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We Dedicate this Sacred Treasure at the holy lotus feet of

Sriranga Mahaguru and SriMata

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अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ	e	ai	o	au	am	ah
क	ख	ख	ग	ङ											
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa											
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ											
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña											
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण											
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa											
त	थ	द	ध	न											
ta	tha	da	dha	na											
प	फ	ब	भ	म											
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma											
य	र	ल	व	श											ष
ya	ra	la	va	śa	sha	sa	ha								

Example:

क	का	कि	की	कु	कू	कृ	क्लृ	के	कै	को	कौ	कं	कः
ka	kā	ki	kī	ku	kū	kṛ	klṛ	ke	kai	ko	kau	kam	kah



Gaṇeśa Caturthī

Gaṇeśa caturthī is one of the most widely celebrated festivals in India. This is a festival that comes generally a day after *Gaurī* festival or sometimes comes on the same day of *Gaurī* festival itself. Even those who do not celebrate *Gaurī* festival, celebrate this festival without fail. *Gaṇeśa* is the most popular deity. The proverb ‘*Gaṇapanillada Grānavilla*’ (There is no village without *Gaṇapa*) is well known. Before elaborating upon the festival, we shall discuss about *Gaṇeśa*, the presiding deity of the festival.

Who is this god *Gaṇeśa*? To this, some may say-"What is the necessity of asking this question? Everyone knows about *Gaṇeśa*. He is the Lord of the *gaṇas* of *Śiva*. He is the beloved son of *Gaurīdevī*. He is a god who removes of all obstacles. He is the Lord who has to be worshipped first in all our

religious rites. “आदावेव समस्तकर्मसु बलिं गृह्णाति भक्त्यार्पितम्” Though he is the son of *Śiva* and *Pārvatī*, he is in no way inferior to them in glory. “आदित्यमम्बिकां विष्णुं गणनाथं महेश्वरम्” He is one among the five gods in *pañcāyatana* and is worshipped on par with *Śiva* and *Pārvatī*. Not only that. The great devotees of *Gaṇapatya* revere him as the supreme *tattva*. He is the Lord who is the cause of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe, is the origin of everything and is all containing. The ‘*Gaṇapatyatharvaśīrsha mahopanishat*’ proclaims this purport in the words “त्वमेव केवलं कर्तासि, त्वमेव केवलं धर्तासि, त्वमेव केवलं हर्तासि, त्वमेव सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्मासि, त्वं साक्षादात्मासि नित्यम्; त्वं ब्रह्मा विष्णुस्त्वं रुद्रस्त्वमिन्द्रस्त्वमग्निस्त्वं वायुस्त्वं सूर्यस्त्वं चन्द्रमास्त्वं ब्रह्म भूर्भुवस्सुवरोम्” His form, appearance, glory and worship have been clearly expounded in the *purāṇas*, *Itihāsas* and *Āgamas*. The tradition of the modalities of his worship is also well known. When such is the case, why should one ask who this *Gaṇeśa* is?" Though orthodox people and staunch devotees accept the above matters with great faith, many opinions that may shake the very foundation of such beliefs are gaining fame and publicity nowadays. Therefore, it will be appropriate to find the true meaning of the matter by examining it on the touchstone of discrimination, and then perform the *upāsana* etc. Some of the comments are as follows:

1. "*Gaṇeśa* the deity is a product of the imaginations of Indians. Dravidians and especially the farmers created the concept of *Gaṇeśa*. Seeing the herd of elephants rampaging their fields and farms, they imagined a god with the face of an elephant and started worshipping him. And he is *Gajānana*, *Gaṇapati*." —This is one theory.

2. "He is the Lord of grains. That is why he has a large belly like a cluster of grains. Grain-devouring rats also live in such places. So the mouse was envisaged as his vehicle. The snakes swallow the mice. The snake resembles the rope used to tie the grain bunches. Therefore the image of *Gaṇeśa* having a serpent tied around his belly also developed." This is another opinion.

3. "There is similarity between the evolution theory put forth by the scientists and the concept of ten incarnations stated in our *purāṇas*. The first of the ten incarnations is the *matsya* (fish) which lives only in water. Afterwards came the incarnation of *Kūrma* (The tortoise) which lives both in water and on land. After a long time, the human being who lives only on land happened to be created. Then it was fancied that his form could be half human and half animal. As a result of these imaginations (the deities) *Narasimha*, *Hayagrīva*, *Tumburu* and *Gajānana* emerged. The last among them was *Gaṇapati*. This imagination of a deity which is half

man and half animal existed in Greeks also. It existed in the pre-Christian era also. Perhaps this fancied deity i.e., *Gajānana* could have emerged around this time." - We come across this theory also.

4. "The *Gaṇapati* we worship now is not basically a god of the Aryans. Though the word '*Gaṇapati*' appears in the *Vedas*, it is used either in the sense of the Lord of *mantras* and *tantras*, or *Indra* the lord of the group of *devagāṇas* or an officer like a king who was the leader of the group of *gāṇas* of the Aryan race."

"Though the Aryans defeated the native Dravidians in wars when they came here, they could not obliterate their culture. They adopted many aspects of the natives' culture, and lent some of their own to it and spread the blended culture throughout India. At that time the '*Gaṇapati*' a leader of groups in the *Vedas* of Aryans was envisioned as identical with the elephant faced god, who was being worshipped by the Dravidians. The practice of worship of *Gaṇapati* is in Jains also. *Buddha* also tamed an elephant-faced female demon that was harassing people and married it in the interest of the welfare of people. That demon is none other than *Gaṇeśanī*. From this the concept of *Gaṇapati* developed in the *purāṇas*." - This is another theory.

5. "Gaṇeśa who was taken from the culture of base Dravidians became of God of Gods in India, powerful enough to be worshipped by Aryan Gods such as *Brahma*, *Vishṇu* and *Maheśvara*. He was even worshipped widely in countries like Burma, Malasiya, Indonesia, China, Sumatra, Java, etc. He not only had the power to remove hurdles but also could cause them. Everyone started worshipping him wishing that he (i.e. Gaṇeśa) may cause no obstacles in their endeavours, even though no favour may come forth. This feeling is quite natural to human beings. For this reason only, the worship of Gaṇeśa spread, not just in India but also in China, Japan and other counties. Thus, Gaṇeśa of south India not only cast his influence over the Aryans of north India, but also on counties other than India." — Some critics continue the theory on these lines.

Scholars have summed up the topic of Gaṇeśa as seen in the *Vedas*, *purāṇās*, *Itihāsas*, *smṛtis* and *sūtras* etc as under:-

In the Ṛgveda (2-23-1) the word *Gaṇapati* is used as an adjective of 'brahmanaspati'. "गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे, कविं कवीनां उपमश्रवस्तमं, 'ज्येष्ठराजम्' ब्रह्मणाम् ब्रह्मणस्पत आ नःशृण्वन् ऊतिभिः सीद सादनम् "

Indra has been addressed as *Gaṇapati* (RV 10-112-9). In the *yajurveda samhita* it is stated that animals come under the *Gaṇapatya* of *Rudra*.

Reference from the *Vedas* tell us that there are many *Gaṇapatis*. (गणपतिभ्यश्च वो नमः-शतरुद्रीय) But nowhere in the *Vedas* Gaṇeśa is depicted as either elephant-faced, or riding a rat, or pot bellied. The *Yajurveda* states that the mouse which is said to be his vehicle, is the animal of *Rudra*. (*Ākhuste paśuh*). The command that Gaṇeśa has to be worshipped before any auspicious rites are begun, is not seen anywhere in *gr̥hyasūtras* and *Dharma sūtras*. In the *bodhāyana sūtra* it is stated that 'devatarpaṇa' should be given to *Vināyaka*, *vīra*, *sthūla*, *varada*, *hastimukha*, *Ekadanta* and *lambodara*. But the authenticity of this part of the *sūtras* is yet to be ascertained. The *Mānava gr̥hyasūtra* says that all the above names refer to *Vināyaka* and that there are four *Vināyakas* viz 'śālakaṭāṅkata', *kūshmāṇḍarājaputra*, *vismita* and *devayajana*. But all these are wicked spirits. Under their spell, people suffer from misfortunes. Scriptures prescribe certain rites to get relieved from their spell. Another *gr̥hyasūtra* says that 'mitrasamhita' is another name for the *Vināyakas*.

Thus, it can be understood that, earlier the *Vināyakas* were considered as evil forces that cause different obstacles and perils. Later they were considered as auspicious deities also. *Vināyaka* was appointed as the Lord of *gaṇas* by *Brahma* and *Rudra*. "He not only causes obstacles but also

removes them and bestows victory."-Says the *Yājñavalkya smṛti*.

