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The Mythological and Philosophical Significance of Cattle in Nepal: An Exploration of Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Prof. Mukund Ballabh Kalauni, PhD

Former Dean, FoHSS, Far Western University

Email: mukundkalauni@gmail.com

Abstract

In Eastern philosophy and spirituality, cattle have held a supreme position, which is not incidental but rather rooted in the profound medicinal properties attributed to them by ancient sages. However, in recent times, particularly in Nepal, it has been observed that people, driven by self-interest, exploit cattle for their milk and then abandon them once they become weak or unproductive. This issue has become particularly acute in Western Nepal, emerging as a significant social problem. On one hand, cattle are suffering, and on the other, individuals are losing their lives in road accidents caused by stray cattle. This research paper aims to present an in-depth study of the current status of cattle in Nepal and its impact on religious and agricultural heritage. It also seeks to raise awareness about the mythological and philosophical significance of cattle, discuss their agricultural importance, and highlight the scientific benefits derived from them. While much has been written about cattle and their importance, there is a noticeable lack of research-based studies that encompass their mythological, philosophical, agricultural, and scientific significance. This paper fills that gap by providing a comprehensive exploration of these aspects. The study employs historical research methods, library research techniques, and comparative analysis. It identifies the issue of stray cattle as not only a symbol of the decline of indigenous development principles but also a reflection of the erosion of human values. While modern agricultural tools are necessary for development, this should not come at the expense of cultural preservation. Unfortunately, in Nepal, modernization has led to the destruction of cattle, which are traditionally considered protectors of health and wealth. This is a matter of grave concern.

The paper is primarily based on secondary data from various books, journals, and other sources, and is qualitative in nature. Additionally, the views of individuals involved in cattle conservation and farmers practicing cattle rearing have been incorporated to provide primary insights. The paper underscores the necessity of preserving cattle, whose by-products, such as ghee, milk, urine, and dung, are vital for human life and the environment, and form the foundation of agriculture.

Keywords: Culture, Scientific, Social, Agricultural, Cow Urine

Introduction

The inspiration for writing this paper stems from the alarming situation observed in western Nepal, where cows and oxen are being abandoned on the streets, with such acts of cruelty going unpunished by both the government and society. The widespread neglect and mistreatment of cattle have become a significant concern, revealing a lack of serious attention from society toward this issue. While legal measures may address some aspects of the problem, raising public awareness is crucial, prompting the need for this study.

In Nepal, cows are not merely considered the national animal but are deeply intertwined with religious, cultural, and agricultural life. The beliefs and traditions surrounding cows contribute significantly to agricultural productivity, religious practices, and human health. However, modernity and material development have led to a growing indifference towards traditional knowledge and cultural heritage, resulting in a steady decline in the condition of cows. This deterioration not only signals the erosion of religious and cultural values but at the same time reflects a broader degradation of human consciousness and social values.

Cows have been revered in Nepal for centuries as sacred animals, symbolizing wealth, health, and prosperity in religious texts. Despite this, the current situation is dire, with many cows found abandoned on streets, markets, and other public spaces. This alarming condition highlights the destruction of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage and underscores the erosion of human values. While modern agricultural tools have increased production, they have also displaced traditional farming practices related to cattle, severely impacting Nepal's religious, cultural, and agricultural heritage. Why are the government, the public, and farmers remaining blind to this, and why is the cow, despite providing nourishment through milk and dairy products and fertilizer and energy through dung and urine, being neglected? This is the issue of today at large to be found out in the society and in the nation.

The primary objectives of this research paper are to: conduct an in-depth study of the current status of cattle in Nepal and its impact on religious, cultural, and agricultural life, highlight the deteriorating condition of cows and reveal the effects on religious, cultural, and agricultural practices, study the mythological and philosophical beliefs related to cows to raise awareness about their significance, discuss the scientific benefits derived from cows, emphasizing their positive influence on human health, agricultural productivity, and the environment.

