

32. Stoop to Serve

VINAAYAKA Chaturthi is the name of the festival celebrated today, all over the country, from the Himaalayas to the Cape, and also wherever people of this country owing allegiance to its culture live. Vinaayaka or Ganesha or Ganapathi or Vighneshwara---all indicate the elephant-God, who is popular among young and old, and who is worshipped as the very first deity, before regularly beginning any ceremony or *samskaar*, any *yaaga* or *yajna*, any vow or fast or pilgrimage. He is the Lord of the *Ganas* or Divine Forces, inside and outside the human body; He is the Lord, who masters and overwhelms *vighna* (obstacle), however imminent or eminent. This is the natural effect of the fact that Ganapathi is the God of Intelligence, *Vidhya* or *Buddhi* (learning or intellect).

Ganapathi is a God revered in *Tantric* (ritualistic) lore, and also, by various *Vedic mantras*. The elephant is proverbially the most intelligent among the mammals and it is vegetarian, indicating its *saathwik* (*balanced* or pure) nature. Ganapathi has the head of the elephant, for, it indicates the Intelligence through which obstacles in the path of achievement, secular as well as spiritual, can be overcome.

There is a popular verse, used on most occasions when Ganapathi is invoked. It mentions various attributes of this God : *Suklambaradharam* (wearing white vesture) is the first, this is the symbol of purity, for, *ambara* means also the sky, the *aakaasha* of the heart. Ganapathi is pure, having universal love and compassion. *Vishnum* is the second attribute, ascribed to Him. Vishnu means that He is present everywhere, at all times. *Shashivarnam* is the third adjective, used. Of the complexion of ash or *Vibhuuthi*; that is to say, glowing with spiritual splendour, with the majesty of spiritual attainments, achievements and potentialities. These are also called *Vibhuuthis*, for, in the Geetha, we find Krishna saying, wherever you see Power, Glory, Majesty (*vibhuuthi*), know that it is Mine!

Ganesha is OM personified

Ganesha is bathed in His Divine Glory; that is the significance of the attribute, *shashivarnam*. *Chathur-bhuja* (Four-handed) is the next denotation. This means that apart from two visible hands, He has two invisible hands, that are available for the two divine uses of (1) Blessing the devotee, and (2) Guarding him from danger. The last: of the descriptive word is: *Prasannavadhanam* (of graceful countenance). The countenance depicts the inner calm, happiness and balance, inner grace and mercy, the consciousness of strength and sovereignty.

Without intelligent discrimination, no skill or strength can be profitably used. One must know how fire, for example, or the electric current, has to be used and how far one can deal with it as an instrument for our needs. The senses of man are also like fire; they have to be kept under constant vigil and control.

No worship can succeed unless the heart is pure and the senses are mastered. Ganesha is the God who helps overcome obstacles; but, He will create obstacles when good endeavour is obstructed by bad influences; He will clear the path for the sincere Saadhaka (spiritual aspirant). He is *Prasannavadhanam* (of beneficial looks) when you pray to Him for good ends; but, He will not be that, when you seek His help for nefarious stratagems! He is *Pranava-swaruupa*, the *Om* personified; so, He is auspiciousness itself.

When God is adored and man is injured, there can be no auspiciousness in such deeds. Man is God encased in human form; he is the Divine in that form and with that name. If the *anu* (part) is neglected, how can the *ghana* (whole) be gained? If the paisa is discarded, how can the rupee be gained? It all begins with a single paisa; another added to it makes two, and ninety-eight again make the lump, a rupee! Man is the one; start, revering him; then, you can gain the Grace of the invisible God; neglect the visible paisa, you lose the invisible rupee!

The basic defect of man is greed, uncontrolled desire

Man loses his status of human-ness, through acts that shame even the beasts. He does not strive towards revealing and manifesting his latent divinity! There is not as big a failing as this sliding back into the animal from which he rose! If he keeps on with his human attributes and capacities, that will deserve congratulation enough. A formidable list can be made of the inadequacies and defects of man, but, the basic defect is 'greed', 'uncontrolled desire'---always clamouring for more, as a result of the ceaseless prompting of the senses!

Raavana destroyed himself afflicted by greed. The very Gods were his chamberlains; such was the dread his austerity' invoked, such was the reward for his Saadhana! But, he was not content. The flames of lust rose as fast: as they were fed. Dhritrashtra, the father of the Kauravas, was enamoured of the greedy plans of his sons, and so he lost all of them, without a survivor, in the field of battle, though their number was a hundred!

Let your heart pant for God

While moving through the dense jungle called 'life on earth', in the thick darkness of *Ajnaana* (Ignorance) of the place you have come from and the place to which you should go, and even of your own real identity, six dacoits---lust, anger, greed, attachment, egoism, hate---pounce on you, and you can overwhelm them and save yourself, only by means of the light shed by *Jnaana* (spiritual wisdom) and wielding the weapon of *Bhakthi* or Dedicated Living.

The Light of Wisdom can shine bright and far, only when Love, pure Love, Love that does not demand any requital, is firm in the heart. He who loves, for the sake of some requital, or for being loved in return, is a coolie, with his eye glued to the wages.

You are really loving only yourself; for, there is only You in everyone. *Soham*, He is I. Whoever you injure, it is you that suffers; whoever you cheat, it is you who are cheated. If you do not do your duty, to the best of your ability and intelligence, and to the full satisfaction of your own conscience, you are cheating yourself. I have known that lecturers in the Colleges have to take lecture only for eight classes of one hour each, per week! And, they do not put the rest of the hours to any beneficial use, either!

Service, the utilisation of time and skill to the uplift of society--that is the highest form of adoration which God will reward with Grace. You get the actual experience of *Sath-Chith-Aanandha* through service, for, through service, you conquer egoism and convince yourselves of the unity that underlies creation. Everyone, be he an office bearer or not, must gird up his loins and stoop for work. The body must be sanctified through *Karma* (good action) and the mind through *Dhyaana* (meditation); in all parts of the country, these units must uphold the ideals and practise them, so that they become inspiring examples for the people.

Bhajan must be a felt experience. Do not sing with one eye on the song that makes the effect on the listeners, and the other, on the effect it makes on God. Let your heart pant for God; then, the

raaga (musical tune) and *thaala* (musical beat) will automatically be pleasant and correct. Sincerity will blot out all errors in *raaga* and *thaala*! Do not allow even one vice like the vice of conceit to enter and ensconce itself in your heart. All the water in a well becomes undrinkable even if one frog is dead and its corpse floats on it. A hundred live frogs will not render it unpotable; but, a single dead one will! Life has to be lived, through the channel marked out by embankments that slow the. raging flood and direct it into useful fields. *Na shreyo niyamam vina--*"No progress without rules and restrictions." Blessed are they who obey the commandments for, they will be rewarded.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 24-8-1971