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**The Garuda Purana: A Classic Conglomeration Of Love, Greed, Virtue, Vice, Faith, Perseverance, Divinity And Justice: A Perspective**

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**ABSTRACT**

India is the land of religion and spiritualism. In Hinduism there are eighteen Mahapuranas. However, 'Garuda Purana' manages to stand out of the crowd. The sacred text makes a comprehensive analysis of knowledge and enlightenment acquired through the path of spirituality, the right conduct and the unseen happenings of life and death. 'Garuda Purana' primarily focuses on the aftermath of life. Beyond the cycle of life, there is death and this auspicious text deals with the results of virtue and vice taken place on this mortal globe. Lord Vishnu, the Preserver plays the most significant role in the text. It is represented in the form of dialogue between the Lord and the Garuda, the greatest devotee the universe has ever witnessed. The discourse encompasses the realms of philosophy, theology and esotericism. The sacred text is divided into two prime sections: The Purva Khanda (The Early Section) and The Pret Khanda (The Post Life Section). The Purva Khanda attempts to explore the genres of creation, cosmology and the subsequent following of rights, rituals and righteousness. Plunging into the ocean of innumerable duties and responsibilities that a single human life must learn to shoulder, this section also seeks the attention of the readers to showcase the importance of pure devotion towards Lord Vishnu for salvation. The Pret Khanda, on the other hand, encapsulates the journey of the departed soul after demise.

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Innumerable facets of Karma are exquisitely portrayed here. Besides, the mortal rights and rituals, this particular area spots the path to be trodden by the departed soul, the exemplary punishments in the hell and the graceful rewards one deserves and gets in the heaven. However, the whole affair banks upon our acts during our journey on this earth. The Garuda Purana doesn't make any such noticeable discrimination between the living and dead. It is a lively document which emphasises time and again on the necessity of love and devotion towards the Supreme Power of the universe to seek solace and salvation on the Day of Judgement. A timeless sacred work which opens the eyes and serves as a guide to wade through the murky water of life's complexities and strongly fathom the essence of mysteries ensconced in the afterlife.

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## **Introduction**

It is an undeniable fact that 'The Garuda Purana' belongs to the category of Sattivika Purana. However, there are others like Vishnu, Narada, Padma, Varaha, to name a few.

'Garuda Purana' is not a very huge corpus. But it is very dense as the work promotes the ethical principles and teachings to be followed in this life to enjoy the bliss of post life. It has almost nineteen thousand slokas, which are further divided into two significant sections namely 'The Purva Khanda' and 'The Uttara Khand'. Each Khanda has again seven chapters or adhyas. However, The Purva Khand is significantly enormous with two hundred and thirty four chapters. The Uttara Khand has only forty five.

An ancient Sanskrit Text which examines the tenets of philosophy, rituals, karma and a vast corpus to serve as the beacon for life, death and the metaphysical enrichments.

## **Objectives**

There are certain strong objectives behind writing this paper on 'Garuda Purana'.

First, it is an attempt to make out the roles performed by Dharma, Karma, Kama and Moksha in the broad canvas of Hinduism.

Secondly, To explore the innate truths in the post death rituals, especially the journey of the soul after departure.

Thirdly, To project the impact on the traditional codes of conduct and practice like Ayurveda and Astrology.

And last but not the least, the vivid analysis on the importance of righteous living and its soulful influence on the social milieu.

### **Scope and Relevance**

During the funeral cortege , The Garuda Purana is recited with the holy aim of offering solace and peace to the weeping souls. Beyond the superficial veneer , there are other spheres which uniformly operate to cater a complete holistic approach to the Magnum Opus. They chiefly comprise life science, laws and regulations of the cosmic energy and the amicable remedy for every solitary physical, mental or spiritual ailment.

### **Methodology**

This paper incorporates all the essential ingredients indispensable for a multi-disciplinary approach. There are different shades of the paper. Ranging from the general stuff to the background of Garuda Purana to the relevant similarities to the consequences faced after death are included in this attempt. However, the 'metaphysical treatment' is to be considered to encourage in an elaborate understanding of the whole matter.

### **The Background to the Purana**

It is must escape the heed that ' Mahabharata', the timeless mammoth task by Ved Vyas relates to the origin of Garuda. The epic tells that when Garuda, the giant Mythological Bird burst forth his egg, a brilliant light emitted from his body, accompanied by the powerful vibration which could be easily compared with the unbeatable " cosmic configuration", which suggested the unparalleled destruction of

the universe in a nano second. Though the sight was frightening, the Tridevas' blessed Garuda and his elder brother Arun took pride of such an immense strength of Garuda.