Yājñavalkya smṛti also says that *Ambikā* is the mother of *Gaṇeśa*. In this *smṛti* he has been referred to as 'mita, sammīta, śālakaṭankaṭa, and kūshmāṇḍarājaputra only, instead of *Ekadanta*, *Heramba*, *Gajānana* and *Lambodara* which are the famous names of *Gaṇeśa*. It also mentions the difficulties that occur if *Gaṇeśa* casts his spell on anyone.

In the 'Bodhāyana grhyasūtra', *Vināyaka* is referred to as the Lord of demons, elephant faced, Lord of obstacles, and, the offering of *naivedya* of *Modaka* and *apūpa* to him is enjoined. This *sūtra* treatise is closer to the concepts on *Gaṇeśa* of the middle ages. The subject matter of *Gaṇeśa* appearing in the *Vanaparva* and *anūsāsana parva* of *Mahābhārata* is similar to the purport which appears in *mānava grhya sūtra*. But in the *Adiparva* of *Mahābhārata* it is stated that *Gaṇeśa* took down the epic *Mahābhārata* as told by *Vedavyāsa* like a dictation. (Some are of the view that this part of the *Mahābhārata* is an interpolation).

The *Gobhila smṛti* prescribes that at the beginning of all the rituals, *gaṇādhipa* should be worshipped along with the *Mātṛdevatās*. *Kālidāsa*

does not mention the name of *Gaṇeśa*. The book 'Harsha carita' of *Bāṇabhaṭṭa* mentions that *Gaṇeśa* is *Vighnādhipati*, *Vidyādhipati*, and elephant faced. The *Mahāvīra carita* of the great poet 'Bhava bhūti' refers to the tusk of *Heramba*.

The *Vāmanapurāṇa* (chapter 54) tells us a strange story about the birth of *Gaṇeśa*. *Matsya purāṇa* instructs how *Gaṇeśa's* idols are to be made. After stating that *Gaṇeśa* has the mouse as his carriage, it makes a mention of a great gift called 'Mahābhutaghaṭa'. *Bhaviṣya purāṇa* and *Agnipurāṇa* state that the worship of *Gaṇeśa* should be done in the month of *bhādrapada* on *caturthī*.

The oldest stone edict that refers to *Gaṇeśa* dates back to the middle of seventh century A.D.

As in Hindus, the custom of worshipping *Gaṇeśa* by Jains also is found in a religious book of Jains called *Ācārādinakara*. This book describes *Gaṇeśas* having two, four, six, nine, eighteen and even one hundred and eight arms. *Narasimha purāṇa* refers to him as having a single tusk, two tusks, or four tusks.

एकदन्तं द्विदन्तं च चतुर्दन्तं चतुर्भुजम् ।

त्र्यक्षं त्रिशूलहस्तं च रक्तनेत्रं वरप्रदम् ॥

Modern scholars have collected references from different authentic works in a chronological order,

and based on them have tried to determine the development of the concept of *Gaṇeśa*. Some of them are as follows:—

“Reference to *Gaṇeśa* does not appear in the *Vedas*. He somehow earned a place among the *devatās* between the Vedic and the *Purāṇic* periods. The interval of time between *Buddha* and the *purāṇās* may be around 1000 years. He might have joined the gods of the Aryans in this time interval. The tradition of *mahāyāna* of the *Bauddhas* had evolved long before the period of the *purāṇās*. We find the descriptions of *Gaṇeśa* there. (*Gaṇeśa* in the *Bauddha* sculptures does not sport the sacred thread)”

When Aryans came towards *Brahmāvarta* they had to fight the Dravidians and other non-Aryans. Not all the non Aryans got killed in that war. As the non-Aryans were already living a highly civilized life, they incorporated the Aryan culture in theirs, and continued to live fearlessly as before. Aryans also took some deities that were being worshipped by the Non-Aryans who coexisted with them. *Nāga*, *Bhairava* etc are the non-Aryan contributions. The various spirits, devils, animals and birds; etc. came from non-Aryans. Similarly *Gaṇeśa* also is one who has come like that.

The gods and goddesses worshipped by the Aryans were well-wishers of people. The gods of

non-Aryans were inferior by nature, wicked, cruel and enemies of human beings. They were being worshipped so that they may become benign. On the other hand the Aryans worshipped their deities seeking help from them. They worshipped the non-Aryan deities they had accepted, so that no trouble is caused in their endeavours. *Gaṇeśa* belongs to this category. There were no changes in *Gaṇeśa*'s previous names. He is called *vighnarāja* and *vighneshvara* only. He was punishing not just the humans, but even those people who were pious.

He used to cause trouble even for (those who wanted to have) the *darśana* of *Vishṇu* or *Someshvara* or *Śivaliṅga*. It is said that he would even steal the religious merits of people, which they obtained by listening to *purāṇās* and sacred stories. Therefore if he is worshipped first and gratified, his army would become peaceful, and allow people to perform meritorious deeds, (they thought). This is a proof to show that *Gaṇeśa* was a non-Aryan god. Even though Aryans accepted him, he had no place in the *vaidika karmas*.

Gaṇeśa is not the legitimate son of Lord *Śaṅkara*. *Śaṅkara* adopted *Gaṇeśa* after his birth. There were a few vexations before *Gaṇeśa* obtained the status of the son of Lord *Śiva*. *Devatās* were scared of them. There was a fight with *Devatās* or

Śankara. So, this shows that there was no worship of *Gaṇeśa* in the *ĀryaDharma* in the beginning. Followers of pure *vaidika dharma* opposed the propaganda given to *Gaṇeśa*. This fight was going on for a long time. Finally, the ancient *Gaṇeśa* was included in worships and got established among *Devatās*.

The spread of *Gaṇeśa (pūja)* started first among women. Later men continued it. "*Pārvatī* gave birth to him by her power first. Later *Śiva* accepted him as his son"—This *purāṇic* legend confirms the above matter.

Aryans had to encounter many diseases and calamities after their conquest march. The original inhabitants i.e. the non-Aryans, and some low level uneducated Aryans also started worshipping these gods for warding off troubles and diseases. Aryans had accepted the existence of obstructing forces such as demons, *asuras*, *rākshasas*, and *yātudhānas*. So, it was no problem for them to accept the new obstructing forces... He was worshipped with the feeling.—"We have given you worship (bribe) which you expect from us. There is no work to be done by you. So, do not create hurdles in the way of auspicious celebrations." And, for this reason, *Vināyaka* was being worshipped a day ahead of such important programmes. And, at

the end, with the words '*vighnarāja kshamasva*' he was given a send off.

Gaṇeśa made a forcible entry into the group of the Aryan gods, and underwent many changes. Just as his form became refined, his nature also got refined.

Thus *Gaṇeśa* grew up as a popular deity as he became a bridge between non-Aryan and Aryan races. He came to be respected not only in India but also in Java, Sumatra and other Buddhist countries.

Some scholars refute the opinion that *Gaṇeśa* was a *Drāviḍian* deity earlier, and that he later joined the Aryan gods. According to them "It is doubtful whether Dravidians had the concept of *Gaṇeśa* at all. If one studies ancient literary works of the Tamil language, reference to *Gaṇeśa* is not found anywhere. Instead we clearly see that '*Murugan*' was the all popular god. We see no record about the existence of a god by the name *Gaṇeśa* at all in Tamil texts.

From the point of view of sculptural evidence, the oldest idol of *Gaṇeśa* found in south India dates back to the 8th century. The oldest idol has been found in *Mathura* of North India, which belongs to either the 4th or 5th century A.D.

Because of these, a doubt arises whether a God by name *Gaṇapati* existed at all in Dravidians.

Modern scholars have made a good study of the literature, stone edicts, paintings, sculpture and other evidences pertaining to *Gaṇeśa*. Based on that, they have put forth their opinion regarding the form, appearance and glories of *Gaṇeśa*, which we have noted hereby.

On the whole, in their opinion, *Gaṇeśa* as a God was unknown to the *Vedas* which are most ancient. In course of time the concept of that god grew into the present form. And, they give the following reasons to state that he is an image which is a product of the blend of the concept of Aryan and *Drāviḍian* cultures.

1) According to *Gaṇeśa purāṇa*, *Gaṇeśa* was to be worshipped as an elephant faced god in *dvāparayuga*, “द्वापरे तु गजाननं युगभुजं रक्ताङ्गरागं विभुम्” Earlier to that, the concept that he was elephant faced never existed. This concept was not there even in the *tretāyuga*. Then came the period of conflict between Aryans and Dravidians. At that time, the very contact between Aryans and Dravidians was most prohibited. The relationship between Aryans and Dravidians began to develop in *dvāparayuga*. Aryans then consented to the inclusion of the *Drāviḍian* god *Gaṇeśa* into the group of their gods.

