

***Vighna Haro Deva !***

## **GANESH CHATURTI**

The rich Hindu pantheon of Gods and Goddesses is astounding; each persona harbours an ocean of divine qualities and powers. And the one worshipped before all is the most intriguing Lord Shri Ganeshji. The 10 days of celebration, especially in Maharashtra, is one of the grandest pujas performed, where every family (irrespective of social status) prays before

***Vighna Vinashak - (Destroyer of Obstacles),  
Lord Ganapathi - (the Wise One),  
Siddhi Vinayak - (Harbinger of Success).***

During these times of pain, chaos, fear and hopelessness, we need to regain power to face challenges and gain victory over negativity. Who better to teach us than our much-loved Ganeshji...

The belief that spirituality, meditation, value education etc. are not for the average person, is untrue. As our thoughts, decision-making powers, emotional intelligence etc. are real (albeit subtle energies), we definitely need to enhance our spiritual side if we aim to be successful in life. Lord Ganesh's birth, characteristics and powers are nothing short of an encyclopedia in ***spiritual maturity*** – a power needed by all.

The story is incomparable to any other birth in history where... “Ganesh is created from the dust of his mother's body (Goddess Parvati). A misunderstanding results in a feud between him and Lord Shankar. Although Ganesh fights courageously, Lord Shankar severs Ganesh's head off during the battle. Overcome with grief, Goddess Parvati implores Lord Shankar to restore Ganesh's life, and therefore He attaches the head of an elephant onto Ganesh's body, giving him new birth. Lord Shankar blesses him, in particular, with the eternal fortune of being worshipped before all other deities and title of ***Vighna-Vinashak***”.

Why would a father (the Lord of the Universe no less) kill his own son, despite the son's ignorance and arrogance? Why couldn't have Lord Shiva re-attached Ganesh's original head? Enchanting as the story may be, the spiritual significance is more beneficial: Residing in a body made of the five elements, we souls, children of the Supreme Being, the Incorporeal God Shiva, forgot our true parents and began to associate with the body and physical world. It is God's mercy that He severs off this **false head of ego** and gives us a new, spiritual birth. The elephant-headed deity, Ganeshji, symbolises the beautiful qualities of a knowledgeable, spiritually enlightened person, for example: -

- **Broad, wise intellect** – elephants are praised for their sharp memory and intelligence. A wise person understands the knowledge of the *Self (Atma), Supreme Being, and the Drama of Life*. Using this Gyan, he or she understands what to imbibe, where to let go, and move on, just as an elephant maintains its self-respect amidst all other creatures. The large elephant's *head* symbolizes a broad and wise intellect, attained through the accurate understanding or Divine Knowledge given by God. And maintains a stable and steady intellect when confronted with adverse situations.

- **Power to Discriminate** – the elephant trunk can do anything from uprooting trees to picking up a needle. Similarly, a person aspiring to attain perfection, can with the power of Rajyoga meditation, develops the power to uproot deep-rooted negative traits / attitudes, and impure habits and weaknesses, that obstructs his path to spiritual upliftment. The elephant's tiny but sharp eyes can see the smallest of good qualities within anybody - small things appear big in the elephant's vision. A spiritually wise person only sees greatness in simple things, and concentrates on others specialties, rather than their weaknesses. Such souls are humble and give respect.

- **Power to Listen** – elephants' huge ears are most sensitive; a single ant caught in its ear can trouble it to death. We too need to know what to hear, imbibe, and what to be indifferent to. The one who is wise of hearing knows the art of having the patience to listen, to understand others. It also portrays one who has the knack of only listening to, and preserving, worthwhile and beneficial things in ones intellect, and discards unnecessary gossip, just as a sieve separates and removes rubbish.

- **Power to Accommodate and Merge** – the elephants' large stomach signifies the art of not spreading gossip, negativity, secrets etc. – the ability to BUILD BRIDGES AND NOT WALLS. The huge *belly* depicts one who always has an adjusting or accommodating nature like the ocean, which never complains in spite of any rubbish that the rivers dump into it. Or one who is indifferent to insult or praise, defeat or victory, defamation or praise, loss or gain...