The problem addressed in this research arises from the increasing abandonment and neglect of cows and oxen in Nepal, particularly in the western regions. This issue represents a significant social problem, as these animals, once central to religious, cultural, and agricultural life, are now left to suffer on the streets. The decline in religious and cultural heritage, coupled with the impact of modern agricultural practices, has created serious challenges for the conservation of cows. The plight of these animals is not just a sign of cultural and religious decline but also symbolizes the degradation of human values and consciousness. This research seeks to explore these issues comprehensively, aiming to raise awareness and propose solutions for the preservation of cattle in Nepal. This research employs a qualitative study method, utilizing both secondary and primary data. Secondary data was gathered through an extensive review of various books, journals, research papers, and other sources, focusing on the religious, cultural, and agricultural significance of cows. This includes studies related to cows from mythological texts, religious scriptures, and their contributions to agricultural development.

Methods and Materials

To collect primary data, interviews were conducted with individuals involved in cow conservation campaigns, cattle-keeping farmers, and others directly related to cows, providing insights into the current status of cows, the challenges in their conservation, and potential solutions. Additionally, the scientific basis of the contributions of cow-derived products such as ghee, milk, urine, and dung to agricultural production and human life was analyzed. This study aims to underscore the importance of cows not only in religious and cultural contexts but also from scientific and environmental perspectives, highlighting the urgent need for their conservation in Nepal.

Results and Discussion

The existence of cows has paralleled that of humans in this world. In Hindu-majority Nepal, where cows provide us with nutritious substances like milk, ghee, butter, yogurt, and cheese, their recent mistreatment has raised serious concerns. The behavior of selfish individuals who exploit and abuse

cows, only to abandon them on the streets afterward, should prompt all conscious and educated people to seriously reflect on this issue. It is now time to raise awareness about the proper significance of cows and to take action. Social organizations and individuals engaged in sensitive, intellectual discourse on the multidimensional importance of cows must now launch a campaign for cow protection. The importance of cows is extensively discussed in the Vedas, Puranas, and traditions. In fact, Hindu festivals and cultural events are considered incomplete without the inclusion of cow-related rituals. However, the current reality is starkly different.

In the *Rigveda*, cows hold a highly revered and symbolic position. They are considered sacred and are associated with wealth, prosperity, and divine favor. Some key references to cows in the *Rigveda* include:

सूयवसाद्भगवती हि भूया अथो वयं भगवन्तः स्याम । अद्धि तृणमघ्न्ये विश्वदानीं पिब शुद्धमुदकमाचरन्ती ॥ (Luitel, p.178, Rigveda, 1.164.40).

"O venerable Mother Cow! You are blessed by consuming highly nutritious grass. May we too be fortunate alongside you. Roam freely everywhere, consuming pure grass and water." This hymn compares the dawn to a cow, praising her for bringing light and dispelling darkness".

गौरीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी। अष्यपदी नवपदी बभूवुषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन् (Luitel, p.179, Rigveda 1.164.41).

"O revered Mother Cow! You are fortunate to eat highly nutritious grass. Along with you, may we also be blessed with fortune. May you roam freely, consuming pure grass and water everywhere."

Thus, cows in the *Rigveda* are not only seen as vital to the economy and daily life but are also imbued with spiritual significance. They are respected as symbols of life, nourishment, and the cosmic order.

The ancient belief that "Cows are the mothers of the world" (Gavo Vishvasya Matarah) persists in *Sanatan Dharma*. The *Rigveda* praises cows, declaring *Gavobhagah*, meaning cows are wealth. In ancient times, the more cows one owned, the wealthier and more prosperous they were considered. The destruction of a creature like the cow, along with other animals, would lead to the destruction of the people of that country (Himal Drishti, 2073, p. 18).

The protection of cows has become a matter of national concern. Reflection on the importance of cows is essential as it is intertwined with our agriculture, economy, culture, and spirituality. Reports of brutal atrocities against cows, which are protectors of human welfare, are increasingly appearing in the media. One article state, "The government has opened a vulture conservation center in a place called Hathithala in Champapur, which falls within the Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve. A nearby animal protection center also houses many stray, orphaned cows and calves from Bedkot Municipality, Bhimdatta Municipality of Kanchanpur district, Krishnapur Municipality, and other areas. However, these cows are dying in horrific ways due to lack of care, food, and water, while their meat is being fed to the vultures as part of the conservation effort. The most tragic aspect is that no one seems to care when these sick cows are attacked by dogs and wild animals. Killing cows to protect vultures is not only a heinous crime but also an attack on the entire Vedic culture and the hopes of more than one and a half billion Hindus" (Himal Drishti, 2074, p. 16).

