






Moksha Patam

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Steps to the Highest Place
2 or more players — 20 min.

The goal of the game is to reach *Perfection*, or *Nirvana*—the highest place for a human being—which is at the top of the game board.

This is a shortened version of the classic game, designed to be played in 20 minutes by 2 or more players (more players make the game last longer).

Equipment needed:

In addition to the game board, you will need a standard 6-sided die and playing pieces. For playing pieces, you can use ordinary game pawns; but if you don't have game pawns, coins (penny, nickel, dime, quarter) work well.

Rules:

1. The players take turns throwing the die, and moving the number of spaces shown.
2. If a player lands at the foot of a ladder, they climb to the top of the ladder and take another turn.
3. If a player lands at the head of a snake, they slide back down to the tail end. Each snake is named for a character from Hindu mythology (you can find short descriptions of each character below).
4. If a player rolls a 1 or a 6, they then take another turn. If they roll a 1 or 6 and land on the head of a snake, they first slide to the tail of the snake, then take another turn. If they roll a 1 or 6 and land at the foot of a ladder, they first climb the ladder, then they take another turn (for having climbed the ladder), then still another turn (for having rolled a 1 or a 6).
5. Players must get to *Perfection* by exact count. For example, if you are on square 78 you must roll a 3 to get to *Perfection*; if you roll a 4, 5, or 6, you must stay on square 78; if you roll a 1 or 2, you may advance that number of squares.
6. The first player to reach *Perfection* wins.

The characters from Hindu mythology:

Bakasura was a demon who demanded that the nearby village bring him a great deal of food each

week—then he would eat all the food, and the person who brought it, too. Finally Bhima killed this demon.

Dhakshaka was the king of the serpents. King Pariksit got angry with a holy man, and draped a dead snake around the hold man's neck. For this anger, the King was cursed to be killed by the bite of Dhakshaka.

Duryodhana, the leader of the Kauravas, hoped to win power away from the Pandavas, his cousins. But his ambition caused him to cheat and murder. He was at last defeated in battle.

Hiranyaksh was a powerful demon who came to believe he was more important than the gods and goddesses. He let his power go to his head, and attacked Mother Earth. The god Vishnu then had to kill him.

Karkodaga was a magical serpent. When Damayanti chose to marry Nala, Saniswara was jealous. He got Karkodaga to bite Nala, causing Nala to forget he was married. Fortunately, Damayanti helped Nala regain his memory.

Kumbhakarma was a rakshasa, or demon, who was a great warrior. When he asked the gods for even greater strength, they caused him to stammer and ask for sleep instead. He slept for six months.

Mahabali was a good king at first, but he was so proud he thought he was better than anyone else. Because of his pride, he wound up dying when a giant boy pushed his head into the underworld, causing him to drown.

Mahisasura was the wicked son of a rakshasa, or demon, who wanted to kill off the gods. He gained the power that no male being could kill him. But after fighting with the gods, the goddess Durga killed him.

Narakasura was an evil king who was conquered all the kingdoms of earth, and he ruled with great cruelty. At last Krishna defeated Narakasura in battle. (Some say that the holiday of Diwali is a celebration of the defeat of Narakasura.)

Ravana was a king who wanted Sita, even though she was already married to Rama. He kidnapped Sita, and this disobedience led to a battle between Rama and Ravana. Ravana lost the battle and was killed.