### **The Story of Kadru and Vinta : Garuda's enmity with the Clan of Nagas:**

Kadru and Vinta were the wives of the sage Kashyapa. While Vinta was adored and admired by all, Kadru was not treated well for her arrogance and pride. Kadru gave birth to thousand snakes and Vinta was the mother of two sons - Arun and Garuda.

With the passage of time, the Insecured and envious Kadru hatched a malefic plan to enslave Vinta. She discussed her scheme with her sons. However, some agreed and some didn't. Those who didn't agree to obey her command were cursed by Kadru that they would be burnt into ashes after Parikshit 's son Janmejey performed a powerful Yagna to efface the existence of serpents forever. This caused fear and they agreed with her.

It was one day when Vinta entered a bet with Kadru that Uchaishravas , the divine seven headed flying horse, who emerged during the hour of Samudra Manthan ( The Churning of the Milk Ocean) had a white tail. Kadru nurtured her evil thoughts, contradicted and said that the body of Uchaishravas is milk white , but its tail is black. Amid the divine horse was seen running at a dizzy speed across the vast oceanic expanse and its tail was completely black. It was the result of the snakes who coiled around its tail to create a fettle of illusion and enforce Vinta lose the bet. Vinta was forced to embrace the chain of slavery.

She was also being asked not to disclose the matter, else Garuda would definitely try to break the shackles of slavery to free her mother. Vinta rested upon her knees and allowed the gross injustice to be inflicted upon her by her own sister.

The pride, jealousy and arrogance of Karuda reached the height. She inflicted inexplicable pains and sufferings on Vinta. Later she agreed to free Vinta from her malicious clutches if Garuda would take the pains of fetching Amrit ( The Divine Nectar) from the Paradise to immortalise her thousand sons.

The Divine Nectar obtained from the churning of ocean was the one and absolute origin of evergreen youth and immortality. The Gods knew this and therefore took every single measure to protect the elixir. It was infact hemmed in by the raging flames of fire. Moreover, the fierce looking and sharp rotating

blades accompanied by two gigantic venomous snakes were the sentinels, making it an impossible act even to access it.

Having acquired the knowledge, the Gods put up a strong fight against Garuda. But Garuda defeated them and dispersed their bodies in all directions.

Garuda, the holy bird assumed a number of sacred paths to accomplish his noble mission. He doused the fire with the mouthful of water from all the rivers , reduced himself to a miniature form to escape the hurt from the rotating blades and cunningly encouraged in a battle between the two giant snakes. Without waiting any more, he moved towards the earth to free his mother Vinta from the bondage of labour. However, Lord Vishnu encountered him and blocked his path. It was thought that the Lord and his devotee would enter into a scuffle! But it didn't happen. They rather exchanged promises . Garuda was granted the boon of immortality and later became the ride of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Laxmi. Garuda also promised Indra to give back the nectar after the whole mission was accomplished in the accepted sense of term.

Garuda applied his brain and intelligence to befool the Nagas. He was well aware of the certitude of destruction if Nagas had consumed nectar. He asked the Nagas , especially the Kaliya to perform the religious rites before drinking the Amrit. The Nagas followed his advice. In the mean time Kadru being happy and gay freed Vinta from slavery. The Nagas went to perform the rites and Indra appeared, took the vessel of elixir and disappeared. Kadru deciphered the situation, became furious and tried to hurt Garuda with all her might!

Beholding the injustice inflicted upon His devotees time and again ( Here Vinta and Garuda) , Lord Vishnu appeared in his complete form and stated the reasons for not distributing the nectar among the Nagas. Moreover, he opined that Nagas were not even fit for a single drop of shadow of nectar and cursed them to have forked tongues! Legends explain this reason behind the snake shedding its snake in a periodic manner.

After his sacred mission, he kept his promise and went to Vaikuntha to meet his Lord Vishnu and become his vehicle apart from destroying the snakes by feeding on them to protect Dharma in every possible manner.

## Lessons and Symbolic Interpretation

The key lessons of 'Garuda Purans' can be summed up in the following areas:

First, the Purana lays too much emphasis on the importance of Karma ( be it good or evil) and the possible consequences one might encounter in this life and life after death. The Karma is the cornerstone of your character, helping in shaping the destiny and fulfilment of wishes.

Secondly, Garuda Purana is the one and only Purana which takes the readers to the world of life after death. The soul transits from one realm to another to seek either reward or punishment against the deed committed.

