

Significance Of Vinayaka Worship

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Theism is on the decline and atheism is on the rise. Righteousness and respect for elders are gradually becoming extinct. Devotion and ancient wisdom have become extinct. Education has become agitation today.

Today is the sacred festival of Ganesh Chaturthi. 'Ga' symbolizes *Buddhi* (intellect), 'Na' stands for *Vijnana* (wisdom). So, Ganapati is the master of *Buddhi* and *Vijnana*. The universe is sustained by *Ganas* (gods) and Ganapati is their master. In this world, everybody has a master, but Ganapati has none. He is a master by himself. This is the birthday of the Master of Masters. Ganapati is also called *Mooshika Vahana* (one who has a mouse as his vehicle). You may wonder how a small mooshika can carry on its back a hefty personality like Vinayaka. Here *mooshika* does not mean a mere mouse. It symbolizes the darkness of ignorance because it is in darkness that the mouse moves about. Hence, *Mooshika Vahana* is one who subdues ignorance and dispels darkness. It is only when we understand the inner significance of the Vinayaka principle that we will be able to celebrate Vinayaka Chaturthi properly. One of the main teachings of the Bhagavad Gita is contained in the *sloka*.

*"Sarvadarman Parityaja
Maamekam Saranam Vraja,
Aham Twa Sarvapapebhyo
Mokshaishyami Ma Suchah"*

(Surrender unto Me and Perform all your actions as an offering to Me. I will destroy all your sins and confer liberation on you.)

So long as man is immersed in body attachment, all types of hardships and misery haunt him. Body attachment is the root cause of *sankalpas* (thoughts). That is why Krishna exhorted man to give up body attachment. The inner meaning of this statement is that man should experience unity in diversity. Without *vyashti* (individual), there cannot be *samashti* (society). Without *samashti*, there cannot be *srishti* (creation). So, first of all we have to recognize the role of *vyashti*. Only then can we understand the principle of *samashti*, which will in turn lead to the understanding of *srishti*. One who understands *srishti* becomes one with *parameshti* (God). In fact, the principles of *samashti*, *srishti* and *parameshti* are very much present in *vyashti*. Hence, one has to make efforts to understand *vyashti* in the first instance.

Vyashti symbolizes the individual (*Jeeva*) whereas *samashti* stands for God (*Deva*). There is not much difference between the individual soul and the Cosmic Spirit. So long as the *vyashti* identifies himself with the body he leads a very ordinary life. It is only when he identifies himself with *samashti* can he understand the principle of creation. So, firstly man should make efforts to understand the true meaning of *vyashti*. This is the message of *Vinayaka*. The letter 'Ga'

(intellect) in the name Ganapati symbolizes this aspect. The letter 'Na' stands for *vijnana* (wisdom). So, Ganapati is one who grants good intellect and confers wisdom.

Today people perform Vinayaka worship without actually understanding its significance. Vinayaka symbolizes the qualities of a true leader in all aspects. "*Viyate Nayake Iti Vinayaka*" meaning, He is a master unto Himself. In this world Vinayaka is worshipped by many. However, Vinayaka does not worship anyone as He has no master above Him. Even Easwara, the father, worships His son Vinayaka, but it does not happen the other way.

Today no one is making an attempt to know the principle of *Parameshti*, who is the fundamental force behind *Vyashti*, *Samashti* and *Srishti*. *Parameshti* is the master of all. In this world, man undertakes various activities, of which some are good and some are bad. Man's *Sankalpa* (thought) is the root cause of this duality. Good thoughts lead to good actions and vice versa. Man is an embodiment of *Sankalpas* and *Vikalpas* (resolutions and negations). True spiritual practice lies in controlling these thoughts and their aberrations.

"Today man is troubled by worry and anxiety. There is not a moment when he is free from worries. What are the worries that disturb man? "To be born is a worry, to be on earth is a worry; world is a cause of worry and death too; entire childhood is a worry and so is old age; life is a worry, failure is a worry; all actions and difficulties cause worry; even happiness too is a mysterious worry."

Body attachment is the primary cause of all worries. Man cannot attain happiness without difficulties and worries. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. It is impossible to experience happiness without undergoing difficulties. There is divinity in every human being. The power latent in man is not present elsewhere. However, he is unable to make use of the divine power in him. Every man is endowed with *Buddhi* (intellect) which has immense potentiality. *Vijnana* (wisdom) is far superior to intellect. The principles of *Buddhi* and *vijnana* have to be properly understood in the first instance.