The benefits of cows are regarded beneficial for the environment, science, Ayurveda, agriculture, and society. Cows are considered a unique gift of nature to humanity and a reservoir of milk. Among the benefits obtained from cows, they are seen as natural factories for producing organic fertilizer, pest control agents, power generators without capital, and an inexhaustible source of *Panchagavya* medicines. Some scientifically proven benefits include cows releasing oxygen when they exhale, as observed by German agricultural scientists Dr. Julie Ras and Dr. Buk. Additionally, cows emit a continuous aroma of guggul, which helps eliminate pollution. Spraying cow dung slurry on waste and garbage from cities can help prevent foul odors and pollution. Cow milk contains all the essential elements required by the human body. According to scientists, cow milk is rich in eight types of proteins, six types of vitamins, 21 types of amino acids, 11 types of fatty acids, 25 types of minerals, 16 types of nitrogen, four types of phosphorus, two types of sugars, carbohydrates, and lactose. Moreover, the cerebrospinal substances present in cow milk, including strontium for brain and memory development, and MDGI protein, which helps prevent the entry of cancer into blood cells, are some of its remarkable benefits" (Himal Drishti, 2074, p. 17). Cow milk helps regulate cholesterol and does not increase it.

Among all milk-producing quadruped animals, the cow is the only animal with a large intestine that is 180 feet long. This allows the cow to convert the grass it consumes into a substance called carotene, which is ten times more abundant in cow milk than in buffalo milk. Carotene is converted into vitamin A, essential for eyesight. The cow has a "Suryaketu" nerve in its spine, which becomes active in sunlight. This is why cows prefer to stay in sunlight. When the Suryaketu nerve is activated,

a golden substance is produced, which gives cow milk its yellowish color. This carotene substance is considered a universal cure and antidote. When cow ghee is mixed with rice and offered in a sacred fire, it produces an important gas called ethylene oxide, which is antibacterial and contributes to environmental purification. It is also useful in making life-saving medicines, including those used in operation theaters today. Cow urine contains 24 chemicals, and cow dung contains 16 minerals, including iron, calcium, phosphorus, and other minerals, as well as carbonic acid, potash, and lactose. The nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, iron, zinc, manganese, copper, and boron found in cow dung can be used to produce various medicines, which are useful for treating more than 100 diseases. *Panchagavya* (a mixture of cow milk, curd, ghee, dung, and urine) can be used to produce 32 types of medicines. Bringing *Panchagavya Ayurveda* and cow-based agriculture into practice will create employment in villages across the country, and the resulting employment will contribute to environmental and population security. Five types of fertilizers can be produced from cow dung, including organic, NADEP compost, vermicompost, bio-dynamic (horn manure), and others. Using the NADEP compost method, 30 kg of compost can be prepared from 1 kg of cow dung for agricultural purposes (data collected from Ashtha TV of Swami Ramdev; discourses in several times).

But I think that cow urine does contain several chemicals, including nitrogen, sulfur, and potassium. Some studies have identified bioactive compounds in cow urine, but the exact number of "24 chemicals" may not be universally agreed upon. Cow dung does indeed contain several minerals such as nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, iron, and calcium. It is widely used in organic agriculture due to its high nutrient content. Cow dung and cow urine have been used traditionally in some cultures for medicinal purposes, including in Ayurveda. However, claims about their effectiveness in treating over 100 diseases or specific health benefits often lack rigorous scientific validation. More research is needed to support these broader claims. *Panchagavya*, a mixture of cow products (milk, curd, ghee, dung, and urine), is traditionally used in Ayurveda and for organic farming. While it is believed to have certain health benefits, the scientific basis for the claim of producing "32 types of medicines" is not clear and might not be universally accepted without proper research backing it. The use of cow dung in various forms, including NADEP compost, vermicompost, and bio-dynamic compost, is scientifically validated for its effectiveness in organic farming. The claim that 30 kg of compost can be prepared from 1 kg of cow dung using the NADEP method is feasible, as this process involves adding other organic materials and microbial decomposition. Promoting cow-based agriculture and *Panchagavya* practices could create rural employment opportunities, particularly in organic farming and sustainable agriculture. These practices also support environmental sustainability by reducing chemical fertilizer use and enhancing soil health.