Thirdly, this sacred text attempts to showcase the necessity of performing religious rites, remembrance and charity to assure the peaceful state of our soul.

Fourthly, the Garuda Purana focuses on the achievement of liberation from the cycle of life and death.

Fifthly, Garuda is the symbol of Dharma and Detachment. The text highlights the importance of staying close to the moral and ethical lessons of truth, non -violence and benevolence. Besides, it puts forth the necessity of detachment from materialism to seek the path of spiritual growth and development. To merge with the infinite is the ultimate goal of this soul.

To have a discourse on the symbolic interpretation of this sacred text , it is quite important to consider the protagonist Garuda. Garuda is a metaphor which represents strength, celerity, unmatched devotion and a famished soul to rise above all the mortal and material constraints which bond our existence and prevent from seeking the path of truth, honour and glory.

Secondly, The Yama Loka episode in the text illustrates the truth of suffering for every single deed on this earth. It is a policy to keep the human race away from the sinful actions. The episode serves as a guide to follow the ethical principles of life to keep the mental conflict at bay!

Thirdly, The 'Garuda Puran' sternly believes in the strong bond between the physical and mental world. Post death, it is utterly important to perform the religious rites to maintain the familial connection.

And finally the ' Moksha' , which is also the 18th, the Final episode of " Bhagavad Gita". The essence of liberation of the soul lies in the reunion with the Supreme Power of the cosmos. The text has talked at

length on the divine role of Lord Vishnu, making Him the focal point of that timeless icon of Supremacy.

### **Garuda Purana and other Religious Texts**

The Purana which primarily emphasises on the devotion and complete surrender to the Lord for the true salvation after death are equally discovered in other religious texts namely - Bible, Quran, Tripitaka and Guru Grantha.

Bible talks at length on the monotheistic view where God's love and salvation are projected through Jesus , the edifice in the text.

Quran talks about the complete submission to the voluntary nature of Allah ( The Omnipotent, The Omniscient).

Tripitaka believes in self - realisation for the true enlightenment.

Sikhism advocates the theory of devotion, equality and a rightful living.

The concept of After life is exhaustively discussed in this text. Similarly the other religious texts viz Bible, Quran, Tripitaka and Guru Grantha have made a detailed analysis of hell, heaven and uniting with the Lord - the absolute motto of life , depending upon the execution of our Karma.

Ethical and Moral lessons are grounded to this sacred text. The virtues of love, mercy , prayer , justice, peace , meditation, equality and salvation are equally celebrated in the other religious texts. In other words, the path for the attainment of true enlightenment is same in each and every religious text. They all believe that the human soul attains the true honour and glory after merging with the God.

### **The Relevance of Garuda Purana in Today's Life**

The 'Garuda Purana' offers a deep insight into the realm of after life. But the modern posterity either fears death or misunderstands its role in our life cycle. The sacred text aids to embrace the challenges of this inevitable truth and discover peace and solace amid grief.

Secondly, The Garuda Purana continuously believes in an honest and a modest livelihood supported by good karma. However, the modern society which is ruled by divided aims, sick hurry and horns of dilemma must develop a sense of perfect understanding of truth, righteousness, values and ethics.

Thirdly, there is an unbiased discourse on the question of detachment. However, the present context is dominated by the factors of consumerism, greed, lust - the reasons behind stress, anxiety and despair. The mantra of detachment is the only tool to tide over such stuff to sustain peace and order in every zone.

Fourthly, the Purana has talked on the awareness of environment. The present generation must encourage in imbibing the teachings related to the connection of human life to revere the nature and promote harmony.

Fifthly, there is an immense scope to depict the concepts of spiritual growth and moral upliftment in the text. However, this lack of spiritual progress results in the declination of the present age. Garuda's intense focus on this particular area ought to act as a light for the true realisation of life where all the basic values, moral education and ethical moves would further help to deal with the global issues like religious intolerance, unrest and inequality.

## **Conclusion**

Different sacred texts have inculcated different values and prioritised different motives to teach the 'right conduct', 'right knowledge' and 'right faith' to the human race. "The Garuda Purana" manages to behave as a bridge between the ancient knowledge and wisdom and the modern whispers and robust challenges. The Lord and His devotees Garuda to make us decipher the spheres of spiritual advancement, ethical shine, life and after life to ensure purpose and equilibrium in existence. A Magnum Opus which will hopefully remain as one of the burning lamps of inspiration and guidance for the ages to come!!

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