

24. Vinayaka worship ranks first

*One may have mastered the Vedantic texts
And perfected the art of expounding them;
If his mind is not well filled with good qualities,
His scholarship is like the crop grown on barren soil.
If you cannot comprehend the Swami in front of you
And wander in search of God all over,
You are like the man who went in quest of ghee
While having butter in his hand.*

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Prakriti (the phenomenal world) is what is directly apparent to man and which deludes him. It is an aggregation of objects. In its natural state, every object is mutable. Such impermanent objects are incapable of giving enduring *Ananda* (bliss). The object which gives you pleasure is transient. The individual who experiences that pleasure is also impermanent. How can an impermanent being derive lasting bliss from a perishable object?

It is, therefore, necessary at the outset to forget the impermanent so that one may be qualified to experience the eternal and unchanging Reality.

The presence of three gunas in the cosmos

The entire cosmos is a manifestation of the three *gunas*: *Satwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. They have been identified with the three colours: white, red and black. It is impossible for man to conceive of a world without these three qualities. It is not possible to find in Nature a situation in which these three qualities are present in equal measure. When the *Satwic* quality is predominant, the *Rajasic* and *Tamasic* qualities are quiescent. When the *Rajasic* quality is dominant, the other two are subdued. When the *Tamasic* quality is dominant, *Satwa* and *Rajas* are subdued. It is seldom that all the three qualities are equally balanced and in harmony with each other.

Likewise in the human body, these three qualities are present in every limb. It will be clear that these three qualities are manifest in the physical universe, in the human body and in the human mind. The *Srutis* (sacred texts) have also declared that the universe is made up of these three qualities.

With reference to man, there is the view that there are three states: *Prakriti*, *Avidya* and *Maya*. In course of time, the term *Prakriti* was applied to man's body. In some parts of the country, people are in the habit of referring to individuals as *Prakriti*. In North Canara, people say: "My *Prakriti* is not well," when they want to convey that their body is not well. *Prakriti* refers to that which is subject to all kinds of *Vikriti* (distortions and changes). This *Prakriti* is the basis of all creation.

The second term is *Avidya*. *Avidya* means that which is the opposite of knowledge. *Avidya* makes one treat what is unreal as real and what is real as unreal and thereby deludes him and makes him pursue sensual pleasures. This *Avidya* follows *Prakriti* in the world as a shadow. Because of this *Avidya*, man is unable to recognise his true nature. *Avidya* is the cause of man's inability to comprehend his true form. As long as *Avidya* remains, man can never be free from troubles.

Combined power of *Prakriti*, *Maya* and *Avidya*

The third term is *Maya*. *Maya* is the delusion which makes one imagine the presence of that which is not present. As long as this state of *bhrama* (delusion) remains, it is impossible to comprehend the *Brahmam* (the Omni-Self).

What is this delusion? Here, for instance, is a rope. But in the twilight of dust, one mistakes it for a snake. When a lamp is brought, it is found that there is only the rope. The snake was never there and the rope was always there. Only the momentary delusion caused the appearance of the snake and the absence of the rope. This is called *Maya*. It makes one imagine the-presence of what is not there and not perceive what is really there. To believe in the existence of that which is nonexistent and in the non-existence of that which is the real truth is the effect of *Maya*. It is the combined power of these *three--Prakriti, Avidya and Maya* which accounts for man forgetting his true nature.

Man often imagines that he has accomplished many things. Presuming that all that he achieves are entirely due to his own efforts and abilities, he deludes himself and forges his own bonds. He forgets the truth that there is higher power which is the driving force for action as well as the author of the results thereof. This is the primary nature of *bhrama* (delusion).

Prayer to Vinayaka gets rid of delusion

To get rid of this delusion and enable man to comprehend his inherent divine nature, the ancient sages taught a prayer. This prayer is the one that is addressed to Vinayaka.

Who is Vinayaka? In the *sloka* beginning with the words, "*Suklaambaradharam Vishnum*," only the form of the deity is described. But there is another inner meaning for the name Vinayaka. "*Suklaambaradharam* " means one who is clad in white. "*Vishnum*" means, He is all-pervading. "*Sasivarnam*" means His complexion is grey like that of ash. "*Chathurbhujam*" means He has four arms. "*Prasannavadanam*" means, He has always a pleasing mien. "*Sarvavighnopasanthaye*" means, for the removal of all obstacles, "*Dhyaayeth*," meditate (on Him). Vinayaka is the deity who removes all bad qualities, instils good qualities and confers peace on the devotee who meditates on Him.

This is how the theistic believers interpret this prayer. The atheists have made a parody of it by construing the prayer as a description of a donkey, which carried white clothes on its back, is ash-grey in colour, wanders everywhere, has four legs, and has a bland look.

