

Vaprakrīḍā: A Playful Butting of Elephants

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ABSTRACT

‘*Vaprakrīḍā*’ is the word used in ancient Sanskrit literature for the playful butting of elephants against mounds. ‘*Vaprakriyā*’ or ‘*Utkhātakeli*’ are the other words used for the same act. Kalidāsa’s *Raghuvamśam* and *Meghadūtam* are the two Sanskrit texts which mention this behavior of elephants. Modern science has also accepted that elephants show this behavior to drain the excessive energy that gets accumulated in them during their rutting period. This behavior is seen in many mammals including bullocks and deer.

The occurrences of ‘*Vaprakrīḍā*’ in Sanskrit literature show the abilities of keen observation of ancient Indians. This paper will be dealing with this behavior of elephants on the following points:

Finding occurrences of ‘*Vaprakrīḍā*’ in classical Sanskrit literature and tracing if there is any cultural importance of those

Getting explanation of ‘*Vaprakrīḍā*’ from the scientific Sanskrit texts like ‘*Hastyāyurveda*’ and ‘*Mātaṅgalīlā*’ which are specially written to discuss elephant science by ancient Indians ‘*Vaprakrīḍā*’ in the light of modern science

With regard to the above points, there will be a thorough study of this behavior of elephants from ancient time to modern time in this paper which will help to understand conceptions and misconceptions, if any, of ancient Indians related to the behavior of elephants.

Keywords: *Vaprakrīḍā, Utkhātakeli, Hastyāyurveda, Mātaṅgalīlā, classical Sanskrit literature, scientific Sanskrit texts, modern science, ancient India*

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