2) *Gaṇeśa's* form resembles the *Onkāra* of the *devanāgarī* script of the Aryans. It also resembles

the letter ‘ā’ of Tamil the language of the Dravidians. Aryans believe that ‘*Om*’ is the origin of creation but Dravidians believe that the letter ‘ā’ is the origin. The form of *Gaṇeśa* the original God was created as a result of the blend of these two concepts.

3) There is a practice of making a small tower from cow dung and worshipping it at the beginning of *Vināyaka vrata*. This *Gaṇeśa* in the shape of this tower of cow dung is called as ‘*pillaiār*.’ The word *Pillai* in Tamil means both a child and Lord *Gaṇeśa*. The reason for the rule that the worship of *pillaiār* should be done even before the worship of elephant faced *Gaṇapati* is that *Gaṇeśa* was earlier the god of only the Dravidians.

4) We see that the idol of *Gaṇeśa* is made from wet clay which is a form of *prakṛti* (nature), and after the conclusion of the *vrata* it is given a send off by immersing it in water, which is (also) a form of nature. Dravidians have been doing the worship of nature right from the beginning. So *Gaṇeśa* is originally a concept of Dravidians only.

5) There is also a tradition of worshipping round stones and hillocks as *Gaṇapati*. Even now a huge boulder in the mountain ‘*Haraparvata*’ near *Śrīnagar* the capital city of Kashmir, is being worshipped as *Gaṇapati*. There is also a custom of

worshipping a rock as *Gaṇeśa* in a place called '*Gaṇeśa ghāṭī*'. This is a vestige of the *Drāviḍian* culture where *Nirākāra Gaṇapati* (*Gaṇeśa* without attributes) was worshipped. The concept of *Gaṇeśa*—'*gajamukha*' (elephant faced) is of later origin.

6) According to the *purāṇās*, *Gaṇeśa* is the son of *Gaurīdevī* only. Just because *Śiva* is the consort of *Gaurī*, he is considered the father of *Gaṇeśa*. *Gaurī* is the goddess of nature. That is, she is the goddess of Dravidians. Therefore basically *Gaṇeśa* happens to be a god of Dravidians as he is the son of a *Drāviḍian* goddess only. The matter that he was accepted as the son of *Śiva*, is an example of the Aryans developing relationship with Dravidians and including the *Drāviḍian* god in their group of gods.

7) The close relationship that exists between *Gaurī* and *Gaṇeśa* is not seen between *Śiva* and *Gaṇeśa*. The festival of *Gaṇeśa* comes close to *Gaurī* festival. There is a big gap of time between the festivals of *Gaṇeśa* and *Śivarātri*. *Śivarātri* is a festival of fasting, whereas *Gaurī* and *Gaṇeśa* festivals are festivals of feasting. *Gaṇeśa* is basically related to *Gaurī*, i.e. only to goddess of nature. This also indicates that *Gaṇeśa* was a god of Dravidians who worshipped nature.

8) *Gaṇeśa* has the face of an elephant and the body of a human being. His face happens to be the culture of Dravidians who worshipped nature. The remaining part of the body is a symbol of the culture of Aryans who were performing *Japa* of gods having human forms. This very image proclaims that *Gaṇeśa* is a blend of Aryan and *Drāviḍian* cultures.

"By worshipping this *Gaṇeśa*, the sentimental oneness of the Aryans and Dravidians which is nothing but the unity of the people of North and South India, can be achieved. 'Unity in diversity' is indeed a national necessity."

The above opinion of modern scholars can appeal instantly to the mind and may superficially appear correct also. Continuing their argument some may say "In our country, semetic religions such as Christianity and Islam also have a big following. To represent them also, it is commendable to add a cross and a half moon-star in the hands of *Gaṇeśa*. Then he becomes a complete God *Gaṇeśa* in a reverential form. People with sentiments of national unity should worship only this type of *Gaṇeśa* idols."

When we examine the above opinions, we do not feel inspired to worship *Gaṇeśa* in our hearts and also externally, as prescribed by our scriptures to obtain the four fold values of life viz., *Dharma*,

artha, *kāma* and *moksha*. Doubts manifest as to whether he is the natural *ādimūla gaṇapa* or a *gaṇapa* of metamorphosis. It inspires one to daydream, in addition to eating *modakas* on the day of the *Gaṇeśa* festival. Then, does it help to remove the confusions and obtain peace of mind, if the modern theories are given up and only if the scriptures and traditions are followed, to understand the true form of *Gaṇeśa*? Is there unanimity of opinion in our *Śāstras* with respect to *ādimūla Gaṇapa*? Let us examine.

Opinion of *Śāstras* on the true form of *Gaṇeśa*

Even in scriptures we do not find an unanimous opinion about his true form, that gives no room for any doubt. In some places he has been referred to as *Nirākāra*, *Onkārārūpi* and *Ādimūla*. In some other places he is described as the one having forms of an elephant face etc and as son of *Gaurī*, son of *Śiva*, and the elder brother of *Shaṇmukha* and so on. There is no unanimous opinion about his birth also. In this regard we come across many contradictory opinions in scriptures and traditions.

Anything for that matter, need not be considered best just because it is ancient.

“पुराणमित्येव न साधु सर्वम्” proclaims *Kaṭidāsa*, our national poet. But one should not forget that considering something superior just because it is

modern, or very modern, is also a kind of blind belief. “*navīnamityeva na sādhu sarvam*” We have to decide the quality of a thing based only on its true merit.

तदात्वे नूतनं सर्वं आयत्यां च पुरातनम् ।

न दोषायैतदुभयं न गुणाय च कल्पते ॥

With this discernment, we shall try to examine the abovesaid modern and ancient opinions.

“*Gaṇeśa* is basically a non-Aryan god, a god of Dravidians, an evil demon, a cruel deity, a spirit and a *piśāca devatā*, a god rejected by the traditional Aryans and a god of the vanquished race. But the victorious Aryans, in course of time, included him among their class of gods who were being worshipped” - This is the opinion on the whole, of the modern scholars.

There is a flaw in the very root of this opinion. *Jnānis* proclaim that god is a supreme truth pertinent to all times and all places. “सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तम् ब्रह्म” “अखण्डमण्डलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम्” “एकमेवाद्वितीयं ब्रह्म” When such is the case, classifying gods as Aryan gods, Dravidian Gods, Mongolian gods etc., amounts to nothing but wantonness of ignorance. The sun and the moon are not different for Aryans and Dravidians. God is also like that. The sun and moon may appear different in different arrays. But God remains as the one and only entity. Therefore,

terming God *Gaṇeśa* as *Ārya*, *Drāviḍa* or *Āryadrāviḍa*, and crowning him as a blend of both cannot be accepted by the learned.

The opinion that God *Gaṇeśa* (of Aryans or Dravidians) is a concept, is itself nothing but a crazy imagination. A god imagined that way will only be a theme for poetics, and not for of *darśanaśāstra*. *Jnānis* who have visualized the truth declare. "I am seeing god. (I am) seeing him clearly. It is not an imagination. It is not a myth. It is as true as the truth. It is the truth of truths".

"*punainduraiyen poypuhulen, sattiyam solluhinren*" "सत्यस्य सत्यमृतसत्ययोनिम्, सत्यात्मकम् त्वां शरणं प्रपद्ये"

Lord *Gaṇeśa* expounded by scriptures is a supreme truth who can be experienced thus, and is not at all a matter of poetic imagination.

We find no sound proof to state that a conflict between Aryan and *Drāviḍian* races occurred in India. It is an opinion rooted in mere imagination. Attributing *Drāviḍianness* to the *Gaṇeśa* who happens to be the offspring of that imagination, is just a thing of thoughtless delight.

If *Gaṇeśa* happens to be a form of a god who is *Satyasvarūpa* why do scriptures call him '*vighnakara*', '*vikāṭa*' lord of ghosts and demons etc? It should be noted that he is also called the remover

of obstacles *prasannavadana*, handsome, and god of gods. There are many forces which cause obstacles to all endeavours, and so they are called *vighna nāyakas* and, *Vināyakas*. "विनायकाश्च शाम्यन्ति" The Lord of such forces is *vighneśvara*—*ŚrīGaṇapati*. He is the Lord who weilds full control over all such evil forces which cause obstacles.. He overcomes all the hurdles of all those who obtain his grace. If he is not worshipped, the attacks of the obstacle causing forces will go on uninterruptedly. He is only a *Devataśakti* with the power to grace or punish staying in *Īśvarabhāva* and not at all a cruel demoniacal force. Though he is the Lord of *bhūtgaṇas*, there is no evidence to say that he is by himself a wicked *Bhūtaviśeṣa*. For example though *Kubera* is the Lord of the *yakshas*, he is a deity and not a *yaksha*. The *bhūtas* that belong to the *gaṇa* of *Gaṇeśa* are not *pretas* or *piśācas*. They are forces of divine origin. They have the power to help a person in *jnānamārga*. **Śrīraṅgamahāguru had said - "Among them (i.e. the *Bhūtas*) there are some divine entities which assist God *Rudra* during destruction. They have power both to protect or devour animals at the time of the destruction of the universe and at other times.**

Such groups of *divyabhūthas* are infinite. *Kumārasvāmi*, *nandīśa* and *candīśa* etc are the Lords of some of these *gaṇas* and they also are

called *Gaṇapatis*. But *MahāGaṇapati* is the lord of such *Gaṇapatis*. This title refers to *Śiva* as well. He is not cruel. Though ferocious to the wicked, he is the *Śivaśankara muddu gaṇapa* to his pious devotees. Just as *maheśvara* is ‘*bhayakṛt*’ and ‘*bhayanāśana*’, *Gaṇeśa* is ‘*Vighnakṛt*’ and ‘*vighnanāśana*’. He is both *prapancaṇāśabhīṣaṇa* and *vilasilokarakshaka*. *Jnānis* describe him as both *devata* and *parādevatā*. He is indeed the protector of the world, since he causes obstacles to the endeavours of demons who are a bane to the world.

