

Ancient Knowledge –System on the Elephant: A Study from the Agnipurāna and the Bṛhatsamhitā

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ABSTRACT

Elephant as an animate commodity has been serving the humanity in various capacities since the time immemorial. Though mostly useful for the affluent ones it attracted the sagacity of ancient Indian intellectuals who occasionally devoted themselves to study and record various behavioural aspects such as *gajacikitsā*, *hastilakṣaṇa*, *mātāṅgagrīḍā*, *gajaśānti*, *hasti-īṅgita-nirūpaṇa* of the giant quadruped. The same is evident through a large number of references on elephants noticed in almost all branches of the Sanskrit literature starting from the epics till the latest Sanskrit compositions of the post medieval period.

In this paper, two important texts from the ancient Sanskrit literature namely the Agnipurāna and the Bṛhatsamhitā are taken for discussion of which one belongs to the Purāna branch and the other to the branch known as astrology. The former text is found to dedicate at least three chapters and the latter one two chapters for dealing with different knowledge-systems as mentioned above, prevalent in connection with the various groups of elephants [*nāgayūtha*]. A comprehensive study of the materials available in these two texts on the above topic would reveal some significant points in addition to the already existing set of knowledge regarding the ancient elephant-life and the human acquaintance with the same.

Keywords: *gajacikitsā*, *hastilakṣaṇa*, *mātāṅgagrīḍā*, *nāgayūtha*, *gajaśānti*, *hasti-īṅgita-nirūpaṇa*

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