

IT'S TIME TO 'SHRI GANESH' A NEW ME

New beginnings are welcomed with enthusiasm, hope, happiness and the pure desire for accomplishment. Around the world, and moreover in India, every milestone of life or fresh venture is encased with a ritual or simply an ardent prayer for everything to go well. These auspicious undertakings fill the aspirant with unending faith and vigour that ensure success. What a beautiful religious practice we follow of invoking the Supreme at every new step we take! How great then must that powerful deity be, who is always worshipped during new beginnings: **the revered Lord Ganpathi**.

Shri Ganesh is by far the most mystical deity, which makes him so intriguing and lovable. **Vighna-Vinashak** (the Destroyer of Obstacles), **Siddhidata** (Bestower of Attainments / Success), the deity to be worshipped before all others in the Hindu pantheon, symbolises good fortune, has an elephant's head and accommodating stomach, carries a rope and axe, rides a mouse Mooshak and is said to be outstandingly wise. These and several other exemplary features cement a place for Ganeshji in the hearts of lakhs of devotees, especially in Maharashtra.

But how ironic that 'devotion' is gradually evaporating from 'religion'...

Though we spend exorbitantly on Ganesh Chaturti celebrations yearly, do we ever reflect on whether Ganeshji appreciates the pomp, the lavish pooja ensembles, the unending, raucous entertainment that usually bear no religious significance, the uncontrolled use of alcohol, the thumping on the idols during visarjan... We were meant to be honouring a divine being yet Ganeshji is subjected to an atmosphere of grave consequences! Without a doubt honest efforts are being invested to keep tradition alive by camouflaging the Festival with modern paraphernalia. It is commendable and inspiring to witness the unification of families and communities as a result of the celebrations but is the human soul being empowered and coming closer to the Almighty? Can we afford to forsake it?

Festivals are precious for lifting our spirits, binding stronger relationships with family and friends, and carrying forth ancient traditions to new generations and the world. But they serve an infinitely more valuable purpose: as we face the onslaught of natural calamities, corruption, terrorism, illnesses, pollution, and abominable fear and sorrow, the magic of these festivals hold no meaning unless the spiritual significance is realised and emulated. We worship Ganeshji to bring us luck devoid of hindrances and complications but wouldn't it be more advantageous to follow His footsteps?

It is tragic to be beheaded by your own father but this sacrifice by Lord Shiva's son granted him a new, unparalleled life of incredible wisdom and power. Ganeshji renounced his false identity to adopt a persona that outshaded whatever he was previously. When we stand before God, humility unlocks the door of our mind to imbibe knowledge and develop an unbiased intellect.

There is no scarcity of learned philosophers and mahatmas who have cogitated and presented the symbolism behind Ganeshji's physical features, weapons, consorts, fables etc. However, the eternal truth is that Ganeshji's potency has and never will be a demonstration of physical capabilities.

Ganeshji is the treasure-store of spiritual powers: **discrimination, far-sightedness, maturity, elimination of negative attitudes, letting go of trivial matters, balance of emotional and rational personalities, ability to mentally detach from the physical realm whenever needed and absorb God's love and grace** and much more. We too are endowed with said values to varying degrees but rarely do we acknowledge the same. Why is it more gratifying today to come into sound and action for festivities than engage in refining the soul's virtues and experiencing God's perfection and beauty? Even if the creation is flawed and ineffectual, there is no loss in maintaining faith in our Creator's ocean-like supremacy. Ganeshji attained his glorious status after sincere endeavour, and wisely secured his powers for eternity so why not we, also children of God, at the least safe-guard our future by taking to his path of enlightenment?

Let us consider Ganeshji's perspective for a few moments daily during the 10-day celebrations this year: *“As I sit in the radiance of my Almighty Father, I am drawn inwards... I contemplate on my fortune of having taken birth at the hands of the Ultimate Creator... I marvel at this new existence... Every distinguished characteristic reminds me of my inner powers... As a child of the Ocean of Knowledge, I am gifted with a wise intellect. I sustain divine energy with a pure and clean mind, balanced intellect, detachment from the mundane, and by acting in sync with my Creator... Nothing is incomprehensible or impossible for me as my aura of purity dispels all limitations... My humility and selflessness never allow my powers to be tarnished. As my life is a blessing from the Supreme, I use this subtle energy to protect the welfare and goals of my devotees....”*

By living through all that Ganeshji upholds in this unique style, his glory will remain with us forever. Newness represents vitality and hidden potential, so just imagine what wonders will be revealed with a positive transformation of the human soul? In the enigmatic, holy presence of Lord Ganesh may each of us unveil a new 'me' and a new destiny.

Om Shanti
Brahma Kumaris
Mt. Abu