Balancing spiritual and physical life-styles is no doubt the greatest challenge. But, armed and protected by 'spiritual weapons' given by God the Almighty during meditation, one finds this impossible task made possible.

The 4 arms of Lord Ganesh symbolise these gifts:

**Axe** – use spiritual knowledge to cut off attachments to old impure world, deep-rooted weaknesses etc. Ganapati is also shown displaying one **tusk**, which symbolizes the protection, or a shield from evil influences through the direct link with the Supreme Source.

**Rope** – bind oneself in spiritual love for God and other fellow beings, so that relationships are nurtured with virtues

**Modak** (sweet) – accept, that becoming morally strong in a negative environment requires tolerance and adjustment. Just as sweets are made after grinding, mixing, frying etc., a spiritual person can only attain his or her goal by over-coming a series of tests. *Modak* also signifies victory over the vices and total control over the sense organs – sweetness is thoughts words and deeds - thereby bringing sweetness in relationships.

**Blessing Hand** – A wise person always shares vibrations of peace, happiness, and good wishes with others.

Wisdom entails **detachment**, as symbolised by Lord Ganesh's posture: His "lotus-seat" - a symbol of purity – i.e. Striking a balance between a spiritual life-style –detached / unique, and living amidst the murky waters of negativity. He is often seated with his right leg touching the earth slightly, whilst his left leg is folded up and under the former. As we know, the right side of the body is controlled by left hemisphere of the brain and vice versa. The right brain is home to emotional faculties, the left to the intellectual / analytical side. Living in this real world calls for synchrony between our two personalities; our emotions should not overpower us but be checked by the intellect. The position of the right leg reminds us to be aware of our worldly responsibilities (alertness), and yet be able to withdraw often into the spiritual realm.

Few amongst us appreciate **rats**...and for good reason! They shred everything to bits, and yet, we see Ganeshji choosing Mooshak, the rat, for a vehicle! Control over rat-like nature is to abstain from analysing people/problems to the point of obsession. Some people are over-critical and mis-use their logic. A sensible person understands that real obstacles are not people or situations, but the vices (weaknesses); they don't waste time in lamenting but search for solutions. Here lies another lesson: Success is accomplished by sincere, accurate and positive efforts. The mouse, known for its impulsive, unsteady, wavering and fickle nature, symbolizes the human Mind. It is the Mind that 'carries' us constantly from one thought to another and another....Therefore the mouse is known to be Shri Ganesh's vehicle – "*Vaahan*". The mind can be controlled only if it concentrates on taking healthy, pure, positive food-for-thought – as is symbolized by the "ladoo".

Ganeshji's **consorts** represent '**Vidhi**' (method) and '**Sidhi**' (attainment of success); wisdom teaches us to use the right method and attain success.

Equipped with wisdom, awareness etc., what are we trying to be successful in? "Obstacles are something I see when I take my eyes off the goal", and so, it's crucial that I identify my life's principles and goals. This is where the powerful **Swastika** comes into play. Rarely is Ganeshji shown without the auspicious Swastika, wherein lie the secrets of time. One of its meanings is the cyclical drama of life, from the early times of Golden-Aged Satyuga to the present Iron-Aged Kaliyuga. As time waits for no-one, and change is the law of nature, the swastika foretells the inevitable re-establishment of a pure, peaceful world. Ganeshji, and all those who follow his example, prove to be the true children of God Shiva, the Almighty, and thus co-operate in world transformation. Swa-stika also means, in order to achieve success in anything I do, I must first set (*tikaana*) my Self (*Swa*) in my original, pure and perfect stage (*sthiti*) before performing any action.

India is the original, eternal magical land where *sanskriti* lives on through song, dance, drama, folklore and so on. We must appreciate the beauty of all legends, but awaken to the reality - that unless we practice the spiritual knowledge merged within, they are nothing but vacuum – as useless as a mirage is to the thirsty.

**AS WE INVOKE LORD GANESHJI'S NAME THIS YEAR,  
MAY WE EXPERIENCE AND IMBIBE  
THE VIRTUES HE STANDS FOR AND  
WELCOME HOME TRUE SUCCESS!**

*Om Shanti*  
*Brahma Kumaris*  
*Mt. Abu*