CHAPTER-IV

Distribution of animals

There was a wide distribution of animals in the days of fable literature. The jungles, forest and different water bodies were the natural habitats of a large variety of wild animals. Now their habitat has shrunk. Here, it is an attempt to examine the wide areas of India in which lions, tigers, elephants and other animals dwelt in those days.

The wild life of a country is a source of sport and enjoyment to its people. It gives healthy recreation to all classes, and is a constant attraction to visitors. It is also an asset which may vanish without reasonable efforts for its conservation. It is now admitted generally that the natural beauty of a country, its varied fauna and flora, are an asset to its people. It should be protected and preserved for their own advantage and for the advantage of future generations. India enjoys the privilege of processing a vast treasure in the form of wild birds and beasts of varied kinds. To live successfully a animals has to be able to withstand climatic and other physical conditions in its neighbourhood. These factors together make up its physical environment, as well as animate environment.

The ability to fly enables the birds to move from one habitat to another. They occur everywhere in the fields, forests, grasslands, mountains, marshes, deserts and waters which have become adorned with the colour and music of these most beautiful of all creatures. Despite their ability to fly some species are restricted to special regions occupying a definite Geographical region or a particular kind of habitat.
Kinds of Animals (Beast and Bird)

The animals that have their wide distribution in different parts of the Indian jungle can be categorised as beasts of prey or carnivorous and herbivorous animals on the basis of their food habits.

The beast of prey which depends upon flesh of lower animals include lion, tigers, wolf, fox, mongoose, jungle cat, leopard etc. They are generally carnivorous animals. On the other hand some animals living in the jungle depend upon grass and plants, shrubs, fruit etc. They are herbivorous animals, which include bull, cattle, cow, elephant, camel, donkey or Ass, deer, rabbits, monkey etc.

Similarly, birds of prey include vulture, owl, crow, hawk, eagle which are flesh eating flying creatures. On the other hand the peacock, dove, cuckoo, parrots etc. are grain eaters.

There are also aquatic animals such as stork, ducks, crane, chakravāka, frogs, snake and crocodiles, which are omnivorous. They depend upon insects, small fish and some lower animals for their survival in their respective habitat areas.

These animals and birds and also reptiles are still found in all over the country though the existence of some of them become rare now a days. Due to some destructive effects of human activity, the natural habitat of wild animals have shrunk to a great extent.

We shall discuss in this chapter the distribution of different kinds of animals in general and also found in Sanskrit fable literature.

Animals of the Past and their place in the ancient Indian literature

The Purānic literature is the most important religious literature of India of the post Vedic period where numbers of animals have been
mentioned. The existences of different kinds of animals have been mentioned in the past literature like the Vedic literature, the Puranic literature and the Classical literature. The krṣṇasāra¹ or antelope is an animal mentioned in the Kālikā-purāṇa. Again Goat is described as the vāhana of God Agni. According to Sanskrit religious literature Agni or the Fire God always rides on a Goat (Skandapurāṇa). This animal has been described as Ajadhara² in the Naiṣadha-caritā of Śrīharṣa. The lion is mentioned in the Durgāsaptasati (or Candi) of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa. There is a fight between Mahiṣa and the lion for a short while. Mahiṣa assumes the form of an elephant and attacks the lion³.

The use of the term mṛgahastin, hastin and varana in 'vedas' proves the familiarity of the vedic people with the elephant⁴. Three consecutive chapters (viz 8-2, 8-4, 8-3) of the Śrīmadbhāgavata Purāṇa contain description of a fight between an alligator i.e. crocodile (grāha) and a chieft tusker (gajendra) and finally the emancipation of the alligator and the freedom of the tusker from the grip of the alligator.

In the 'Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa' the 'Tiger'⁵ is mentioned as the 'Vāhana' of the Goddess Dīrghēśvarī.

Similarly, Airāvata is described as the Vāhana of Indra. Monkey or semi divine animal like 'Hanumān' has been mentioned in the Rāmāyana in the epic literature.

'Wild Boar' is mentioned in the Mahābhārata⁶. The mention was made in the war between Arjuna and Lord Śiva under the guise of a hunter killed the wild boar which was demanded by Arjuna also as his shaft that had killed the boar. Afterwards Lord Śiva bestowed on Arjuna the divine 'Paśupāta weapon'. The great poet Kālidāsa mentions in his famous works like Raghuvamsam⁷, Abhijñānam Ākuntalam⁸ which are classical literature of those days about elephants, deer, and many other song birds and some
beasts of nature in a very excellent way. It has already mentioned that there was a wide distribution of animals in the days of fable literature. Now their habitat has shrunk. In the Pañcatantra also it is found that, there were numerous kinds of birds in contemporary India. The cuckoos, parrots, cranes, doves and pigeons. Some other important birds such as crows, owls, sparrows, wood peckers, cañjakaś, vultures etc. are also mentioned in the Pañcatantra as well as in Hitopadeśa.

The Kāśikāvṛtti of Jayāditya and Vāmana also gives an exhaustive idea of the bird population. The crow is described as the natural enemy of owls in Kāśikāvṛtti.

Similarly, in the Aesop’s fable various kinds of birds and beasts are mentioned in the form of some interesting fables. However, many of these birds and beasts mentioned above remain confined to certain sanctuaries only in modern times with a great threat to their existences.