In summary, while some claims in the statement are grounded in traditional knowledge and supported by scientific evidence (particularly in agriculture), others, especially those related to medical treatments and specific chemical contents, require more scientific validation.

There is no doubt that this method will be successful in producing the necessary fertilizer for organic farming in our country. Indigenous cow breeds, which are essential for human and agricultural needs, are gradually nearing extinction. Failure to preserve these breeds in time would be a significant loss for our country.

According to a World Health Organization report, the use of food, fruits, water, and vegetables contaminated with chemical fertilizers and pesticides is causing 21 times more toxins to enter the milk of mothers, which is a grave situation. Therefore, by protecting local breeds of cows, we can move towards health, environmental, and land preservation, as well as economic prosperity. Let's pledge to protect, rear, and conserve cows and become cow protectors (Himal Drishti, 2074, Chaitra, Year 16, Issue 6, p. 17). To extract more milk and sell it, dairy farmers employ various methods. The first thing these morally corrupt individuals do is take a calf that is not even seven days old and abandon it in a remote and desolate place. Deprived of its mother's milk, we witness the pitiful condition of such calves everywhere today. The calf cries on one side, and the cow cries on the other, while the selfish farmer ties the cow's legs and extracts milk for profit. This is a shameful and sinful way of life, ready to deprive another being of its nourishment. When they see no further benefit from an old cow, they drive it away to temples like Pashupatinath or some forest to die alone. Some even sell the cow to butchers for financial gain. Ironically, those who sell their cows to butchers are often the same people who, during Tihar, don the guise of religious devotees and worship the cow during Laxmi Puja, Cow Puja, and Govardhan Puja. These same heartless individuals hope to cross the mythical river of *Vaitarani* by donating a cow when they are on their deathbed (Himal Drishti, 2074, Kartik, Year 16, Issue 3, p. 23).

In today's context, scientific research is increasingly establishing that cow ghee, milk, buttermilk, cow dung, and other cow-related products are vital for human life and the environment. Facts are emerging that medicine for deadly diseases like HIV/AIDS can be derived from cows. The superiority of cow's milk is becoming more evident today. Fertilizer made from cow dung and urine has not only led to the production of nourishing grains, fruits, and vegetables, but the use of this fertilizer has also begun to restore the fertility of the soil, which had been diminished by the use of chemicals. Despite all this, human selfishness, the thirst for wealth, greed, and attachment have diverted people from recognizing these virtues of cows. As a result, the revered cow species is being oppressed and neglected by us.

Hindu religion and culture are among the oldest in the world, and they are based on scientific principles. The main foundation of Hindu religious texts has been the oral tradition, but due to the attacks by Westerners on written materials, the theft of scientific facts, and the distortion of certain narratives, the true scientific significance of the cow has been overshadowed. The term "Gau" (cow) has always been revered in Sanatan Dharma since ancient times. Our sages have extensively discussed the Kamadhenu cow, and this is not just a myth but a truth. Not only milk, but cow urine has also been confirmed by scientists to be extremely useful. They have proven that cow urine is a powerful antibiotic medicine. Today, we see a shortage of Patanjali's "Godhan Ark" in the market, even though thousands of liters are produced in a single day. This indicates the high demand for cow urine. Both cow urine and milk possess incredible disease-curing powers. Cow's milk contains a high amount of Omega-3, which is used to prepare effective medicines for various diseases in modern medicine.

A cow benefits everyone not only during its lifetime but also after its death. The Vedas mention cow rearing, and science has stated that cow's milk can be used as an Ayurvedic medicine. As mentioned earlier, Omega-3 has become widely popular in capsule form, and a significant business has developed around it. In ancient times, only natural and good fats were found in cow's milk. According to modern science, Omega-3 increases DHA levels, which enhances human brain function and eyesight. EFA (Essential Fatty Acids) includes two elements, Omega-3 and Omega-6. When these two elements are obtained through balanced nutrition, the human brain becomes sharp and balanced. The sages used to rear cows, consume cow ghee and milk, and thus acquire Vedic knowledge, philosophy, and wisdom, spreading the light of knowledge to the world. Cow ghee is considered essential for good health; Swami Ramdev claims that it can be used to clear a blocked nose (Yog Sandesh, 2016, December, Year 14, Issue 4, p. 58).