On this day of Vinayaka Chaturthi, people make *Kudumulu* and *Undrallu* as special dishes and offer them to Vinayaka. They are special and unique in the sense that they are cooked on steam without any oil content. *Til* seeds, rice flour and *jaggery* are mixed, made into balls, cooked in steam and offered to Vinayaka. You should enquire into the purpose of making such an offering. *Til* seeds are good for the eyes. Steam-cooked preparations without any oil content are good for your digestive system. One who partakes of such food will be free from blood pressure and blood sugar and will always enjoy sound health and happiness. Food preparations, which are cooked on fire with oil content, are harmful to *Jatharagni* (digestive fire). Such food gives rise to various diseases. One can lead a long, happy and healthy life, if one avoids food with oil content. Vinayaka has a potbelly but he has perfect health as he partakes of steam-cooked food without oil content.

Vinayaka is also called *Vighneswara* (remover of obstacles). No obstacle can come in the way of one who prays to Vinayaka. Worship of Vinayaka confers success in spiritual as well as worldly endeavors. God grants happiness at two levels, *Pravritti* (outward) and *Nivritti* (inward). *Pravritti* is related to physical body whereas *Nivritti* to intellect. The former undergoes change with the passage of time, whereas the latter remains unchanged. Hence, one should try to reduce body attachment with proper food and habits.

Excessive intake of food results in obesity and, consequently, heart will be subjected to greater strain to pump blood. Blood travels a distance of 12,000 miles in the body with each heartbeat. With increase in obesity, the circulation of blood and hence the functioning of heart will be impaired. Hence, one should exercise control over one's food habits. In fact that is what Vinayaka does.

People worship Vinayaka by offering *Garika* (a kind of white grass). What is the origin of this worship? Once Parvati and Parameswara were engaged in a game of dice. Nandi was asked to be the adjudicator. Nandi declared Easwara to be the winner each time. Mother Parvati thought that Nandi was biased in Easwara's favor. She became furious and pronounced a curse on Nandi that he should suffer from indigestion. At once Nandi fell at her feet and prayed, "Mother, I have not cheated you, nor did I show any favoritism towards Easwara. I have been highly impartial in my judgement. It is because of the power of His will that Easwara emerged victorious each time. Easwara's *Sankalpa* is Vajra

Sankalpa (His will is bound to succeed). Hence, I seek your pardon and pray that I may be freed from the curse." Parvati at once took pity on him and said, "Nandi! on the fourth day of the month of *Bhadrapada*, you worship Vinayaka with *Garika* (white grass). You will be freed from indigestion when you partake of the grass offered to Vinayaka."

People who maintain pet dogs know this well. When they leave them in the lawns, the dogs search for white grass and eat it. What is the reason for this? The white grass is beneficial to their digestive system. Hence, we see that the offering made to Vinayaka ensures good health to one and all. Since times of yore, people believed that Vinayaka conferred His grace on those who worshipped Him on the fourth day of *Bhadrapada* month.

Today man is not making proper use of his *Mathi* (mind), *Gathi* (effort), *Sthithi* (position) and *Sampatthi* (wealth). As a result, he is losing the sacred energy that God has given him. Not merely this. He is subjected to misery and grief because of his evil traits like *Kama*, *Krodha* and *Lobha* (desire, anger and greed). He has absolutely no control over his desires. When one desire is fulfilled, he craves for another. Anger is another evil trait which ruins man.

"One with anger will not be successful in any of his endeavors. He will commit sins and be ridiculed by one and all."

"Anger is one's enemy, peace is the protective shield, compassion is the true relation, happiness is verily the heaven and misery is the hell."

Hatred is more dangerous than anger. It gives rise to many evil qualities which come in the way of experiencing Divinity. Man is supposed to live for a hundred years, but his lifespan is cut short by these evil qualities. When these evil traits are totally subdued, man can enjoy a long and happy life. He will not lose his life even if he were to meet with a serious accident. Man is tormented by the reflection, reaction and resound of his own evil qualities. Desire, anger and hatred are not human qualities; they are bestial tendencies. Man becomes a beast if he allows these wicked qualities to overpower him. He should constantly remind himself that he is a human being and not a beast. In this manner, he can keep a check over his bestial tendencies. Unfortunately, the youth of today are developing excessive desires and consequently their future is ruined.