Habitation of some important animals (Birds and Beasts) found in Sanskrit fable literature

In regards of animal kingdom and its present general distribution, there are some regions or various zones each of which supports its characteristic assemblage of wild animals.

Here is an attempt to describe habitat areas of some jungle-living animals found in general and also in fable literature.

Animals living in forest and grassland

Among the wild animals living in forest of the Himalayan sub region, the lion is perhaps the most lordly and majestic animal found in India. The Indian or Asiatic Lion is the lion that has figured in history,
distributed as it was in historic times from southern Greece to South East India. It was once found over the whole of Northern and Central India particularly in Mathurā and in south till Narmadā also on the bank of the river Godāvāri. The lion was found in various parts of the days of the Pañcatantra. The frame story of Pañcatantra (Book-I) mentions that lion had an ideal habitat on the bank of the river Yamunā in those days, where he often came to the riverbank to quench his thirst with his attendants.

**Lion:**

The lion was also found in the forests of Vindhya Mountain as described by Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa.

“śleṣe kecana sabdagumphaviṣaye kecidrasc āpacre-lamkare katicitsadarthaviṣaye cānycye kathāvarpāne. ā sarvatra gābhīradhīrakavītāvindhyātuvičānārī-saṅcārī kavikumbhikumbhabhiduro Bāṇastu paṅcānavanah.”

- Śrīchandradeva. (The last quoted from Mr. Parakhī’s Work)

In another story of the Hitopadeśa it is mentioned that on the mountain called Mandara there lived a lion called Durdanta, who always used to slaughter animals.

People admire the lion so much that he has found an important place in the art and literature of the world. Long ago, the lions were found everywhere in India.

It is clear from a number of stories in the Pañcatantra that lions were found in the jungle of India abundantly. It was also found in the desert, the banks of the Sabarmati river, Haryana, the Southern part of river Narmada. This magnificent animal which reared in the vast wood lands of India, is now reduced to a population of about 205 in a small area of 1515 sq. km in Gir forest. Now they are confined to the Gir forest of Gujara, Kathiawar. There too, their number has declined considerably. It is
mentioned in *Hitopadeśa*\(^{15}\) that on the mountain called ‘Arbudaśikhara’ or *Mount Abu* of Rajasthan there was a mighty lion called ‘Mahāvikrama’. Whenever he would go to sleep in his mountain cave, a mouse, would nibble off the tips of his mane.

**Tiger:**

In the jungle stories of *Pañcatantra, Hitopadeśa* and other works of fable literature tigers are frequently mentioned on the Indian sub-continent the tiger is at home in varying environmental conditions. The habitat of the tiger in the country at present includes North-East-India, Sundarbans, the foot hills of the Himalayas, Rajasthan and Western-ghats. Its range extends upto Burma\(^{16}\). There is a tale of tiger in *Hitopadeśa*\(^{17}\) mentioning its habitat in the jungle areas of Southern India. It is described that an old tiger having a bath, was holding Kusa grass in his paw on the bank of a lake and wanted to offer a gold-bracelet to someone.

The tiger is the most common animal in Korean fable\(^{18}\) literature. Because of its natural beauty, the number of tigers is now drastically reduced due to senseless poaching the animal and destruction of its habitat. In ancient India, the tiger was found in all jungles. It was a commonly found animal of the cat family. Therefore, no specific area or state of the country is generally mentioned. Men’s cruelty is the cause of its dwindling population. In 1930, there were 30000 tigers in India, which has been reduced to about 2000 of its population now.

**Cheetah or Dvīpi:**

The cheetah or dvīpi as mentioned in the Sanskrit literature inhabited in all types of jungles. Formerly, it was found all over India but at present the number has greatly diminished.

The cheetah was destroyed by indiscriminate killing and clearing of forest areas. Like the lion, the cheetah came to India by way of our North—
Western passes. It established itself in the plains and lower hills of Northern and Central India and then it moved Southwards as far as the Deccan and Mysore. The last Indian Cheetah is now extinct.

The cheetah lived most commonly in low rugged hills, and came down from its lair amidst rocks and boulders to hunt in the neighbouring plains.

This animal is described in a tale of *Pañcatantra* as having sharp teeth, by means of which, it can pierce the skin of dead elephant. There are many stories in the past where cheetah always plays like a villain. It was found within the Indian Territory, Tibet, Ladakh and parts of Kashmir.

**Leopard:**

The Indian *panther* or *leopard* was found all over the whole country long ago. It inhabits in all types of forest. The common leopard or panther was probably found all over India in the jungles, as there is no reference to any specific region of India as its habitat in Sanskrit fables. It is found in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayan ranges at present. The number of this animal has now greatly decreased. The species is now well protected in Mount Abu wild life sanctuary.

In the *Pañcatantra* there is tale of the clever jackal, *Mahācaturaka* by name, who took the help of a leopard to cut open the skin of the dead elephant with its sharp teeth.

**Jackal:**

The *jackal* and Indian fox are not confined to any specific climate or region. They are found all over India from the foothill of the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. It is the most common animal among the wild beasts which roam about near the human habitat even today. It can live in almost any environment. Any locality suits them, whether it is desert, forest, plain or
hills. They have been found at high altitudes also. But they prefer the vicinity of towns and villages, where they live in holes dug in the ground.