The argument put forth by some modernists that *Gaṇeśa* is a god of farmers, and He is an imagined god who would put an end to the menace of elephants is ridiculous. Why should a god who is auspicious and brings happiness to all the worlds (*samastalokaśaṅkara*) be associated only with farmers? To suppose that the mouse which is his vehicle as a creature with sharp teeth that devours corns and grains, is the outcome of scant knowledge. It should be noted that the mouse is described by *jnānis* as a demon and as an obstacle to *yajnas*. Again, to argue that he was conceived to get rid of the menace of elephants is also strange. Continuing on these lines, the web of imagination can be further extended by stating that God *Narasihma* was imagined to save oneself from the menace of lions,

Varāhasvami was imagined to save oneself from the menace of pigs and to save oneself from the menace of serpents, the deity *Śeshanāga* was imagined. Can this be an honest inference?

Lord *Gaṇeśa* is not a flower of imagination. It is a distinct glory of god that clearly manifests to the inner eye. Statements like he is a god of *Anāryas*, a cruel god, an inferior god etc are nothing but arguments without substance. One has to know the honest opinion regarding *Gaṇeśa* only from his enlightened devotees who have visualized him. Such honest opinions have been imprinted in the *vedas*, history, *Itihāsas* and *Āgamas* etc. Truth can be experienced only by acquiring knowledge about him through the *Śāstras*, and doing *Upāsana* under the guidance of a *Guru*. This is the belief in our tradition.

But we come across strange statements, regarding *Gaṇeśa* which shake this belief and which are also contradictory in themselves, in the abovesaid books. Only prominent among them have been discussed here.

In some books it is stated that *Gaṇeśa* is the formless *Parabrahma*. In some other places he is described as *Sakāramūrti* (a god with a form) having the face of an elephant and holding the noose and an *ankuśa* (a special hook). So, a doubt

arises whether great souls who have realised truth can give contradictory opinions.

But when seen with proper judgement, it can be understood that there is no actual contradiction in those statements. Even though god is basically a form of divine knowledge and bliss, a form of *parañjyoti* and truth, he gives *darśan* to his devotees in various forms, only with the auspicious *saṅkalpa* of providing a blissful refuge to the devotees.

Jnānis say that they are images full of *tattvas*

न ते रूपं न चाकारो नायुधानि न चास्पदम् ।
तथापि पुरुषाकारो भक्तानां त्वम् प्रकाशसे ॥

1) Though water has no shape in its true form, it can take many shapes in the state of ice. Those who have seen water in both these states, do not see any difference in the form between water and ice. Both the statements viz Water has no shape or it has a shape are true when they refer to the distinct states of water. There is no actual contradiction in them. The descriptions of formless *Gaṇeśa* and *Gaṇeśa* with a form are of this type. **But a word of caution here. "Not all shapes imagined by mind at will, can be the forms of god *Gaṇeśa*. Only those forms seen and reported by *yogis* are fit for meditation and worship. *Yogis* of all periods of time and place, visualize only those distinct**

forms (of god), when their minds enter the particular centres. They cannot at all have a different experience in that regard. These are the variants of the manifestations of the supreme truth".—This was the explanation kindly bestowed on us by the *Mahāguru* when he was expounding the *Yogasūtra* “यथाभिमतध्यानाद्वा”

2) *Jnānis* say that the divine auspicious form of God is *Jnānānandamaya* (immersed in divine knowledge and bliss.) ‘विशुद्धज्ञानदेहाय’ ‘ज्ञानानन्दमयं देवम्’ ‘सच्चिदानन्द रूपाय’. ‘When such is the case, why the *purāṇās* say that *Pārvatī devi* created an idol from the dirt of her body, and that idol itself is *Gaṇeśa mūrti*?. The literal sense of the figurative statements of the *purāṇās* should not be taken here. *Pārvatī* is *prakṛtimātā* (mother nature). The first layer of mother nature ie the *prthvītattva* itself is termed here as her body’s dirt. And the *caitanya* (spirit) itself is *Gaṇeśamūrti* which is filled as the presiding power in that earthen mass. It may be noted here that the *Mūlādhāra* which has been stated as the abode of *Gaṇeśa* in the *Āgamas*, consists of the *prthvī* element.

3. We need not blindly assume that all the available texts pertaining to *Gaṇeśa* Viz. *Itihāsa*, *purāṇa* and *Āgamas* are *Ārsha Sāhitya* from end to end. In them, many interpolations that have been added by people at different times can be found

copiously. We have to set apart such interpolations and honour only those parts that are compatible with the philosophic principle. Even in the credible parts and evaluation, an evaluation as to which happens to be is the story part, which is figurative, which is didactic and which is the straight truth must be made. And they should be interpreted under the guidance of *jnānis*.

For example, let us consider the story of *Gaṇeśa* getting the head of an elephant. The elephant face of that god is neither an imagination of a poet nor a symbol. All the *yogis* whose minds merge in the '*mūlādhāra*', get the *darśan* of an elephant's face in a triangle. In '*yogasūtra*', that centre is called '*gajakunḍapradeśa*'. One, whose soul departs through that place, will be born as an elephant. If, in that divine elephant faced body of deity, the power of *Śiva* happens to manifest through the *kshetra* of pure disposition (*śuddhaprakṛti*) it becomes Lord '*gajānana*'. One should not misapprehend that the elephant of the inner spiritual world is just the (animal) elephant we see in the external world. Though there is similarity in shape between the two, the shape of the (elephant) in the (inner vision) is a form of '*praṇava*' only. "प्रणवस्वरूप वक्रतुण्डम्" If the turn of the trunk is to the right, it is called '*dakṣiṇāvarta*'

(*Balamuri*) *Gaṇapati* and it becomes '*mokshaprada mūrti*' (the form which grants emancipation)

When the *Upāsana* of the form of *Gaṇeśa* which has the trunk turned towards the left is done, that form bestows material enjoyment. If it enters the *tamoguṇa kshetra* (field of darkness) it becomes a demon with the face of an elephant (*gajāśura*) subdued by god *gajānana*. ("निरस्तदैत्यकुञ्जरम्")

All this is the aspect of the true principle (*tattva*). And, *Śiva* cutting off with his trident the head of the son of *Pārvati* who stopped him when he tried to enter the inner quarters of *Pārvatī*, and subsequently (his act of) fixing the head of an elephant which was sleeping with its head to the north to the body of the son of *Pārvatī* etc., is the story part.

"*Gaṇeśa* was right indeed in stopping *Śiva* from entering the inner quarters of *Pārvatī* of *Gaurī* as per the command of his mother. Why should *Śiva* cut off his head?" This question is similar to the following question "*Jaya* and *Vijaya* stopped *śanaka* and other sages as *Nārāyaṇa* had ordered that no one should be allowed inside without permission. Why did the sages curse *jaya* and *vijaya* who did their duty?" Here, God has indeed bestowed enlightenment upon *Gaṇeśa*, *jaya* and *vijaya* by awarding a small punishment for the fault of

drastically applying a general rule even under a special circumstances (not knowing that Śiva is the supreme Lord). The rule made by *Pārvatī* does not apply to Śiva who is the head of the family and the paramount Lord. The rule stated by *Nārāyaṇa* does not apply to supreme devotees like *sanaka* and other sages who are an example for the words “ज्ञानी त्वात्मैव मे मतम्”. Even so, God does show his grace to the devotees who follow his orders. We see such a favour being shown to *Gaṇeśa*, *jaya* and *viṣaya* in this story. Thus, this is a story that teaches both *tattva* and morals.

