

## 22. Significance of Ganesh worship

VINAAYAKA means one who removes all obstacles in the way of fulfilling any action. Vinaayaka also demonstrated the truth that His Divine parents (Parameshwara and Paarvathi) were the two to whom he owed his birth and existence and whom he should seek as his redeemers. This is the reason he is described as Vinaayaka and *Vighneshwara* (The Lord of Obstacles). He is also called Ganapathi--the Lord of all the *Ganas* (the host of spirits). There is an inner meaning for this name. Ganapathi is known for his supreme intelligence. It is because of this intelligence, he is able to keep under his control the vast array of spirits.

Only the person who has *suukshma buddhi* (acute power of intellect) can realise this nature of Divinity. Saint Thyaagaraaja enquired whether one needed refined intelligence to recognise the Lord. How could a monkey (Hanumaan) cross the ocean? How could Lakshmi attain the Lord? How could Yasodha bind Krishna? How could Bharatha enjoy the glory of Raama without satiety? All this was due to the power of supreme devotion to the Lord. There was nothing greater than devotion to Raama, declared Thyaagaraaja.

Ganapathi, who was endowed with supreme intelligence which enabled him to understand the all-encompassing nature of the Divine, subjected himself to a test by which he could impart to the world this intelligence. Parameshwara invited His two sons, Vinaayaka and Subrahmanya, to go round the world and said that whoever completed the trip first would get a fruit immediately. Subrahmanya mounted his peacock and set out on the race with zest.

### **Ganesha's claim for completing the trip round the world**

Ganapathi, who was cast in a big mould and had as his vehicle a mouse, was apparently no match for his younger brother. How could he hope to go round the world? Seeing Ganesha complacently sitting there, without joining the race, the 'Divine parents asked him why he had not yet started on his trip. They urged him to get busy. But Ganapathi continued to enjoy what he was eating and seemed to be in no hurry to make a start.

A little while later, seeing that Subrahmanya was approaching the place, Ganapathi circumambulated his parents and sitting before them claimed that he had gone round the world. Paarvathi asked him: "Without going round the world, how can you claim you have done so merely by going round us?" Ganesha replied: "Oh, Mother, the whole earth is permeated by both of you. If I go round you, is it not equal to going round the whole world? What is the purport of statements such as: *Eeshaavaasyam Idham Sarvam* (All this is inhabited by the Lord), *Vaasudhevas-sarvam idham* (Vaasudheva is everything)? You are Omnipresent and to go round you is equivalent to circling the Universe," he said. Parameshwara presented a fruit to Vinaayaka and said: "Because you have a keen intellect, you shall be the master of all the spirits." It is for this reason that Vighneshwara is worshipped by one and all before performing any auspicious function, whether it is entering a new house or performing a marriage ceremony or any other religious function.

It must also be noted that the Lord's family is an ideal one, maintaining harmony and peace in spite of the antagonistic elements present amongst them. The vehicles of *Shiva* (the bull), *Paarvathi* (the lion), *Ganesha* (the mouse) and *Subrahmanya* (the peacock) are in their natural state inimical to each other. But living in the presence of the Lord they shed their enmity and live at peace. Harmony in the Divine family shows that where there is Divinity there is peace and amity. Hatred and jealousy arise when the Omnipresence of the Divine is forgotten or ignored.

Holy days like Vinaayaka Chaturthi should be celebrated only to remind ourselves of such sacred truths and to sanctify our minds and lives accordingly. They should not be treated as holidays for feasting and merry making. Ganapathi should be worshipped so that all the *Ganas* (spirits) become friendly and helpful to us. Thyaagaraaja sang that if he has the *dhaivaanugraham* (Lord's grace) all the *grahas* (planets) will be in his grasp.

We must purify our hearts so that the Lord may shower His grace on us. All education, all mastery of the scriptures and all kinds of worship will be of no avail if the heart is not filled with qualities like love, compassion and forbearance.

*Mandhir, Prashaanthi Nilayam, 10 September, 1984*

*Dharmakshethras and Kurukshethra (field of virtue and of action) are not to be looked for near Delhi or Hasthinaapur, on the map or on the ground. Nor are the Paandavas and Kauravas merely princely clans figuring in the tale. The human body is named Kshethra, and so Dharmakshethra is in every one. When the owner of the body discards all desires, all passions, all impulses and all propulsions, then the body becomes Dharma-kshethra!*

*A child has in its heart only Dharmakshethra, for, it has not yet developed sensual desires. It accepts whatever is offered. Its ego is not yet ramified into the objective worm of multiplicity.*

*But, later, when it grows branches and foliage, the Dharmakshethra takes the shape of Kurukshethra--the battlefield where the mind struggles between hope and despair, and is compelled to consume the diverse fruits, sweet and bitter, of one's acts.*

*Sri Sathya Sai*