Jackals are known for their cunning and intelligence. Many stories dealing with their cleverness, shrewdness, ‘humour’ and their wisdom are mentioned in the fables specially in Pañcatantra and Hitopadeśa. Stories like ‘Blue jackal’, ‘The greedy jackal’, ‘The sly old jackal and the elephant’ etc. the two jackals in the frame story (Lion and the bull) and ‘Clever jackal’ in the Pañcatantra are there where the jackal is depicted as hypocrite and untrustworthy animal.

**Domestic animals:**

Besides wild animals there are some domestic animals are found in the days of ancient fable literature. The authors of the Sanskrit fable literatures have mentioned the habitations of some domestic animals for their purpose.

**Camel:**

The camel is a domestic animal used by the people of desert lands which they regarded this animal as their transportation also. Generally camel is widely found in Gujrat, Rajasthan (Thar Desert) and such other sandy areas or desert lands. It is very rarely mentioned in Pañcatantra or other Sanskrit literature. At least in three stories mentioning of camel is found in the Pañcatantra (The story of ‘the lion, jackal and the camel’, ‘the story of the lion and the belled camel’, ‘The camel and the chariot maker’.

The author of the Pañcatantra describes Gurjaradesa as a country which rose into prominence for camel trade. The country of Gurjara is known in modern times as “Gujrat” which is state of the Indian Union on the coast of the Arabian Sea.
Ass:
The ass is found as a common domestic animal in India. It is generally used by washer men for carrying their garments. Apart from domestic asses there are also some wild asses. India is famous for wild asses. This rare species is found at present in the Kutch region of Gujarat. Both Ass and Donkey are described in animal fable literature as a foolish animal. The ‘singing ass’ in the Fifth Book of the *Pañcatantra* describes the foolish nature of the Ass. Because of its foolishness once an ass became a prey of a lion as he fell on the trap of a wicked jackal, the ass was obviously the ‘wild ass’³¹. This wild species is known in India as *K.Runtime*

Donkey:
Donkeys are generally used by the washer men for carrying the bundles of cloth. This animal appears in the stories of *Pañcatantra* and *Hitopadeśa*. There are some similar wild species of the animal like ‘Omager’ and ‘Kiang’ in Kurdistan and Tibet. The ‘tiger skinned donkey’ is an amusing story in the Fourth Book of the *Pañcatantra*³³. In the *Hitopadeśa* also the presence of this animal is described in Varānasī³⁴ and Hastināpura, the two holy cities in ancient India where donkey is used by the washer man. Donkeys are a common domestic animal of India. On the other hand the wild assess are found in the deserts of the Rann of Kutch in the Western Coast.

Dog:
Among the domestic animals dogs were the first animals to be fully domesticated by men. The usefulness of the domestic dog to man is sufficiently recognised. They have been used for hunting. The domestic dog was not only a friendly companion of the people, but also a regular partner in the hunting expedition of the hunters in the days of *Kāśikā*³⁵.
There is a reference of domestic dog in the *Hitopadeśa*, who plays a significant role in one story. In this story a washer man maintained a dog with a donkey for his household purpose, but it proves unfaithful to his master and refuses to bark at the approach of a thief. A domestic dog in the *Pañcatantra* also plays a significant role in one story. The dog *Citrāṅga*, who left for another land in search of his livelihood, had to return to his own land after sometime. Because he observed that in the new country his friends of his own race were his enemies. Here, in the case of dogs, the strong sense of territorial possession is the source of the enmity.

**Goat:**

Widely domesticated, the goat is another simple animal, which play practically no role like the lion and the jackal in the Sanskrit fable literature. Goats were occasionally necessary for performing Vedic sacrifices. In a story of *Pañcatantra* a domestic goat has been carried by a Brāhmaṇa which is meant exclusively for the sacrificial purpose.

**Animal living in Environment**

**Elephant:**

In the animal fables, elephants are commonly mentioned, specially by the author of *Pañcatantra*. In the fable literature of India it is found mainly as a wild animal. Though no specific region of India has been described as its dwelling, it generally dwelt in all thick jungles of India. In India, the wild elephant are found in Assam, Mysore, Tamilnadu, Kerela and the Terai forests of Uttar Pradesh. The animals are also found in Thailand, Srilanka, in Western Ghats from Southwards, Himalayan ranges that fall in West Bengal, Orissa and Bihar. This animal cannot tolerate high temperature. As a result it always desires to take bath in cool muddy lakes.
The mongoose, the jungle Cat and deer were and are found in almost all parts of Indian jungle from the Himalayas to Kanya-Kumari.

**Mongoose:**

Frequently, found with Snake-Charmers, the mongoose is a familiar animal. The small Indian mongoose is found in Northern India from Kashmir to Bengal. These world famous little animals, immortalised by Rudyard Kipling's 'Rikikitavî', invariably draw crowds when exhibited by Snake-charmers in contest with cobras. The mongoose was probably found in almost all parts of India in those days as today. Villagers in India probably kept them as pets not only to combat snakes, but also to control rats, mice and scorpions.

