *Smṛti* literature also reflects several aspects of fauna. Several *Smṛtis* mention the use of flesh of animals and birds as a dietary article in *Śrāddha* rites that give satisfaction to the manes (*Pitṛs*). These views need to be studied with regard to earlier texts of the Vedic period such as the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* wherein a large number of animals and birds are mentioned in the sacrificial rites such as *Aśvamedha Yajña*. This will give us an insight regarding to the origins of some animals and views shared by our ancestors. The *Smṛtis* also share views of *Garuḍa Purāṇa* and other *Purāṇic* texts regarding the law of transmigration to several faunal species based on their actions. This is evident from the *Manusmṛti*, *Parāśarasmṛti*, *Gautamasmṛti*, *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, *Śātātāpasmṛti*, *Viṣṇusmṛti* and other texts which advocate various expiatory rites for killing of certain animals. It may be interesting to note that even through hunting was practiced from ancient times, there were strict rules codified in the *Dharmaśāstras* regarding to expiations that need to be done to minimize the sin caused by killing an animal. Such views are expressed by the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*. Even the sins of stealing, killing and other such actions made one to get reborn as various species. Almost all *Smṛtis* extensively glorify the cow in all aspects that one finds rich information regarding them in these texts. Interestingly some aspects of examining dead animals,

pregnancy conditions and expiations for sexual intercourse of humans with animals are mentioned in *Parāśarasmṛti*. In view of the recent inhuman treatment of animals in modern world, *Smṛtis* give several laws to protect animals that can be advocated into the present system. Such laws given by *Nāradasmṛti* and *Bṛhaspatismṛti* can also be made stricter by grouping modern laws along with them. Interdisciplinary research of fauna in *Smṛti* texts with other previous literature as well as later texts such as the *Mṛgapaṅkṣīśāstra*<sup>48</sup> of Haṁsadeva may allow one to ascertain the history of such observations and date them probably based on modern sciences. This will provide a complete Zoological Knowledge possessed by ancient Indians.

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