4. Some people deriding the devotees of *Gaṇeśa* say—"A dwarf elephant form, which is elephant faced and has a dangling huge belly, rides on a mouse and it has a snake tied around the belly, they say. Anyone who sees this ugly form feels repulsed and may feel frightened also. How uncivilized indeed are those who worship this as god." But the devotees call Him handsome God and cute *Gaṇapa*". Which is this beauty? And what is beauty? **When we requested Śrī Raṅgamahāguru to elucidate these, he said:—**

"The beauty of a thing lies in its natural form. A beautiful monkey does not mean an animal having limbs like a human being and grace of movements, and dress like a human being. Only if there is monkiness in its head,

body, limbs and mischievousness, it is a beautiful monkey. Similarly, when the divine forms of *Gaṇeśa*, *Narasimha* and *Bhadrakālī* etc are depicted exactly like their appearance inside, that will be their beauty. They may appear ugly and terrifying for the lay people. But, as these forms fill *sādhakas* with supreme bliss when they enter the interior which is subtle in dispositions, these natural forms (of gods) are called by the devotees as "handsome form" and a "mine of beauty." As the same inner bliss flows in them when devotees see those forms in pictures, and statues etc. they call them most beautiful. When one wants to see his own form in deities, it may appear ugly and ferocious. But when one forgets his own form and becomes one with the deities, they happen to be nothing but icons of beauty and bliss.

5. Laymen may ask—"Is it possible for that huge bellied guy to ride on a mouse"? This question occurs because they think that the mouse which is the vehicle for *Gaṇeśa*, is (like) the troublesome rodent with sharp teeth seen around.

But when viewed truly it will be understood that the mouse happens to be the chief of forces which causes obstacles to the worship of god and the rites and *Dharma*. They are stealthy forces within, which cause obstruction to the worship of god. Some

demonical forces secretly (snatch) parts of *Havis* that are offered to deities in *yajnas* both internal and external. They are the *Mūshakas*. The word ‘*mūshaka*’ is derived from the verb root ‘*mush*’ (*Musha Steye*) which means ‘to steal’. The original form of such *mūshakas* is the *mūshaka*, the vehicle of *Vighneśvara*. Can one ride on a mouse? The above said *mūshakas* in the form of obstacles ride on us (indeed.). It is not possible for us to keep them in check. But the *vighneśvara-Gaṇeśa* who is the son of *Śiva* and *śakti* subdues that demon of obstacles, and rides on it. And, that demon can cause no problem to *Gaṇeśa*.

"It is indeed God *Vighneśvara Gaṇeśa*, who, riding the obstacle demon and having total control over him, can drive him to any place of his choice or stop him anywhere at will. Even in the *purāṇās* the rat is depicted as a demon and an evil force, who tried to fight against *Gaṇeśa* but was totally defeated, surrendered to him and obtained a boon from HIM to serve him as a vehicle"—This was the valuable commentary provided by our *Mahāguru* which we humbly recall here.

‘‘हविर्मुषां प्रशास्तारं नौमि मूषकवाहनम्’’

5) In *purāṇās* we come across a story of a contest between *Gaṇeśa* and his younger brother

Kumārasvāmi. Their parents *Pārvatī* and *Parameśvara* put forth a condition that, among the two the one who circumambulates very quickly, the three worlds first, will have his marriage celebrated first. Accordingly, *Kumārasvāmi* with full enthusiasm mounted the peacock his vehicle, and set off quickly for the *Lokapradakshiṇa*. But *Gaṇeśa* started late. He was obese with a dangling belly. His carriage was a mouse. Is it possible for him to win the speed contest against *Kumārasvāmi*? But he was matchless in intelligence. On seeing *Kumārasvāmi* returning after completing the *pradakshiṇa*, *Gaṇeśa* quickly circumambulated his revered parents three times and humbly sat down in front of them. As he circumambulated his venerable parents he earned the merit which was equal to that of circumambulating the three worlds thrice. So he was adjudged the winner in the context and his marriage was performed first—This is the story.

The story is interesting. It drives home the point that parents are most venerable. There is also a message that the power of intelligence is greater than the power of the body. But at the same time we see that many people, on listening to this story, come to two harmful conclusions and offend God. They are -

1) The intelligence level of *Kumārasvāmi* is

lower than that of *Gaṇeśa*. So, the worship of *Kumārasvāmi* is inferior, and the worship of *Gaṇeśa* is superior.

a) Both *Gaṇeśa* and *Kumārasvāmi* are the worthy sons of *Mahādeva* staying in the proximity of the God of Gods. How come even they also nurture feelings like mutual envy, attachment, hatred and one-upmanship? If that is the case, they are not true *Devatātattvas*, but just personages imagined in the human mind.

When the abovesaid conclusions invade the mind (of devotees) the faith in worship of god gets reduced. So, some people interpret the story as below, to induce faith in the worship of god.

"The above story is an explanatory remark intending only a praise. It's purport is only to create devotion in the worship of *Gaṇeśa* and not in disparaging *Kumārasvāmi*. The worship of both *Gaṇeśa* and *Kumārasvāmi* is great" No doubt this interpretation is well intentioned and brilliant. It is true that such 'arthavādas' are used in many places in scriptures.

But the present story is related to the *yogabhūmi*. Only *yogis* who have realized truth can give an actual and a truthful account of it. **With high gratitude, we present here the explanation**

bestowed by Śrīraṅgagurudeva, the eminent master of yoga.

"Both *ŚrīGaṇeśa* and *ŚrīKumārasvāmi* are parts of *parañjyoti SadāŚiva*. One may reach the *akhaṇḍa mūla svarūpa* by taking refuge in any of these two. But the paths to them are different. One path is making use of many (*Siddhis*) and reaching the goal a little late. This is the path of *kumārasvāmi*. The other path is one which is direct and fast, without the roundabout use of *Siddhis*. This is the path of *Gaṇeśa*. Both paths are superior. Those who desire to reach God after acquainting themselves with *Siddhis* follow the first path. Those who wish to reach the *paratattva* without paying attention to the *siddhis*, follow the second path. The *sādhakas* may take to any of these two paths (according) to their liking and desire." Thus the abovesaid story is *tattva pradhāna*. The issue of competition or respect or disrespect between gods does not arise at all here. A universal truth which can be comprehended by *sādhakas* by own experience is expounded here.

6) 'Gaṇeśa's marriage'—is an adage in Kannada which means a marriage that continues for ever, i.e. the marriage that will never happen. According to this there is no marriage at all for *Gaṇeśa*. He is always a *Brahmacāri*. But in some places (in scriptures) it is stated that has a wife by

name *vallabhā*. We also see statements that he has two wives, ‘*Siddhiśaktidevī*’ and ‘*muktiśaktidevī*’ or *Siddhi* and *buddhi*’.

We see the idol of *ŚaktiGaṇapati* with *śaktidevī* sitting on his lap. "Why do *Śāstras* say in one place that he is unmarried and at some other places that he is married? Are these mere poetic words conjured up whimsically? This is the question which arises here. Some try to clarify thus- "Earlier he was not married. But he married later. So there is no contradiction in the above statements". But this clarification happens to be one which has emerged from mere intellectual speculation. It carries no value in the divine field.

In reality these are different forms in the worship of *Gaṇeśa*. There is a path of meditating upon *Gaṇeśa* in the ‘*kevala*’ form. The presence of forces such as *Siddhi* will not be there. In common parlance, that form may be called ‘*Avivāhita Gaṇeśa*’. When that form is worshipped, the tranquil auspicious form (*Śivasvarūpa*) that is behind the divine force can be experienced. But *Gaṇeśa* also has the power to grant *Siddhis* such as *aṇimā* and others. As these *siddhis* are always under his control, they may be called ‘wives’ in worldly language. If this ‘householder’ *Gaṇeśa* is worshipped, *siddhis* are obtained. It will result in worldly prosperity also.

If *brahmacāri Gaṇapati* only is worshipped, spiritual elevation is obtained. God does not have *vikāras* such as desire, anger etc., like human beings. He is *satyakāma* and *sathyasaṅkalpa*. The *śaktis* related to his *satyakāma* and *satyasankalpa* are called as his wives figuritively. There are circumstances where these forces along with the supreme god give *darśana* in the *saguna Sākāra* form. And the weapons held by *Gaṇeśa* such as *pāśa*, *ankuśa*, *paraśu* (axe) etc happen to be his distinct forces. Thus, Lord *Gaṇeśa* grants *Siddhi* and *mukti* directly or by (*paramparā*) (Successively).

7) Some enigmatic questions such as, whether *Gaṇeśa* is just one god or are there many *Gaṇeśas*? Does he belong to *Śivagaṇas* Or does he belong to *Vishṇugaṇa* etc arise in our mind. If we study the scriptures we get clear solutions to these questions. *Vasus*, *rudras*, *Ādityas*, *maruts* etc. happen to be *gaṇadevatās*. Each of these *gaṇas* has a *Gaṇapati*. Among these *Gaṇapatis*, referring to only the most important *Gaṇapati* who belongs to the *Śivagaṇa* is called as *mahāGaṇapati* is well known.