**Jungle Cat:**

In the Tantrākhyāyīka there is a story of a jungle cat as 'justice of the Vile'. This is retold in Pañcatantra where the jungle cat wearing the garb of an ascetic, killed a kapiñjala bird and a hare through its foul trick. The cat has become rare now in Indian jungles. But in the age of fables it probably existed in a wider area in jungles.

**Cheetal or spotted deer:**

In fable literature of India the Cheetal or spotted deer is described as a common animal apparently found in almost all parts of India. In the second book of Pañcatantra the story of 'searching for friends' describes that 'Citrāṅga' the innocent deer has been rescued by other friends viz. a crow, a tortoise and a mouse from the trap of a hunter. The deer are found in India practically throughout the land wherever there are jungles with good grazing fields and plenty of water. However, the authors of the Pañcatantra and Hitopadeśa have referred to two distinct dwellings of this animal in two stories. In one story, a hunter killed a deer in the forests.
of the Vindhya mountain. In the other story, *Campakavatī* (probably *Campā*) in Magadha is described as another dwelling of the animal.

Chital or spotted deer is amongst the most wildly distributed and common of the larger wild mammals of the Indian subcontinent. Indeed, it is also one of the most ornamental. Being both a browser and a grazer, Chital prefers grassland-forest borders.

Man’s influence on deer has been mainly that of an exterminator. In India, deer survive in a reduced number, or have disappeared from territories where they were commonly found. Decline in the population or the extermination of deer has its adverse reaction to human interest. They provide the basic food of the larger carnivores which are now deprived of their natural prey and naturally the cattle killing at present has become an alternative means of livelihood of these animals.

However, the deer at present mainly exists in abundance in the Madhya Pradesh, the Terai region and the Himalayan foothills and to a certain extent in Assam. Incidentally we may refer to the adventure of a spotted deer (*Mārīca*) mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *Pañcavatī Vana* of Daṅḍakāraṇya in the present Maharashtra which indicates that this rare animal existed at one time in this region.

**Hare and rabbits:**

Among the rodents the **hare** and **rabbits** are found both as domesticated and wild. ‘*The wise rabbit’, ‘the clever hare*’ are some of the stories found in *Pañcatantra* also in *Hitopadeśa* and other works. The animal was probably commonly found in all jungles. In the *Burmese Folk Tale* the rabbit figures in eleven tales. Here, the ‘rabbit’ acts as the counter part of the Indian hare, which plays its role as a hero in many tales. At present the hares are found in the ranges from Southern India to the Godāvarī on the East, Rajasthan and Kāthiāra and also many parts of
Eastern India. Generally hares and rabbits are live in the neighbourhood of villages and cultivations. These animals can be kept as pets also.

As the people hunt those animals for their meat and fur and because of the destruction or unavailability of the suitable natural habitat many species of hares and rabbits have faced the extinction of their population.

**Mice and Rats:**

Mice and Rats etc. are classified as rodents. These are gnawing animals. These animals are a common creature in India even today like a household animal. The fable writers describe them as the common resident of India. There is a tale in Pañcatantra\(^5^3\) where a large group of rats creating constant trouble to a sanyasin by stealing grains he kept for his meal. In the second book of the Pañcatantra 'Hiranyakā' the little mouse\(^5^4\) freed 'Citragrīva' the chief of the pigeon with his horde when they entrapped in hunter’s net. As a true friend, 'Hiranyakā' also freed 'Citrānga' an innocent deer\(^5^5\) by unfolded the plan of his rescue when the deer get entangled in the net of a hunter, was apparently a spotted deer.

**Wild boar:**

The wild boar is another animal which is found even today in the jungles of India, Sri Lanka, Burma and it is very common in Ceylon\(^5^6\). The wild boar possesses great intelligence and is known for its courage. In a story of Hitopadeśa\(^5^7\) of wild boars of a formidable size roamed about in Vindhya forest in Central India. In one story of the Pañcatantra\(^5^8\) the author describes how a mighty wild boar killed a hunter. However, this animal is widely distributed in Indian jungles areas. The Indian wild boar primarily lives on grass. In ancient days the beast naturally existed in all parts of India. To-day also this is found in all Indian jungles including Assam.
Monkeys usually live on good terms with other wild animals. Captive or wild, the common monkeys are seen in the Northern India, Central India, as far South as the river Tapti in the West and the Godavari in the East, also in the forest lands of Assam, Burma and Sundarbans as well as Himalayan ranges to Cape Comerin.

In Sanskrit fable literature, monkeys play an important role in various stories. They live in large groups, troops near or in villages and towns, and in grooves around tanks and temples. In a story of the *Hitopadeśa* the author mentions the dwelling place of monkeys to be in Magadha country, the famous prosperous kingdom in ancient India. In another story of the same book, the dwelling place of the monkeys is mentioned as the banks of the river Narmada.

It is also described in the *Hitopadeśa* that, there was a city on Sriparvata called Brahmapura of modern Andhra Pradesh. Once a thief running away after taking a bell was killed by a tiger. The monkeys living in that mountain picked up the bell and used to ring it all the time.

There are different species monkey which are found in different parts of India. The red Macao and the Golden Langoor are some specialities of Assam at present. In the Sanskrit fable literature the monkey is described as a common dweller of the country. In the story of *the monkey Valibadana and the porpoise* in the *Tantrākhyāyikā* and *Raktamukha and the crocodile* in the *Pañcatantra*, this animal is described as a dweller of the sea-beach. In a story of *Hitopadeśa* the author mentions the dwelling of monkeys as the Magadha country (Bihar), the famous prosperous kingdom in ancient India.