There is no master above Vinayaka

The Vinayaka-principle, however, has only one meaning, which is relevant to everyone irrespective of whether he is a believer or a non-believer. "Vinayaka" means that He is totally master of Himself. He has no master above Him, He does not depend' on anyone. He is also called Ganapathi. This term means He is the lord of the *ganas---*a class of divine entities. This term also means that He is the master of the intellect and discriminating power in man. He possesses great intelligence and knowledge. Such knowledge issues from a pure and sacred mind. This knowledge leads to *Vijnana* (wisdom). Because He is the master of *Buddhi* (intelligence) and *Siddhi* (wisdom or realisation), He is described as the Lord of *Buddhi and Siddhi*. *Buddhi and Siddhi* are referred to as the consorts of Vinayaka.

The mouse is the vehicle of Vinayaka. What is the inner significance of the mouse? The mouse is considered as the embodiment of the sense of smell. The mouse is a symbol of the attachment to

worldly *vasanas* (tendencies). It is well known that if you want to catch a mouse you place a strong-smelling edible inside the mouse-trap. The mouse also symbolises the darkness of night. The mouse can see well in the dark. As Vinayaka's vehicle, the mouse signifies an object that leads man from darkness to light. The Vinayaka-principle, thus, means that which removes all the bad qualities, bad practices and bad thoughts in men and inculcates good qualities, good conduct and good thoughts.

Another name for Vinayaka is "Vighneswara." Easwara is one who is endowed with every conceivable form of wealth: riches, knowledge, health, bliss, beauty, etc. Vighneswara is the promoter of all these forms of wealth and removes all obstacles to their enjoyment. He confers all these forms of wealth on those who worship him. Vinayaka is described as "*Prathama Vandana*" (the first deity who should be worshipped). As everyone in the world desires wealth and prosperity, everyone offers the first place for worship to Vigneswara.

It is only when the inner meanings of various aspects relating to the Divine are understood that worship can be offered to the Divine meaningfully. Unfortunately, as only the superficial and worldly meanings of the scriptural texts are expounded these days, men's devotion is growing weaker continually. It is essential for everyone to understand the inner meaning of the Vedantic texts.

Faith in God should never waver

One may have immense faith in God. But from time to time, the power of *Maya* may undermine this faith. In Mahabharata even staunch devotees of Krishna like Dharmaja and Arjuna displayed hesitancy in acting upto the advice of Krishna and had to be taught their duty through Bhishma and Draupadi respectively.

Faith in God should never waver. In no circumstance should anyone go against the injunctions of the Divine. Whatever worship one may offer, however intensely one may meditate, if one transgresses the commands of the Lord, these devotional practices become futile. The reason is that the Divine has no selfish objective or aim. It is out of small-minded selfish motives that people act against the sacred commands of the Lord. Even small acts of transgression may in due course assume dangerous proportions.

Like the clouds in the sky which are brought together or dispersed by the winds, the passage of time brings about for man the union or separation of associates and happiness or sorrow. Time is the form of God. It should not be wasted. It is to understand such sacred truths that festivals like Ganesa Chaturthi are celebrated.

Ganesa's intelligence

How did Vinayaka acquire *siddhi* (supreme powers)? His parents held a contest for their two sons--Ganesa and Subrahmanya. They said they will offer their grace in the form of a fruit to whoever came first in circumambulating the universe. The younger son Subrahmanya, set out immediately on his peacock to go round the universe.

On seeing Subrahmanya approaching his parents, almost at the end of his trip, Vinayaka, who had been quietly sitting all the while, got up and went round the parents and sat down. Parvathi observed that Subrahmanya, who had taken so much trouble to go round the universe, should be declared the winner. Parameswara asked Vigneswara what was the inner significance of his going round the parents. Ganesa replied: "The entire universe is permeated by both of you. The

entire creation is a manifestation of the Siva-Sakti form. It is an act of delusion to attempt to go round this phenomenal universe. To go round both of you is the true circumambulation of cosmos." Then Parvathi exclaimed: "Yours is the fruit." Ganesa became the Lord of *ganas* (the Divine hosts). Easwara was so much impressed with the supreme intelligence of Vinayaka that he told him: "All those who wish to worship Me, will offer their worship first to you."

Such was the grace showered on Vinayaka. What is the reason? Ganesa's faith in the Lord and His omnipresence. The right path for all people is to develop faith in God and lead godly lives.

Vighneswara is also regarded as *gaja thelivi* (one endowed with the wisdom of the elephant). The elephant is noted for its supreme intelligence. It is also known for its absolute loyalty to its master. It is ready to sacrifice its life itself for the sake of its master.

The direct proof of this is Sai Githa (Bhagavan's elephant). Ordinarily hundreds of cars will be passing on the road. Sai Githa will take no notice of them. But when Swami's car happens to pass that way, it will instinctively notice it. It will rush to the road raising its familiar cry. What love for Swami! It will be no exaggeration if faith is equated with the elephant.

When an elephant moves among the bushes, its path turns into a regular passage for all animals. It is thus a pace-setter for all animals.

Vinayaka is a leader for all deities. Faith in Vinayaka should be developed as the exemplar for all deities and he should be worshipped as the embodiment of Divinity

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