As *Śivapurāṇa* puts it, there are many *Gaṇapatis* among *Śivagaṇas*. A work ‘*śatarudrīya mahāsamhita*’ mentions this. “गणेशो गणपतिश्च वो नमः”

Nandīśa, caṇḍīśa, Kumārasvāmi, Vīrabhadra and others are also *Gaṇapatis*. *Gajānana* the most important and principal lord of all these *Gaṇapatis* is called ‘*mahāGaṇapati*’. All *Gaṇapatis* are not ‘*gajānanas*’.

In the *gaṇas* of *mahāVishṇu* also, there is a *vighneśvara* by name ‘*gajānana*’. ‘गम् गजाननाय नमः’ ‘यस्य द्विरदवक्त्राद्याः पारिषद्याः परश्शतम्’ ॐ नमो गजवक्त्राद्यैः पारिषद्यैः प्रशासते । श्रीरङ्गराजसेनान्ये सूत्रवत्या समेषुषे’

Śrīmadbhāgavatamahāpurāṇa, Śrīpāñcarātra, and *Śrīvaikhānasāgamas* state that the name ‘*vishvakṣena*’ applies to the *MahāGaṇapati* of the *Vishṇupārshadas* who is the Lord of this ‘*gajānana*’ *Gaṇapati* and many other ‘*vighneśvaras*’.

दुर्गा विनायकं व्यासं विष्वक्सेनम् गुरुन् सुगन् (भागवत 11, 27, 29)

दत्त्वाऽचमनमुच्छेषं विष्वक्सेनाय कल्पयेत् (भागवत 11, 27, 43)

In *Śrī pāñcarātra vaikhānasāgamas* the worship of this *vishvakṣena* is an inseparable part of *Vishṇu pūja*.

Here, we humbly recall the great words of *Śrīraṅgamahāguru* who had stated that the place of *mahāGaṇapati* belonging to *mahāŚivagaṇa* is ‘*mūlādhāra*’ and the place of *vishvakṣena mahāGaṇapati* belonging to *Vishṇu mahāgaṇa* is ‘*maṇipūraka*’.

Then, which mark has to be drawn on (the forehead etc) *Gaṇeśa* at the time of worship?

Tiryakpundra or *Ūrdhvapundra*? This question also gets an answer here. If the Lord that is worshipped is the *MahāGaṇapati* of *Śiva*’s troops, he should be adorned with *Tiryakpundra*. If it is ‘*vishvakṣena*’ *MahāGaṇapati*, the commander of the troops of *Vishṇu*, he should be adorned with *Ūrdhvapundra*.

8) Some people contend that *Gaṇeśa* is not at all a *vaidik* god because there are no *Vedic* hymns in praise of *Gaṇapati*’.

Is not *Gaṇeśa* a *Vedic God*, as the *vaidika sūkta* ‘आ तू न इन्द्र क्षमन्तम्’ appearing in the eighth *maṇḍala* of *R̥gveda* is being used in *Gaṇeśa pūja*? The above *vedic* hymn clearly refers to the deity *Indra*. There is no description of *Gaṇapati* of *Śiva* or *Vishṇu* (*gaṇas*) there. The word ‘*mahāhastī*’ appearing in the *mantra* does not mean a big elephant or an elephant faced god. It means a god with a big hand and an ‘*Ajānubāhu*’ (long arms extending up to the knee) - It also means the one who has a liberal and a charitable hand. (But the tradition of using this *sūkta* in *Gaṇeśa pūja* has come down to us from a long time). But, just for this reason, Lord *gajānana* who is spiritually experienced by *jñānis* should not be called a non-*vaidik* god. *Vedas* are compositions of spiritual experiences of *jñānis*. Though a clear description of that god is not available in the *vedic samhitās*, he is indeed a *Vaidikadevatā*, as he is realized through *jñāna*. There is a clear *Dhyāna*

mantra of a god who is ‘*vakra tunḍa*’ and *Danti* in an *upanishat* related to ‘*yajnikī devatās*’ who figure among the gods worshipped in *navakāṇḍarshitarpaṇa*.

ॐ तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे वक्रतुण्डाय धीमहि ।
तन्नो दन्तिः प्रचोदयात् ।

This *upanishat* is esteemed by *Āpastamba*, *bodhāyana* and other *yājusha grhyasūtrakāra maharshis*. There is no evidence for the objection that it is a later interpolation.

A garland of *vedic* verses called ‘*Gaṇeśa sūktā*’ is being used in the *abhisheka* of *Gaṇeśa* and in his praise. In this garland of *vedic* verses ,

आ तू न इन्द्र क्षुमन्तम् चित्रं ग्राभम् सम् गृभाय। महाहस्ती दक्षिणेन॥१॥
विद्या हि त्मा तुविकूर्मिं तुविदेष्णं तुवीमघम् । तुविमात्रमवोभिः ॥२॥
न हि त्वा शूर देवा न मर्तासो दित्सन्तम् । भीमं न गाम् वारयन्ते ॥३॥
एतोन्विन्द्रम् स्तवामेशानम् वस्वः स्वराजम् । न राधसा मर्धिषन्तः ॥४॥
प्र स्तोषदुप गासिषच्छ्रवत्साम गीयमानम् ।
अभिराधसा जुगुर्त् ॥५॥
आ नो भर दक्षिणेनाभि सव्येन प्र मृश॥
इन्द्र मानो वसोर्निभाक् ॥६॥
उपक्रमस्वा भर धृषता धृष्णो जनानाम् । अदाशूष्टरस्य वेदः॥७॥
इन्द्र य उ नु ते अस्ति वाजो विप्रेभिः सनित्वः ।
अस्माभिः सुतं सनुहि ॥८॥
सद्योजुवस्ते वाजा अस्मभ्यं विश्वश्चन्द्राः । वशैश्च मक्षू जरन्ते ॥९॥

The *sūktā* of *Rgveda* (8-81) beginning with “आ

तू न इन्द्र क्षुमन्तम्’ adorns the eight *maṇḍala*, the *mantra* “गणानां त्वा गणपतिम्” adorns the second *maṇḍala* of *ṛgveda* and also the second chapter *taittirīya samhitā* of *yajurveda*, and the two *Ṛks* viz “नि षु सीद गणपते” adorn the tenth *maṇḍala* of *Rgveda*. This garland of *mantras* can be translated as follows:

"O lord *Indra*! You have big hands. Hold in your right hand the money that is great, wonderful and worthy of acceptance, for my sake. We know that you are the one of multitude of actions, a bestower of plenty, the one who possesses a lot of money, vast and endowed with various protections. Come, let us praise *Indra*, the owner of wealth, and the one who is self luminous. Let not others torment us with money. Let *Indra* also praise well the name we sing, sing along with us and listen along with us. Let him accept us, facing us with money. O *Indra*, get us wealth from your right hand. Touch us well with your left hand too. Do not make us nonclaimants for money. O! destroyer of wicked people, coming near us, get us with a firm mind the money of a person who is not charitable. O *Indra*! You possess food which is consumed by the learned. Give it to us who are begging for that. Your food which brings delight to all, will come to us fast. People with desires praise you quickly".

गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे कविं कवीनाममुपमश्रवस्तमम्

ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणां ब्रह्मणस्पत आ नः शृण्वन्नूतिभिः सीद सादनम् । (ऋग्वेद 2-23-1 तै.सं. 2-3-14-3)

I invite you, who is the *Gaṇapati* of all *gaṇas*, poet among poets (great *jnāni* among *jnānis*). You possess food and fame which can be compared to the best, you are *jyestharāja* of *mantras*. You are the Lord of *Brahmas* (i.e. of *Mantras*, *karmas* and food), please come with protections and be seated.

नि षु सीद गणपते गणेषु त्वामाहुर्विप्रतमं कवीनाम् ।

न ऋते त्वत्क्रियते किं चनारे महामर्कं मघवन् चित्रमर्च ॥

अभिख्यानो मघनवन्नाधमानान्त्सखे बोधि वसुपते सखीनाम् ।

रणं कृधि रणकृत्सत्यशुष्माभक्ते चिदा भजा राये अस्मान् ॥ (ऋग्वेद - 10-112-9, 100)

("O *Gaṇapati*! Please be seated. You are called the most enlightened among the *gaṇas*. No rites can be performed either nearby or far away without you. O (*Indra*!) the wealthy one! Honour this venerable praise. O *Maghavan*! Friend! Owner of riches! Consider us as friends who are begging you. Make us powerful and influential. O! the one who has true (real) power! Warrior! Fight the wars. Even though we are deprived of sharing, make the part of money reach us.")