According to the *Tantrākhyāyikā* and *Hitopadeśa* the animal roamed about in cities quite comfortably enjoying the love of man.
**Distribution of aquatic animals**

Aquatic animals which are the cold blooded creatures include crocodiles and turtles, while smaller water animals like fish, frogs, tortoises are found in many stories of the *Pañcatantra*¹⁶⁶, and also *Tibetan*¹⁶⁷ and *Korean*¹⁶⁸ folktales.

**Crocodiles:**

Crocodiles are wide spread species of reptiles found in India. It inhabits in the large, fast flowing rivers like Gangā, Mahānadb. Brahmaputra and their tributaries and also in some Indian coastal waters. In the story of the monkey and the crocodile in the *Tantrākhyaṇakā*¹⁶⁹ and *Pañcatantra*¹⁶⁷ the *crocodile* is describes as a dweller of the sea-coast. This is correct. The animal is found in the *Sundarbans* to-day. These animals mainly remain on the surface. They cannot dip deep into the water.

**Frog:**

Frogs are abundant in almost all warm habitats through out the world. They cannot live in salty or brackish water.

The habitats of frogs are the ponds, lakes and sometimes-marshy land of the river or ditches, except some parts of desert areas. There are a few interesting tales of frogs in Sanskrit fable literature. In a story of the *Pañcatantra*, ‘Gangadatta’ was the chief of a family of frogs that lived in a well. According to the stories of the *Tantrākhyaṇikā*¹⁷¹ and the *Pañcatantra*¹⁷² frogs dwelt in rivers also.

**Turtle and Tortoise:**

The turtle belongs to the amphibian animal family, which is found in land and water also. Generally, turtles live, feed and breed mostly in water and tortoises mainly on land, but as is often the case there are notable exceptions. Several species of tortoises are seen in the fresh water of Indian
beaches, in the state of Gujarat, Sri Lanka, Orissa, South-Western Coast, in the state of Assam. Some tortoises live in Coastal water and lay their eggs on suitable beaches. Its typical habitat is open scrub forest in the dry South-east and North eastern parts of India, but at present the number of tortoise has greatly diminished. The giant tortoises are now rare or extinct on many Islands because they are slaughtered and their habitat destroyed by men and because of the introduction of animals that prey on the young or compete with the adults for food.73

This aquatic animal (tortoise) is frequently mentioned in some stories in Sanskrit and other fable literature such as ‘The two ducks and tortoise’, ‘the hare and the tortoise’. The tortoise ‘Mantharaka’ in the second book of the Pañcatantra helped sincerely as a true friend, while the deer Citrāṅga who was entrapped in hunters net. It is mentioned in the Hitopadeśa that in the Daṇḍakā forest there was a lake called Karpūragaura where a pious tortoise named Mantharaka lived.

**Snakes and iguana:**

Snakes and iguana are two reptiles, which are also the members of Indian animal kingdom. There is a reference to a snake, a cobra in the story of ‘Haridatta Brahmāṇa’ in the Pañcatantra. Another snake Priyadarśana appears in the story of the ‘snake Priyadarśana and frog Gangadatta’. In two other stories of the Tantrākhāyikā and Pañcatantra, a serpent becomes a vehicle of frogs.

Snake also inhabit in a wide range of environment from paddy fields upon sandy areas to thick rain forests, man groove swamps, mountains upto 15000 ft. in height and even the open sea. This water living animal now facing a great extinction threat.

It is described in the third book of the Pañcatantra that ‘Haridatta’, the poor Brāhmaṇa worshipped a cobra in his paddy fields and
decided to placate the Snake-god. The snake in this story lived in a hole near the paddy field. The snake Priyadarśana selected a hole in a well.

The snake was found in abundance in the age of the Tantrākhyayike and the Pañcatantra. It is mainly a dweller in holes. No specific region has been mentioned in these fable literatures as the dwelling of snakes. They were and are found almost everywhere in India.

**Fish:**

The still, calm water of ponds and lakes are an ideal habitat of small fish. Some big fish live in river and seas also. Large fish, often very spectacular which have been widely hunted for their flesh are also found in Indian water. Due to some natural calamities fish mortality has increased. In the stories of Šatabdhi, Sahasrabuddhi and Ekabuddhi, the fish are describes a dwellers of ponds⁷⁹.

The story of the ‘Three fish’ of the Pañcatantra⁸⁰ states, how the fishermen have liquidated the pond of fish, only because of their livelihood.

**Distribution of Birds in Sanskrit literature**

While describing animal fables in Sanskrit Literature we find that different kinds of birds are also mentioned in the stories.

It is needless to say that birds are the only animals that have feathers. There are almost 1000 species of birds in the world today. Every kind of bird has also adapted itself to survive in a particular habitat. In any one group of birds there may be several different families, all looking quite different from each other. Accordingly their geographical distribution is also not the same.
India is the heaven for many rare birds like Cakravāka, Caṭaka, Crane, Stork, Peacock, Woodpeckers etc. The *Third Book of the Pañcatantra* contains the central theme of the story that describes the enduring enmity between the ‘Crows and Owls’.