Human life can be compared to a four-story mansion. *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa* (celibacy, householdership, recluse and renunciant) are the four stages of human life. *Brahmacharya* is the foundation; if the foundation is strong, the other three stages will be automatically taken care of. But the modern youth are ruining three-fourth of their lives because they do not have a strong foundation of *Brahmacharya*. When elders advise them to pray to God for at least five minutes, they say they have no time, but they have all the time in the world to wallow in bad qualities and bad habits. Students and youth in particular should make every effort to build a strong foundation of *Brahmacharya*. Merely remaining a bachelor is not *Brahmacharya*; constant contempla-

tion on Brahma is true *Brahmacharya*. Think of God and chant His Name under all circumstances. Lead a life of purity. Dedicate your life to the principle of love. This ensures the safety of the mansion of your life. You see the walls, you see the roof, you see the entire building, but you do not see the foundation. It is hidden underneath. However, the safety of the mansion which is seen from outside, rests on the unseen foundation. When you build a house, you design the walls and roof in such a manner to make it look attractive. But the foundation which bears the entire building does not require any beautification. Yet, it is the most important part of the building. Today man is not bothered about the foundation of life. He is more concerned about the external appearance.

The first stage in human life is *Brahmacharya*. 'Charya' means to conduct oneself. You should always think of Brahma. Your conduct should befit the stage of *Brahmacharya*. In olden days, the preceptor was referred to as *Acharya*, meaning one who practises before preaching. One who merely preaches without practicing is only a teacher. He may be able to teach a few lessons but he will not be able to render any help in controlling your mind and attaining spiritual progress. Only a true *Acharya* can help you to control your mind. When we talk of *Acharyas*, two names readily come to our mind. One is *Bhishmacharya* and the other is *Dronacharya*. *Dronacharya* was the Guru of the Pandavas in the sense that he taught them the art of archery. *Bhishmacharya* was the spiritual teacher of the Pandavas. He was a great *Jnani* (one of wisdom).

Jnana does not mean acquisition of textual knowledge. *Advaita Darshanam Jnanam* (perception of non-duality is supreme wisdom). A true *Jnani* is one who dedicates his body, mind, and intellect to God. He thinks only of God and nothing else. He performs his activities with the sole purpose of pleasing God. *Sarva Karma Bhagavad Preethyartham* (do all actions to please God). You should not crave for personal satisfaction. You should make every effort to please God. This was the only endeavor of Bhishmacharya. He was the son of Mother Ganga. All his life he obeyed the command of his mother and ultimately when his end approached, he wanted to experience the love and grace of his mother. He was wounded by the arrows shot by Arjuna and was lying on the bed of arrows for 58 days. His entire body was pierced with arrows. Before leaving his body, he requested Arjuna to bring his mother Ganga and quench his thirst. Arjuna means one with a pure heart. He had earned many appellations like Phalguna, Partha, Kiriti, Svetavahana, Bhimbhatsa, Savyasaachi, Dhanunjaya, etc. On hearing the request of Bhishma, Arjuna with all his might shot an arrow into the earth. Immediately, mother Ganga sprang forth like a fountain and quenched the thirst of her son, Bhishma. Thus, he breathed his last peacefully.

Today we find many people bearing the name Arjuna, but their conduct does not match their name. In the famous pilgrim center of Srisailam, the divine couple Bhramaramba and Mallikarjuna are the presiding deities. *Bhramara* means a honeybee and *Amba* means mother. *Malli* means Jasmine flower. *Mallikarjuna* symbolizes a pure

and white Jasmine flower. Just as a bee sucks honey from a flower, likewise, Bhramaramba enjoys the company of Mallikarjuna.

Among the Pandavas, Arjuna was considered to be the greatest because he was pure-hearted. He never caused any harm to the innocent. Never did he use his weapons against anyone without a valid reason. Before the commencement of war, Arjuna requested Krishna to go to the Kauravas on a peace mission. Krishna asked him, "Whom should I approach?" Arjuna said, "Oh Krishna, you are the all-knowing One. I don't need to give you any instructions. Please make every effort to avert the war." Krishna said, "What is the use of talking to the blind king Dhritarashtra? His attachment to his sons made him blind to the reality. He will listen to his sons but not to Me." However, Krishna went to Kauravas as an emissary. But as He had predicted, His peace mission failed. War became imminent. He came back and told Arjuna, "All My efforts proved futile. Be prepared for the war." Arjuna expressed his concern that many innocents would be killed in the war. Krishna said, "Arjuna, those who come to the battlefield will be totally prepared to face any eventuality. Nobody comes to the battlefield to merely watch the show. They are ready to give life or take life. So, there is no question of any innocents getting killed in the war. So, be prepared to fight." Arjuna wanted to convey this news to brother Dharmaraja. Both of them went to him. Right from the beginning Dharmaraja was against war. He had no choice but to accept. The same was conveyed to Nakula and Sahadeva.