Importance of Cow's Milk

Similarly, the milk from foreign breeds of cows, as opposed to indigenous or local breeds, contains a harmful toxin called BCM-7. To authentically determine which cow belongs to an indigenous local breed, DNA testing is conducted. One of the reasons behind the widespread prevalence of diabetes today is the presence of BCM-7 in A1 milk. It has been established that diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes are directly related to A1 milk containing BCM-7. Mental diseases that occur in old age are now being linked to the consumption of A1 milk during childhood, while the A2 element found in local breeds of cows is considered beneficial for health. Around the world, the presence of BCM-7 in A1 milk is considered a cause of various diseases, which, as

mentioned above, is found in the milk of foreign cows. Therefore, we need to conserve our own indigenous cows, enhance their reproductive capacity, and promote their usefulness. It's concerning that A1 milk, found in foreign cows like Jersey, Holstein, and others, is spreading worldwide due to their higher milk production (Yog Sandesh, 2016, December, Year 14, Issue 4, p. 58).

Benefits of Cow Urine

Even after a cow stops producing milk, it remains valuable to farmers. Cow urine and dung are not only highly useful for agricultural purposes, but they also offer some health benefits. By implementing appropriate technology and maintaining cleanliness, cow urine from healthy cows that graze on grass and herbs can be collected in clean containers and refined using modern equipment. Farmers and traders can earn economic benefits from the production and sale of cow urine, similar to the profits gained from milk. Swami Ramdev's Patanjali Trust collects thousands of liters of cow urine daily, which is used in Ayurvedic treatments for various diseases. Programs like Patanjali and similar initiatives have enabled farmers to benefit from cow urine production. This not only increases farmers' income but also contributes to the preservation of non-milk-producing cows. People are gaining both health benefits and economic advantages. The primary benefits of cow urine include its beneficial effects on the brain, intelligence, bile, and its ability to counteract phlegm and *vata dosha*.

Cow urine contains nearly all the elements necessary for health, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, almost all mineral elements, uric acid, carbonic acid, urea, vitamins A, B, C, D, lactose, enzymes, hormones, creatinine, and phenols. The phenols and copper (copper sulfate) present in cow urine give it antibacterial properties. Its chemical composition is highly sensitive. The number of hormones in the urine increases in pregnant cows, and the amount of lactose increases in milking cows. The quantity of cow urine decreases when fed dry grass and increases when fed green leafy vegetables.

Cow urine is particularly useful in the following conditions: Asthma or respiratory diseases are often severe and sometimes untreatable. For treatment, 10 milliliters of purified cow urine, 40 milliliters of water, and two pinches of turmeric should be consumed. For filariasis or elephantiasis, consuming 20-25 milliliters of cow urine on an empty stomach every morning for 40 days is beneficial. In digestive diseases, soaking a small *harro* (*Haritaki*) in cow urine for 24 hours, then roasting it in cow ghee and making a powder, helps relieve digestive ailments when taken 5 to 10 grams after meals in the afternoon and evening. In jaundice, consuming fresh cow urine on an empty stomach for 21 to 41 days is beneficial. For constipation and related disorders, mixing 30 milliliters of cow

urine with a little rock salt and consuming it provides relief (Yog Sandesh, 2016, December, Year 14, Issue 4, p. 58).

Similarly, cow urine is beneficial in treating conditions like arthritis, joint pain, tuberculosis, and more. A cancer patient from Gobariya, Mahendranagar, reported that his cancer was cured after consistently consuming cow urine morning and evening for six months. Since then, I have personally been taking four tablespoons of Patanjali's *godhan ark* mixed with an equal amount of water, and I have experienced significant relief from issues like colds, joint pain, and allergies. There may be some discomfort when first starting the consumption, but over time it becomes a habit and naturally proves to be beneficial. For overweight individuals, consuming 10 milliliters of cow urine mixed with half a lemon and two tablespoons of honey in lukewarm water on an empty stomach in the morning can help reduce body fat. In this way, cow urine possesses numerous medicinal properties. Compared to artificial antibiotic drugs, natural antibiotic cow urine offers health protection, promotes cow conservation, and provides economic benefits to farmers (Himal Drishti, Year 15, Issue 7, 2073, Falgun, p. 18).