The *Vigraha* and *Sandhi* chapters of the *Hitopadeśa* also gives many sub tales where various kind of birds like, vulture, cakravāka, parrot, peacock, crane, Tīṭhībha, Garuḍa, swan, crow etc are mentioned who proxyed the roles of human characters.

As mentioned in the *Pañcatantra, Hitopadeśa* and other fable literature of India and abroad various kinds of beautiful birds seem to have their natural habitat in India as well as in some other countries of the world. The *Jātaka stories, Aesop’s fable, Tibetan tales, Korean fables, Burmese Folk Tales, Magic Drum (Central African tale)* etc. are also rich in describing various kinds of bird stories which give an exhaustive idea of the bird population of the world.

The changing physical pattern of the world over geological periods has much to do with the presence or absence of birds in various parts of the world. The distribution of birds over the globe is a fascinating subject. The reason of some species being so wide spread and others restricted is largely a matter of speculation.

Sanskrit writers have mentioned about the distribution of animals and birds in their various works, but the earlier existence of these birds and beasts in those places are going to be extinct now a days.

**Vulture:**

Though most Indian species of birds have no difficulty in crossing the short sea barrier, it is a curious fact that no Vulture has crossed the negligible sea barrier and consequently there are none beyond the southern
tip of India. Only one scavenger Vulture has been seen in Srilanka. These birds and strong fliers are seen everywhere in South India.

Bird watchers in India lament that the skies are virtually empty. The “King Vulture” is hardly seen, and even birds like Caţţakas which were so common in the past are now rarities.

Indian Vultures are often found in the tropical and subtropical region of the world. This bird is wide ranging resident. The Himalayan race of Vultures are found in the Gangetic plain, lower Himalayas, Eastern India, Bangladesh to Mynmar. The bird spreads in Winter over North West India.

In Hitopadeśa, the vulture’s abode was mentioned to be in a hill called Gṛdhraṅgaṇa on the banks of the river Bhāgirathī.

The vulture is considered as a good scavenger in the earth, and for this reason, the great poet Kālidāsa has given its reference in the battle field in his famous Kāvyas.

The roaming of the vulture over and around the House is also considered as an evil-omen of the inauspicious vulture is described by Kālidāsa.

In the Hitopadeśa it is mentioned that on the bank of the river Bhāgirathī there was a hill named Gṛdhraṅgaṇa. In the hollow of the tree there lived an old, blind but wise vulture (Jaradgaṇa) who was killed by other birds as they misunderstood him, while a cunning cat had eaten all the fledgelings of the birds.

**Owls:**

Owls are distributed almost (all) over the entire Indian peninsula from the Himalayan foothills to the North East India and Sri Lanka except Rajasthan and the adjoining arid portions. Even the owls are
found in all lands except Antarctica. They seldom migrate, but lack of food sometimes drives them to migrate to new hunting grounds. The owls are found sufficiently in the Northern part, as well as Middle part of Indian Union\textsuperscript{89}. The dwelling place of the Owl as bush covered rocky hillocks and ravines\textsuperscript{90}.

The common Owls of the town, villages and garden, is the best known owl, in India. However, the inauspicious large hooting Owls as distinguished from the common Owls which often nest near or actually in human habitations.

There are many superstitions prevailing with regards to the owls. In many parts of the world the hooting of an owl is considered as a forewarning of death. At the same time, the ancient Greeks considered them as a symbol of wisdom\textsuperscript{91}.

It is found in the \textit{Rg-veda} – “\textit{Yaduluko badati moghametad}”- (\textit{Rgveda} 10, 165,4) In the \textit{Kumārsambhavam} of \textit{Kālidāsa}, it is mentioned that the dwelling place of the Indian Owl is in the dark caves of the Himalayan mountain\textsuperscript{92}.

**Crow:**

The expression of \textit{Kākajāti} used in \textit{Harit Sāṁhitā} Chapter-11 stands for the Crow family and both Kāka and Vāyasa are in general used for any crow.

The crows whether it is ‘Common Crow’, ‘House Crow’ or ‘Jungle Crow’ widely distributed in Indian peninsula, and dwells in road side trees, grooves, gardens of the plains and lower hills, wandering upto the outer Himalayas.

The author of the \textit{Pañcatantra}\textsuperscript{93} mentions in a literary style, the abode of crows and owls in the third book (\textit{Kākolūkīyam}) that in the
southern land there was a city named ‘Prthviperatishana’ just outside the city of (Mahilaropya). There was a big banyan tree near the city, where the king of the crows ‘Meghavarpa’ used to live on it, in a fort, with his family and people. The city of Mahilaropya is present Mylapore in Tamil Nadu. It does not mean that Tamil Nadu was only place where crows lived. They live everywhere in India.

In the same place, a little away from the tree, another king, a great owl named ‘Aridarman’ with large number of owls lived secure in a fortress in a mountain cave.

In the Mitralabhha chapter of the Hitopadesa, the author mentions that, on the banks of the river Godavari there was a huge silk cotton tree where birds from different regions would come to stay there overnight. A crow named ‘Laghupatanaka’ was lived on that tree where he plays some indifferent role along with its three friends-the mouse, the tortoise and the deer.