Some scholars raise an objection here- "In this garland of *mantras* the first and the last parts clearly refer to *Indra*. We see the words *Indra* and *maghavā* which denote *Indra* only. The middle part

of the *mantras* indicates *brahmaṇaspati* (or *brhaspati*). There are no words here which are designated for *Gaṇeśa* only. Mistaking the words *Mahāhastī* and *Gaṇapati* to mean a big elephant and the Lord of *Śivagaṇas*, people are using these verses for the worship of *Gaṇeśa*. In reality *Gaṇeśa* is not a vedic god at all. How is it proper to praise him with vedic verses?" Our answer to this is as follows:. There is no objection to use the above *mantras* for the worship of *Indra* and *brahmaṇaspati*. It is clear that the purport of the *mantras* refers to them. It is also true that *Indra* and *Brahmaṇaspati* are stated as deities in the precepts which mention the ancient *Ṛshi*, *Devatā*, *chandās* and *Viniyoga*. But it is not inappropriate to use the above *mantramāla* in the worship of Lord *Gaṇeśa* who is renowned in *purāṇās* and *Āgamas*, because the purport of these *mantras* suit Lord *Gaṇeśa* as well. The word *Indra* also means the one who possesses supreme wealth and the word 'maghavā' means the one who is endowed with riches also. In this sense these adjectives apply to *Gaṇeśa* also. No auspicious rite is done without the worship of *Gaṇeśa* at the beginning. And, the sentence with the meaning 'no karma either nearby or far away is done without you' suits *Gaṇeśa* also. So these *mantras* may be used for the worship of both *Indra* and *brahmaṇaspati*, and the worship of

mahāgaṇapati. We see that there are many *vinīyogas* for the same *mantra* in many places in the rules related to *vaidika kriyā kānda*.

And one more thing has to be noted here. To know which *mantra* applies to which god, it is necessary to study the meaning of that *mantra*. And, which god is touched by the chanting of a particular *mantra* and which deity's centre is blossomed by that, also need to be observed. When observed from the second point of view it is found that it works in the 'mulādhāra centre' which is the place of *Gaṇeśa* and so, it is proper to use it for the worship of *Gaṇeśa* who is renowned in *purāṇās* and *Āgamas*.

In the "*Mahānārāyaṇa*" which is a part of *taittirīya upanishat*, a god with a curved trunk and an ivory tusk is clearly praised. Just because clear references to *Gaṇeśa* are not found in most of the *Vedamantrās* available to us, it is audacious to consider *Gaṇeśa* himself as a non-vedic deity. A deity who has come to be experienced by *jnānis* happens to be a vedic deity only, even though he is not found in the *Vedamantrās* terminologically speaking. Because he is *veda* (*jnāna*) *Gocara* (visualized by Veda i.e. *jnāna*).

9. Some say "The features of beauty or handsomeness in people are, a tall body, slim

stomach and a broad chest. Instead of conceiving the form of *Gaṇeśa* endowed with the above features, why should we comprehend him as one with a short form and a dangling stomach?

This is a childish question. God's form will not be according to our imagination. One should meditate upon that form, which has been realized and experienced by *jnānis* and under their guidance only. Otherwise (meditating upon some form of our liking) amounts to meditating upon a doll of our imagination. The forms of gods do not appear differently to different people. When a person reaches the particular centre (field) of that deity, the form realized by *darśana* will be distinct, and will be one and the same for all.

If one looks at the short stature and a dangling belly (of *Gaṇeśa*) from the physical view point of, it may look ugly. But if one honestly enters the spiritual field, the form will be attractive and blissful. This is the experience of *jnānis*.

Some mock at *Gaṇeśa*—"What has *Gaṇeśa* stuffed in his dangling belly? *Modakas*? or flesh and fat?" It is not right. Because, the form of God is *Aprākṛta*. It is full of effulgence. How can it consist of sweet meat, flesh and fat? He is the Lord in whose sovereignty the twenty one *tattvās* are hidden within. When our mind merges in that

image, we will have the *darśana* of those twenty one (*tattvas*).

We see that the *Śāstras* state that the number twenty one is of special significance to *Gaṇeśa*. The things needed in his service viz., the leaves, flowers, *modakas* and *namaskāras* - are all twenty one in number. Why should this number be twenty one only? Is it not a mere imagination one may ask. No, it is not like that. As he is the Lord of twenty one *tattvas*, it is natural to remember that number, at every stage of his worship.

10. We come across a story related to *Śrī Gaṇeśa* and *candra*. On the day of his festival, *Gaṇeśa* was riding a mouse with a snake tied around his belly. Seeing that big bellied short elephant faced *Gaṇeśa*, *candra* began to laugh loudly. *Gaṇeśa* got enraged and pronounced a dreadful curse-‘If anyone happens to see you on the day of *Gaṇeśa cauti*, he shall be an object of a false accusation.’ And, *Gaṇeśa* provided a relief also by saying that if the story of *Śrīkr̥ṣṇa*’s finding of ‘*Syamantakamaṇi*’ is listened to, the stigma of false accusation shall vanish.

Here many questions naturally arise. "How can a satellite, ie the moon can make fun of *Gaṇeśa*? Does it make any sense? What is wrong if one looks at that satellite on *Cauti*? How does it lead to a false

accusation? How can one get freed from that by listening to the story of *syamantakamaṇi*? Etc.

A doubt arises here -"Has any *Harikathādāsa* (traditional story teller) composed this story with the intention of causing some fear in the minds of people and making them somehow to listen to the *upakhyāna* of ‘*syamantakamaṇi*.’"

But actually this is a story relating to *tattvas*. It is not correct to take it’s meaning literally as an incident which actually happened in the past. It is also not right to ridicule the story without properly understanding the *tattva*.

It is a story which answers some questions viz "What will be the effect on our mind when some events happening in nature are witnessed by us? Does it help in the *Upāsana* of a deity or does it cause some adverse effect?

“न तुलस्या गणेशानं न केतव्या सदाशिवं”—As per these words of *Śivapurāṇa* one should not worship *Gaṇeśa* with *tulasi* (holy basil), because the sight and fragrance of *tulasi* closes the inner (spiritual) centers related to *Gaṇeśa*. The touch of ‘*ketaki*’ flower (screw pine) reduces the effect in the spiritual centers related to the *darśana* of *Śiva*. Likewise, seeing the (moon) on *cauti* impedes the worship of *Gaṇeśa*. The Sun is the reigning deity of

buddhitattva and the moon is the reigning deity of *manastattva*.

अन्तश्चन्द्रमसि मनसा चरन्तम्

चन्द्रमा मनसो जातः

आदित्यो ग्रसते चन्द्रम् आत्मना ग्रस्यते रविः

And *Manastattva* itself is also referred to as *candra*.

The last among the twenty one *tattvās* under the reign of *Gaṇeśa* is the mind. The twenty one true principles are the *pañcabhūtās*, *pañca karmendriyās*, *pañca jñānendriyās*, *pañcatanmātras* and the mind. When the restrained mind is merged in the inner sky of knowledge (*jñānākāśa*), one experiences the glory of *Gaṇeśa*. On the night of *Gaṇeśa caturthī* one should be under such a restraint, and keep blissfully experiencing the true form (*nijasvarūpa*) of *Gaṇeśa*. Instead of doing so, if one indulges in seeing the form of *candra* (moon) in the external sky, he may fail to comprehend the glory of *Gaṇeśa*, and instead, may pervertedly mock at his form. As a result, the inner spiritual centers which remove torments do not open up, and the centers which cause infamy and accusations, get opened up. The solution to this annoyance, as per the words of *Upanishads* and *tantraśāstras* viz.

“आप्नोति मनसस्पतिम्” “चेतचञ्चकति चेतनासिः” “अर्धमात्रात्मकः कृष्णः यस्मिन् सर्वं प्रतिष्ठितम्”

is by listening with faith and devotion to the *upākhyāna* of *syamantakamaṇi* that routs out blasphemy and which happens to be the *Līla* of *ŚrīKṛṣṇa* the supreme master of *Manastattva*, and by praying God. It helps in giving up the thought of seeing the moon outside, and, in making the mind which is the *candra* within, to surrender to God *Gaṇeśa*, and enjoy his glory blissfully submitted. *Jñānis* say that the purpose of the above story is to make lay persons understand this principle in a pleasing way.