Cow urine from cows that roam in the forest is extremely effective. Such cows consume various types of herbs, graze on grass like *dubo* as they desire, get exercise from roaming, drink clean water, and are therefore very healthy. Urine from an ox can also be used, as there is no difference in its qualities. When cow urine is stored in a clay pot, it never spoils. Cow urine is considered as pure as the water of the Ganges; it neither spoils nor allows the growth of bacteria. It is important to ensure that the cow is of a local breed, meaning it should be indigenous. The urine of cows that are crossbred with foreign breeds does not provide the same benefits. The recommended amount is 25 grams of cow urine per day, which should be consumed in the morning on an empty stomach, filtered through cloth. For children, half the amount is sufficient. Consuming cow urine cleanses the intestines and slows the aging process. It has incredible antibacterial properties that destroy bacteria-causing diseases. It also helps in maintaining black hair.

Cow urine is beneficial for treating conditions ranging from common illnesses to severe diseases. It is considered a universal remedy for all diseases, making the body healthy when consumed. It is a destroyer of diseases and a provider of health. The cow itself is like a pharmacy—a mother and a life-giver. By seeking refuge in the cow, one can gain all benefits (Himal Drishti, 2073, Falgun, p. 18). Cow urine from any age of cow is considered suitable, but urine from a sick cow or one that has recently calved is considered unhealthy (Himal Drishti, 2073, Falgun, p. 18).

It has also been proven that cow urine can be used as an alternative energy source through batteries. A battery powered by 400 grams of cow urine can light a 3-watt bulb for 400 hours. A 12-volt "Go-Jyoti Battery" can even charge a mobile phone. This battery was developed at a cowshed in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India. It does not require charging with electricity. All this has been made possible by the efforts of Purushottam Tosniwal, the General Secretary of Kanpur Gaushala. According to Tosniwal, this could become an alternative source of electricity. Tosniwal asserts that batteries charged with electricity last only 5-6 hours, while the Go-Jyoti Battery powered by 400 grams of cow urine lasts for 400 hours (Himal Drishti, 2075, Baishakh, p. 14). In Hindu culture, the significance of the cow surpasses even that of the Gayatri Mantra and the Ganga River. The practice of the Gayatri Mantra requires intense austerity, and even bathing in the Ganga involves some degree of renunciation. However, out of ignorance, some people consider the cow to be just an ordinary animal and neglect it. The cow is disrespected, and its killing is taking place. People fail to recognize the value of the cow, which is beneficial to their well-being. Here is a set of citations and full references tailored to the given text:

Without mental purity, neither spiritual practice nor material happiness can be achieved. The mind is the root of all human actions, and the cow is a primary means for purifying the mind. Human life is inherently connected to the animal world, and among animals, the divine cow is the cornerstone of human existence. Both cows and oxen are considered divine animals (Sharma, 2016).

In the Far Western Province of Nepal, even today, it is customary to ask, "Is there milk available?" when exchanging greetings during visits. In rural areas, it is still common for every household to keep cows. The practice of gifting a cow, known as *Godaan*, during weddings, religious rituals, and auspicious occasions remains prevalent in society (Bhandari, 2018). In the hilly regions, it is still customary to have a traditional cowshed or gaushala attached to one's residence, something unimaginable in Western countries. Before meals, it is customary to set aside a portion called *Gogross* for the cow. In the "Shraddha" rituals, cow worship is mandatory. In Hindu society, the presence of a cow is essential in all rites and ceremonies, from birth to death (Pandey, 2020).

Panchagavya, a sacred combination of five products derived from the cow—milk, yogurt, ghee, urine, and dung—is considered extremely pure and important from religious, cultural, and medicinal perspectives (Joshi, 2017). *Panchagavya* is regarded as a symbol of purity and sanctification in religious rituals. It is believed that its use in ceremonies such as *yajna*, *puja*, *havan*, and other religious practices enhances purity. Scriptures mention that consuming and using *Panchagavya* can atone for various sins. It is used for purification purposes (Sharma, 2016). In Hinduism, the cow is

revered as a mother, and the use of *Panchagavya* reinforces the importance and sanctity of the cow. Utilizing cow products fosters a sense of respect and protection towards cows in society (Bhandari, 2018). In the Ayurvedic system of medicine, it is believed to have medicinal properties that enhance the body's immunity, detoxify the system, and improve both mental and physical health (Joshi, 2017). From an environmental perspective, it is used as a fertilizer in organic farming, enhancing soil fertility and helping to replace harmful chemical fertilizers (Pandey, 2020). Thus, Cow and cow products all elements are very useful in the sense of religious and health basis.