In another story of the Hitopadesa (Book-I) the author mentions that in Magadhadesa, there was a large forest called ‘Campakavati’ where since long, a deer and a crow lived with great affection towards each other.

In the third part of the Hitopadesa the author again mentioned that there was a fig tree on the way to Ujjayinī, where a swan and a crow used to live.

Thus, it is seen that, though the crows are found in all over the Indian peninsula, yet some specific places in ancient India are mentioned by the authors of the Pañcatantra and the Hitopadeśa.

The jungle crow as mentioned in the Sanskrit literature includes three types of crows which are (i) Aranya Kāka or Vana Kāka, (ii) Parbat Kāka and (iii) Kakola. The Kakola in the following example placed with the
vulture and jackal in a battlefield, presumably in the plains of North India, is the jungle Crow, as found in the Mahābhārata⁹⁷.

"Sṛgāla grdhra Kakolah Sadasyastatra Patriṇah"

Garuḍa:

Garuda is another hunting bird that is popularly known as Nāgasi (snake eater) in the Sanskrit literature. Due to its huge physical basis Garuḍa is regarded as the ‘King of the Birds’. This bird is found in the mountain areas of Indian Peninsula⁹⁸.

Garuḍa is a mythical divine bird. No specific land has been mentioned as the dwelling place of Garuḍa in Sanskrit fable literature. In the first book of the Pañcatantra⁹⁹, ‘Garuḍa’ is found with Lord Viṣṇu, and both of them threatened the vast ocean for his misdeed that had stolen the eggs of little pewit couple.

It is observed that many birds prefer the environment, where they can live in association with people. Among the seed or grain eating birds pigeon, house-crow, sparrow, peacock, dove, parrot, cuckoo, woodpeckers etc. are generally found throughout the Indian Union. These birds practically inhabit in dense scrub and deciduous jungle, plain and foothills preferably in the neighbourhood of rivers and streams.

Parrots, Doves, Pigeons etc. are ground feeding granivorous birds. They are seen in pairs and small parties in association with other members of same family. There is a story in the first part of the Hitopadeśa¹⁰⁰ where it states that on the banks of the river Godāvari there was a huge silk cotton tree, (Śālmali Tāru) and many (grain eating) birds from different region would come to stay there overnight. And the king of the doves ‘Citragrīva’ was one such bird entrapped in a hunter’s net along with his retinue, who was in search of grains.
Parrot:

It may be mentioned here that parrots are not confined to the Vindhya and the Godāvari region alone. It is found almost every in Northeast and Middle India even to-day. Locally migrating parrots are found in all tropical regions of the world. In the third part of the Hitopadesa the parrot is regarded as an intellectual Brāhmaṇa, pious, and devoted messenger of peacock king Citravārya, who resides on a mountain named Vindhya in Jambudvīpa.

We find in the story of the ‘Twin parrots’ in the first book of the Pañcatantra and also in the Paṅcākhyaṇaka of Pūrṇabhadra that parrots are the dwellers of the mountain. In this story the two parrots behaved in different ways according to their environment they reared.

Woodpecker:

Woodpeckers are well known Indian birds, more than one species of which occur in every part of the country. It lives on trees and makes its nest in the hollow of the tree. In Sanskrit literature woodpecker is called Darbaghāta or Kaśṭhakūṭṭa which would mean “one who makes music on wood or bamboo” and both the names are commonly applied to all birds of the family. One of them figures as Kaśṭhakūṭṭa in the Cātaka-dampati story in the “Mitrabheda” section of Pañcatantra.

Peacock:

Peacock is considered as the ‘National Bird of India’. In many countries it is considered to be a sacred bird and is treated very piously. Yet, they are being severely hunted for their beautiful feathers and other items. Being an omnivorous kind of bird, the Peacock is the most beautiful and gorgeous looking bird of India which are found in almost every mountain, in the thick jungles and fields near the river and even in cities.
It is already mentioned above that in the third part of the *Hitopadeśa* the king of the birds, a peacock, named *Citravarṇa* dwells on Vindhyā mountain in Jambudvīpa.

**Cuckoo:**

The *cuckoos* are a family with a worldwide distribution. It is a migratory bird. Cuckoos are considered as a very clever bird because of its parasitic (Parabhṛt) nature and for this nature, the bird roams according to its need——

*Prāgantarīkṣa gamanāt svamapatyajātāt*¹⁰⁶

*Manyadvijaih Parabhṛtah Khalo pośayanti*

In the *Kākolūkiyam* chapter of *Pañcatantra* the bird cuckoo is mentioned in the assembly of bird community where the owl was to be elected as their king.

However, in the Sanskrit fable literature, the cuckoo is very rarely mentioned, but sufficiently mentioned in the Kāvya literature.

Aquatic (water fowl) birds include Swan, Cranes, Cakravākas, White stork etc., which were found practically throughout the Indian Union.

In the *Kākolūkiyam* chapter of the *Pañcatantra* the author describes that once all the feathered community gathered to discuss their problems. Swan, storks, cranes, koels, pigeon, roosters, parrots and all the species of birds participated in that conference where the winged fraternity decided to elect their new king and the owl is proposed for the purpose¹⁰⁷.

Similarly, in the ‘Vigraha’ chapter of ‘*Hitopadeśa*’ it is described that once, all the aquatic birds assembled together and crowned a royal-swan named Hiraṇyagarbha as king in the birds kingdom¹⁰⁸.

