

Gajendra Moksha: A New Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The story of Gajendramoksha is narrated in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa for the very first time. In this episode, Viṣṇu came down to earth to protect Gajendra, the elephant, from the clutches of Makara, the Crocodile and with Viṣṇu's help, Gajendra achieved mokṣha or salvation. Gajendra was a king in his earlier birth. King Indradyumna, a devotee of Vishnu, due to his disrespect to the great Sage Agastya had been cursed to be reborn as an elephant.

Indradyumna could attain Moksha finally when he (as Gajendra) left all his pride and doubt and totally surrendered himself to Vishnu. After Bhāgavat Purāṇa the story is referred by Nilamata, Skanda and Vamana Purāṇas. These Purāṇas talk about the recitation of the prayer made by the elephant to god Viṣṇu 'Gajendramokṣa Stotra' and effects of it. This prayer is known as 'Gajendramokṣa Stotra'. It is believed that the recitation of this hymn can give the person who recites freedom from sins, debts etc.

The story of Gajendramokṣa, according to Bhagavata Purāṇa is directly related to devotion. In the modern context, this story can be reinterpreted. The teachings of Chāṇakya can help this new interpretation. An attempt will be done in this paper to restudy and reinterpret the story of Gajendramokṣa and justify the applicability of the recitation of this prayer.

The original story of Gajendramokṣa in Bhāgavata Purāṇa, translation, commentary and the references of this story in Sanskrit literature will be used as reference materials. To reinterpret this story, Chanakyanitidarpana and some management books will be consulted.

Keywords: *Gajendra Moksha, Bhagavata Purana, Chanakya, Management*

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