Panchagavya has been described as follows:

पवित्रं व रसायनं च पश्यं च बलबुद्धिकृत् स्यात् ।

आयुःप्रदं रक्तविकारहारि निदोषहृद्गोविषापहम् ।

"It (the cow) is pure and also a remedy (rasāyana). Observing it, one gains strength and intellect. It bestows longevity, removes disorders of the blood, and eliminates toxins and diseases of the heart."

This verse emphasizes the beneficial qualities of cows, reflecting their revered status in traditional thought. This shloka means that *Panchagavya* is a pure and medicinal substance that increases the body's strength and intellect. It extends lifespan, cures blood disorders, and is effective against heart disease and toxins. *Panchagavya*, a mixture of five substances derived from local cows—milk, curd, ghee, urine, and dung—is considered an extremely sacred medicine. Its health-promoting qualities make it useful for both the sick and the healthy. It provides joy to the heart, enhances strength and intellect, increases lifespan, cures blood disorders, balances the three doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) in the body, cures heart-related disorders, and cleanses the body by removing toxic substances.

Milk, one of the components of *Panchagavya*, is considered nectar. In many countries, including Nepal, people consume milk daily. Ayurveda also describes many benefits of milk (Himal Drishti, 2078, Shrawan, p. 26).

In the mixture known as *panchamrit* (a combination of five nectars), one of the ingredients is cow's ghee. Thus, ghee from local cows is considered a nectar-like element. Research has shown that offering cow's ghee and rice into the fire during a Havan produces important gases such as ethylene oxide, propylene oxide, and formaldehyde. Ethylene oxide gas is one of the most widely used bactericidal gases today, employed in everything from operating theatres to the production of life-

saving medicines. Scientists also consider propylene oxide gas as a basis for artificial rain. Burning 100 grams of cow's ghee during a Havan ritual results in the production of approximately one ton of fresh oxygen in the atmosphere. This is why there is a tradition of lighting lamps with cow's ghee in temples and performing Yagnas during religious ceremonies. It also has the capacity to remove nuclear radiation from the environment (Shirovich, 1992).

Ancient civilized Hindus also knew how to raise animals. Cows were revered in their eyes. Because of that, the four *varnave chanted 'Mata Rudranan Duhita Vasoonaan...'*. He used to extract milk from cows. Bullocks were collected for farming. How could the basic agriculture of the nation be in the agricultural country without giving the cow equal status as a mother? In that case, it is possible that the mind, etc., and all the agricultural tools came from animals. At that time there was a place for cows in an orderly manner. Apart from this, bullocks were used for ploughing, which is considered as the main part of agriculture. Other works were used for pulling 'carts'. In this way, it can be understood that the cow has an indelible mark even in the Vedic era, as milk, curd, ghee etc. nourish people and the agricultural tool oxen also (Prapanacharya S.p.53)

According to Ayurveda experts, applying two drops of cow's ghee in both nostrils in the evening and massaging cow's ghee on the navel and soles of the feet before sleeping at night can induce deep sleep in patients suffering from insomnia. Cow's ghee has an extraordinary ability to neutralize the harmful effects of radioactive radiation in the human body. Applying two drops of ghee in the nostrils every morning and evening can cure migraines, prevent allergies, and treat skin diseases (Himal Drishti, 2074 B.S., Jestha, p. 16). The cow is not only revered as a cultural symbol but also holds significant economic, philosophical, Ayurvedic, and social importance. Nepal, an agrarian country, faces poverty partly due to the exploitation and abandonment of cows. Thousands of cows have been injured or killed, highlighting the urgent need for better management and conservation of indigenous cows. Cow dung can be used to produce manure and biogas, and cow urine can be processed for various uses. Instead of relying on imported fertilizers, conserving and utilizing indigenous cows could provide sustainable solutions.