The Crane’ was found in Malava country and Swan and Cakravāka’ in Karpūradvīpa, etc. in ancient India. It is also found in *Hitopadeśa* that a
kind of bird called ‘Ţitţibha’ has its dwelling place on the shore of the southern sea.

The Cakravāka is another sacred (aquatic) bird described in the Sanskrit literature. This bird is generally found in the river pool, on the bank of the sea, mainly in ‘Saurastra’. Cakravāka prefers sandy beaches (than heavy watery places) of Indian sea or other big riverbanks with cool and calm water free from plants and wide speeded grassy lands. Sanskrit literature is, of course, full of warm and tender references to this bird. The Cakravāka occupies a status of its own in Hindu culture. It is also a migratory bird, so the bird will not remain for whole year in Indian Union. They arrive India in winter season.

In the Hitopadeśa ‘Cakrava’s named Sarvajna played an important role as a virtuous minister to the royal swan-king ‘Haranyagarbha’ of Karpūradvīpa who knows all the sastras. The habitat areas of this bird Cakravāka has mentioned on the banks of the river Ganga, Yamuna as well as Sarayu (Mathurā) by Kālidāsa in his Raghu and Kumārsambhavam. The dwelling place is also mentioned on the bank of river Malini in the Abhijñānam Sakuntalam.

The Sarus generally dwells in the lake – “Sarasi bhavah sarasah” This bird has such a relation with the lake or pond that any one can guess from a distance that the presence of a lake is situated very near. In Sanskrit literature cranes are mentioned as the “birds of autumn” or “Saradvihanga.”

The Indian Crane popularly known as Sarus Cranes are essentially birds of well watered, open fields or plains and they avoid hills, forest country as well as desert lands. Their dwelling place was the Malava country as described in Hitopadeśa (Sandhi part). It was the virtuous General Sarusa who saved its king Haranyagarbha at the cost of his own life.
The Cranes are often found (in India) occurring in flocks throughout North India and South to Deccan in the cold weather. It is very destructive to the crops. The common crane of North India is the krauṇca proper of Sanskrit literature. The crane has played its role as a secret spy in the *Hitopadeśa* who can move on water and land. They are generally found in the riverside, paddy fields of agricultural lands near the villages during the cold and winter season.

The krauṇca is another famous Indian bird which earns an important place in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The krauṇca bird is found on the bank of the river Tamasā as described in the *Vālmikī Rāmāyaṇa* (1/2/8 – 15). The krauṇca mountain in the Himalayas is described as resounding with the loud calls of the common crane or krauṇca birds (Mahābhārata 9, 46, 84). The bird has been mentioned in the *Kāśikā*. It has been reduced to a rare species now.

In the Sanskrit literature (Kāvya literature) the favourite place of the ‘Swan’ is described by the poet is in the ‘Mānasa lake in Tibet’ hence they are also named as ‘Priyamānasas’.

Another favourite dwelling place of the Swans are described in Alakāpurī, (Ujjayini), in the Gandhamādan parvata, in the mount ‘Sumeru’ on the bank of the river Ganga also on the bank of the river ‘Sarayu’.

The Swans are not migratory birds, so they occur any where within Indian limits all round the year.

From this, it is quite clear that these birds have their dwelling place or residence on sea coasts of different Islands and they are local migratory birds.
The reasons for decreasing the habitat of wild animals and birds at present

Due to various factors the natural habitat of the wild animals has shrunk to a great extent. Great need is felt in this country for adequate measures to preserve wild life from the destruction, which is threatening it. The need for saving the wild creatures from annihilation is recognised in most countries of the world as a whole.

The reasons for decreasing the habitat of wild animals are varied that happen under different circumstances. Most of the animal species became extinct not because of their evolutionary failure, but because of human intervention in the form of killing of the animals and destruction of habitat area. As a result man is recognised as a destructive agent. Large scale destruction of the wild life for food, trade and pleasure in the form of hunting by fire arms; in the major cause of depletion of wild life population throughout the world and especially in India. The important reason for hunting is to get the animal products (i.e. fur, plumage, tusk, horn, musk etc.) and thereby to earn some easy money from it.

In the present discussion also, it is mentioned that hunters were traversed the forest continuously in search of birds of prey as found in different fables. The story of the Three Fish where lakes of fish were baled out by fishermen.

Similarly, destruction of natural abode of animals natural calamities, pollution by external object, over exploitation etc. are main factors responsible for decreasing the habitat of wild animals of the present.

However, extinction of Bird population also occurs due to habitat destruction. As a result of the drastic changes in India’s environment in the course of the past six decades particularly as a result of the cutting down of forests and extending the range of grasslands and agricultural areas, there
has been a corresponding change in the pattern of the fauna throughout the country. Wood Peckers, for example have been drastically reduced and seed eating birds have multiplied.

As such, under the present and the past distribution of animals, it is very essential to look after availability of the suitable natural habitat, also habitat preservation is equally necessary because, the jungles, forests and different water bodies are the main natural abode of various kinds of birds, wild animals, and aquatics animals which were found abundantly in the jungle of ancient India and as the mention of these animals were found in Sanskrit fable literature and other works during the age of Pañcatantra.

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