

27. The Ganesa Principle

THE world has many exemplary leaders, but none like *Vinayaka*. He is also called *Vigneswara*, because he is regarded as the presiding deity for obstacles. Even as *Yama* is the presiding deity for births and deaths, the grace of Ganapathi removes all obstacles. Ganapathi means the Lord of *Ganas*. He is the Lord of Sound and has the form of *Om* (Pranava).

What is the esoteric meaning of Ganesa's elephant head? The elephant is noted for its acute intelligence. Ganesa's elephant head symbolises sharpness of intellect and the highest power of discrimination.

Because of the purity of his intellect, *Vinayaka* is also called the giver of *Buddhi* (intellect). He responds to the prayers of devotees and hence he is known as *Siddhi Vinayaka* (the *Vinayaka* who grants what is sought).

Once Vyasa embarked upon writing the Mahabharata. Because of immensity of the task of writing down millions of verses, Vyasa sought the help of Brihaspati, the preceptor of the *Devas*, for a suitable scribe. Brihaspati told Vyasa that none but *Vinayaka* could carry out the work. Vyasa appealed to *Vinayaka* for aid. Vyasa stipulated that everything that was written should be understood by the scribe. Ganesa, in his turn, laid down a condition that Vyasa should not pause in dictating the verses so that the stylus with which he would be inscribing the verses on the palm leaves should have no rest. *Vinayaka* could write down the entire *Mahabharata* because he was the embodiment of all knowledge. Vyasa could accomplish his prodigious task with Ganesa's aid.

Significance of placing *Vinayaka* in forefront

The mouse is Ganesa's vehicle. The mouse is a clever and lively creature. As a symbol it means that we should be clever and diligent in our actions.

There is special significance in placing *Vigneswara* in the forefront before embarking on any undertaking. In a forest, when an elephant moves through the jungle, it clears the way for others to follow. Likewise, by invoking Ganesa, the path is cleared for our undertakings. The elephant's foot is so large that when it moves it can stamp out the footprints of any other animal. Here, again, the symbolic meaning is that all obstacles in the way will be removed when Ganesa is accorded the place of honour. The journey of life is made smoother and happier by the grace of Ganesa.

On *Vinayaka Chaturthi* day, students place books in front of the Ganesa idol and offer worship. They pray to the deity to illumine their minds. Hence Ganesa is known as "*Buddhi Pradayaka*", one who grants intelligence. No one should regard Ganesa as uncouth because of his elephant head and his immense belly. *Vinayaka* is a deity who encompasses the universe within himself. He is a deity of infinite potency.

Vigneswara is described as one wearing a white cloth. His body is ash-grey. He is depicted as having four arms and a cheerful countenance. The white cloth signifies purity of mind and heart. By worshipping Him, you must endeavour to achieve similar purity. *Vinayaka* always appears serene and calm. By his grace, the devotee must seek to achieve similar equanimity, whatever may be the ups and downs in life.

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Between the hill of individual life and the region of the Universal, there is the flooded river of Nature, with all its confusions and complexities. It is difficult to discover where it comes from, how it accumulates all that uproar and where it ultimately ends. But fortunately, we have in every human community bridge-builders, who help people to cross.

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