Though they were young, they were highly noble. They were endowed with greater virtues than even Arjuna and Dharmaraja. Their joy knew no bounds when they saw Krishna. Knowing fully well the wicked nature of the Kauravas, they were prepared for a war. They were not bothered about the outcome of Krishna's peace mission. They were all the time praying for His safe return. Such was their love for Krishna. Ultimately, Arjuna said, "Krishna, is it possible to get nectar out of poison? What is the use of giving good counsel to the wicked Kauravas? It is like throwing Jasmine flowers into the fire. Let us put an end to this talk of peace and get prepared for the war."

When they actually reached the battlefield, seeing the vast Kaurava army, Arjuna became despondent. He was concerned that many innocents would get killed in the battlefield. He was afraid that he would be the cause of grief to many families. He said, "Krishna, I cannot bear the sight of my own kith and kin getting killed in the battlefield. When I think of this, my head is reeling. Let's go back at once without wasting any time." Krishna pretended to be angry. He said, "Arjuna, it was you who instigated Me and brought Me to the battlefield. How can you behave in such a cowardly manner now? Shame on you!" At this juncture, He imparted the teaching of Bhagavadgita to Arjuna. It gave Arjuna the necessary strength to fight the battle. However, when he confronted Bhishma, he could not withstand his might. In order to instill courage in Arjuna, Krishna at once jumped from the chariot and said, "Arjuna, I will kill this Bhishma and protect you." Arjuna said, "Krishna,

you have taken a vow that you will not fight the war. I don't want You to go back on Your word for my sake." As Krishna was approaching him, Bhishma folded his hands and prayed, "The one who is coming to kill me is the only one to rescue me." Such was the devotion of Bhishma.

Embodiments of Love!

Our history is replete with sacred inner meanings. But the modern youth do not pay any attention to our history. They waste their time in reading novels and meaningless stories. These *Kathas* (stories) will give only *Vyathas* (sorrow). Divine story alone teaches you the ideal path. His story is history. You should read such a sacred history, understand it and put it into practice. Sacred epics like the Ramayana, the Bhagavata and the Mahabharata are the repositories of great teachings. Likewise, the story of Vinayaka also has a great message for mankind. Vinayaka is the embodiment of wisdom. That is why all gods worship him. On this day of Vinayaka Chaturthi, students place their textbooks in front of the Vinayaka idol and offer their prayers. The inner meaning is that they should pray for the divine wisdom to be bestowed on them. It is most essential that the students to worship Vinayaka on this auspicious day. He fulfills the desires of his devotees. He confers only *Anugraha* (grace). He has no *Agraha* (anger). Hence, not only the Bharatiyas, even the people of other countries, worship Vinayaka.

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon, there is going to be a program presented by our former students who are working for Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. They are

doing a lot of good work. There are a few elders who have been looking after the Trust affairs for the last 30 years. All these years, I have been personally supervising the day-to-day affairs of the Trust. Ever since my students have joined the Trust, they have taken up the responsibility and are doing a good job. Be it in Book Trust, or in Accommodation office or anywhere else in the Ashram, our students are rendering yeoman service. They speak gently and sweetly. They do not use harsh words. They follow the dictum: Help ever, Hurt never. These Sathya Sai Central Trust boys will present a program in the afternoon in which they will talk about various activities of the Trust. Each one of you must necessarily listen to what they have got to say. Whatever they are going to say is purely based on their own experience. My boys always speak the truth. They will not utter a lie, even for fun. They will be conveying the message of truth in the afternoon program. They are young in age, but they are very efficient in their work. They are taking keen interest in the activities undertaken by

the Trust. They are propagating Swami's message all over the world. I am extremely happy that these boys have come up well in life. They are highly intelligent. If they are asked a question, they give a suitable and a prompt reply. Five boys are looking after our Central Trust accounts. Likewise, some boys are working for our Books and Publications. You do not find mismanagement of even a *Naya Paisa*. They are very honest. Every *Paisa* is accounted for. They are endowed with noble qualities, good habits and ideal character. See it for yourself in the afternoon. They are actively involved in broadcasting all the programs that are conducted in Prasanthi Nilayam over the Radio Sai Global Harmony Channel 24 hours a day. Though they are young boys, speak in a highly polished language. You are going to listen to them in the afternoon. It is essential that you learn their language. After all they are your brothers. All are brothers and sisters. I want every one of you to get such an opportunity and come up well in life.