The cow is not only revered as a cultural symbol but also holds significant economic, philosophical, Ayurvedic, and social importance. Nepal, an agrarian country, faces poverty partly due to the exploitation and abandonment of cows. Thousands of cows have been injured or killed, highlighting the urgent need for better management and conservation of indigenous cows. Cow dung can be used to produce manure and biogas, and cow urine can be processed for various uses. Instead of relying on imported fertilizers, conserving and utilizing indigenous cows could provide sustainable solutions (Giri, 2020).

In a society marked by urban superficiality, materialism, and insensitivity, it is crucial to implement moral education, protect resources, and manage them effectively. Local and provincial governments should focus on providing affordable cattle feed, establishing pastures, managing livestock insurance, and offering financial support to farmers. The recent outbreak of lumpy skin disease, which has led to significant losses in milk production and the death of many cows, underscores the need for governmental and social intervention. Despite occasional discussions about stray cattle issues, political concerns often overshadow these pressing economic, religious, and social matters.

According to Ayurveda experts, applying two drops of cow's ghee in both nostrils in the evening and massaging cow's ghee on the navel and soles of the feet before sleeping can induce deep sleep in patients suffering from insomnia. Cow's ghee is noted for its ability to neutralize the harmful effects of radioactive radiation in the human body. Applying two drops of ghee in the nostrils every morning and evening can help cure migraines, prevent allergies, and treat skin diseases (Himal Drishti, 2074 B.S., Jestha, p. 16) and cow urine can be processed for various purposes. Instead of relying on imported fertilizers, utilizing and conserving indigenous cows could offer sustainable solutions.

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Conserving and promoting cows could enhance Nepal's economic and spiritual well-being, fostering a more prosperous and harmonious society. Respect for cows, integral to rituals and cultural practices, reflects a broader reverence for life and tradition. However, the irony of searching for and feeding abandoned cows as a religious duty while neglecting their care in practice points to a troubling disconnect between religious values and societal actions, underscoring a broader crisis of cultural and moral integrity.

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We have been discussing the significance of cow (*Govansh*) but our discussion will be incomplete until we discuss on the condition of abandoned cows and other animals on the road. The problems caused by stray cows and oxen and their solutions in Far Western Nepal may be discussed as follows:

Stray cattle, particularly cows and oxen, have led to significant challenges in the Far Western region of Nepal. These include damage to crops, road accidents, and environmental degradation. Effective management and policies to rehabilitate stray cattle are urgently needed (Shrestha, 2018). The issue of stray cattle in rural Nepal, including the Far Western region, has worsened due to a lack of proper infrastructure and animal shelters. Community-based initiatives and local government involvement are essential in addressing the growing number of stray cows and oxen (Joshi & Bista, 2019). In Far Western Nepal, the abandonment of cows and oxen has led to both economic and social problems. Solutions such as promoting cow sanctuaries and utilizing cow dung for biogas production can mitigate these challenges (Thapa, 2020).

The cow is revered not only as a cultural symbol but also for its significant economic, philosophical, Ayurvedic, and social importance. In Nepal, an agrarian country, poverty is partly attributed to the exploitation and abandonment of cows. Thousands of cows have been injured or killed, highlighting the urgent need for improved management and conservation of indigenous cows. Cow dung can be used to produce manure and biogas, and cow urine can be processed for various purposes. Instead of relying on imported fertilizers, utilizing and conserving indigenous cows could offer sustainable solutions.

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Conclusion

Historically, cows have coexisted with humans, particularly in Hindu-majority Nepal, where they have long provided essential dairy products. However, the recent exploitation and abandonment of cattle underscore an alarming trend that demands immediate action. The Rigveda portrays cows as symbols of life and prosperity, and their mistreatment threatens not only animal welfare but also Nepal's cultural and religious heritage. Cases of cruelty, such as their use in vulture conservation centers or trafficking, expose the disconnect between traditional values and current practices. While Nepal has legal provisions against cow slaughter, the lack of explicit recognition in the 2072 Constitution, along with socio-political challenges, complicates efforts to protect these revered animals. To restore balance, it is crucial to raise awareness of the spiritual, economic, and environmental significance of cattle, while promoting stronger policies and conservation measures that honor the deep-rooted cultural reverence for cows.

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