11. *Gaṇeśa* has been described in some places as the son of *Śiva*, his servant, remover of obstacles and a deity who grants knowledge, wealth, progeny, fortunes, health and other wordly benefits. In some other places he is described as the supreme Lord who bestows *moksha*. Which of these two is true? This is the question that invades our mind. **Śrīraṅgagurudeva had stated that the answer can be clearly found in the practice of yoga and experiences. "In the Upāsana of Gaṇeśa, if the mind is drawn from Mūlādhara to Maṇipūraka and made to merge there, only the above said wordly Siddhis can be obtained by the grace of that Śivaputra. And, if the mind is drawn further**

upwards and made to merge in *SadaŚiva* of *Sahasrāra* who happens to be the 26th *tattva*, one will be benefited with supreme bliss, supreme peace and emancipation. “सहस्रारे महापद्मे शिवेन सह मोदते”

12. "Generally (devotees) place a god's idol in the *pūja* room and worship with great devotion and faith every day. They protect it from getting defiled, mutilated and from such other offences that may happen. This is the natural way of the devotees. But there is a strange practice in the worship of *Gaṇeśa* on *Gaṇeśa caturthī*. After worshipping it for (a stipulated) period of time, they immerse it in the waters of a lake or a pond. The presence of divine forces in that idol which has been specially worshipped for a long time with devotion must be quite high indeed. Then why indeed such an idol of god is discarded in water as if it is a *Nirmālya*?" - This is a question which arises naturally.

The students of a higher secondary school who were familiar to me, performed *Gaṇeśa pūja* on *Gaṇeśa caturthī* and took the idol in a grand procession and immersed it in a lake as per tradition, and returned. Some students studying in the same school, belonging to other religious faiths, taunted them in a tone of ridicule—"O! You are back after drowning your god in water"! The students who had performed the send off of the deity were

unable to give an appropriate reply to them, but only expressed their anger. If we also cannot get a satisfactory answer when such question confronts our mind too, it causes commotion in the minds of the staunch devotees also.

A mind which has faith in traditions and customs, searches for various answers to this problem. One person gave an answer saying that the immersing of *Gaṇeśa* in water is a symbol of washing off our sins in water. But this (reply) will only lead to contempt and derision. How can sins get redeemed if the idol of god is let in water? Only sins can get accrued by throwing the merit yielding idol in water, and how can it remove sins? This will be the question again.

Some others propose another solution. They say "We worship *Gaṇeśa* with extraordinary purity, customs and services on *Gaṇeśa caturthī*. It is not possible to worship him every day with the same level of purity, customs and services. It amounts to an offence to god if he is not worshipped in that special level. So it is safe to immerse the specially worshipped idol of god in water in the above said manner." This answer also does not stand the test of reason. Because, *Śāstras* accept the discarding of an idol of god in water, if it is broken or mutilated. If a *Śivaliṅga* or a *sāligrama* happen to get broken in the vital places, they are discarded in water, and it

is also *Śāstrasammata* (permitted by *śāstras*). But why should an idol of *Gaṇapati*, which is free from any deformity, which is complete and beautiful, be immersed in water? If someone were to say "It is not possible to worship everyday in the prescribed manner; and so we are immersing the idol in water", a counter question arises—"In that case, those who can afford to worship everyday as per precepts, need not immerse the *Gaṇeśa* idol in water, isn't it?" But even such people have the custom of immersing the idol of *Gaṇeśa* in water, which is worshipped on *Gaṇeśa caturthī*. Therefore the above answer does not satisfy us. Not all idols of *Gaṇeśa* are immersed in water. The image of *Gaṇeśa* made of stone or metal which is worshiped in '*pañcāyatana*' (five forms of god- *Gaṇeśa*, *Śiva*, *Vishṇu*, *sun* and *Pārvatī*) *pūja* everyday, is not immersed in water. Only the *Gaṇeśa* invoked in the idols of clay on *Gaṇeśa caturthī* is immersed in water.

"There is a custom of performing the *udvasanā* of *Gaṇeśa* mentally who is worshipped every day with invocation and sixteen types *upacāras*. So, why not perform the *udvāsanā* of *Gaṇeśa* in this way who is worshipped on *Gaṇeśa caturthī*? Why immerse in water only? If one is not able to worship, can he not give it to other devotees who wish to worship it? Or, if such persons do not come by, the idol may be kept in a place where it won't be treaded

upon. It may be buried in a pit. What is the purpose of immersing in water only"? Such questions also arise.

The answer to the above questions should not be searched in the intellectual realm and not in the imaginary world also. Because, *Gaṇeśa* is beyond intellectual thoughts and imaginations, and is a *satyamūrti* who can be realized by experience in the hearts *jnānis*. Right answers for the doubts pertaining to him can be found only in the '*yogabhūmi*'. **Here we shall place forth the answers for the above doubt, which were graced by Śrīraṅgagurudeva the eminent Yogi.**

"There are many categories in the divine forms of *Gaṇeśa*. The form of *Gaṇeśa* known as '*Siddhi Vināyaka*' should be worshipped with a special *saṅkalpa* on that day to obtain relief from the *tāpa-trayas*. At that time, great *yogis* worship *Gaṇeśa* at *Mūlādhāra* and merge their mind in *Gaṇeśa* at *Maṇipūraka* which is above that (*Mūlādhara*). To obtain relief from the above said *Tāpa-trayās*, the merging of the mind in *Maṇipūraka* is sufficient. *Mūlādhara* is the place of '*prthivī*' *tattva*. *Yogis* merge *prthivī tattva* in *jalatattva* in their inner world in the abovesaid manner. The great sages who are also *Mahāyogis* have taught a *tantra* to provide the experience of the inner world to those who are not *yogis*, and to

give an education which is in accordance with the experience of the inner world. That is, to immerse the *Gaṇeśa* made of clay which is the external form of *pr̥thivī* (*tattva*) in the pure water of a lake, which is the external form of '*jalatattva*', as per scriptural precepts.

"If one immerses the clay *Gaṇeśa* in water with the wish "Let *pr̥thivī tattva* get merged in *jalatattva* inside me", then the mind travels inwards in the spiritual centers of *laya* of the inner world, and helps for the easy fulfillment of our desires and wealth."

पृथिवीतो जले लीनं विभाव्यान्तर्महर्षिभिः ।

यस्यार्प्यते जलाधारे बहिः पार्थिव विग्रहः ॥

"The idol of *Gaṇeśa* to be worshipped on that day should have the trunk bent to the left. Those who desire only '*brahmajñāna*' should worship an idol of '*Balamurī*' *Gaṇeśa*. Then the mind moves crossing the '*cakrasthāna*' (places of mystical wheels) that are above *maṇipūraka*, and travels upwards upto *sahasrāra* and then merges in *sahasrāra*. So, the immersion of the clay idol of *Gaṇeśa* which is worshipped on *Gaṇeśa caturthī* in a lake, is a great external *yajna* which fosters the internal *yajna*".—**We gratefully remember Śrīgurumūrti who drove home the tattvārtha**

pertaining to the *Yogabhūmi* in this way, which is both authentic and beautiful.

4. *Āgamās* tell us that there are twenty-one or thirty-two types of the *mūrtis* (forms) of *Gaṇeśa*. *Mudgala purāṇa* enumerates thirty two types. They are, *bāla Gaṇapati*, *taruṇa Gaṇapati*, *bhakta Gaṇapati*, *vīra Gaṇapati*, *śakti Gaṇapati*, *dvija Gaṇapati*, *siddha Gaṇapati*, *ucchishṭa Gaṇapati*, *vighna Gaṇapati*, *kshipra Gaṇapati*, *heramba Gaṇapati*, *Lakshmī Gaṇapati*, *mahā Gaṇapati*, *vijaya Gaṇapati*, *nṛtya Gaṇapati*, *Ūrdhva Gaṇapati*, *Ekākshara Gaṇapati*, *vara Gaṇapati*, *tryakshara Gaṇapati*, *kshipraprasāda Gaṇapati*, *haridrā Gaṇapati*, *Ekadanta Gaṇapati*, *sṛshṭi Gaṇapati*, *uddanda Gaṇapati*, *Rṇamocaka Gaṇapati*, *Dhundhi Gaṇapati*, *dvimukha Gaṇapati*, *trimukha Gaṇapati*, *simha Gaṇapati*, *yoga Gaṇapati*, *durgā Gaṇapati* and *sankashtahara Gaṇapati*.

बालस्तरुणभक्तश्च वीरशक्तिर्द्विजस्तथा ।

सिद्धउच्छिष्टविघ्नेशौ क्षिप्रो हेरम्बनामकः ॥

लक्ष्मीगणपतिश्चैव महाविघ्नेश्वरस्तथा ।

विजयःकल्पनृत्तश्चाप्यूर्ध्वविघ्नेश उच्यते ॥

एकाक्षरो वरश्चैव त्र्यक्षरः क्षिप्रदायकः ।

हरिद्राख्यश्चैकदन्तः सृष्टिरुदण्डनामकः ॥

ऋणमोचनको दुग्धिः द्विमुखस्त्रिमुखस्तथा ।

सिंहो योगश्च दुर्गा च देवस्सङ्कटहारकः ॥

द्वात्रिंशद्विघ्नराजाख्यः तेषां ध्यानमथोच्यते ॥

Among these idols *ucchishṭaGaṇapati* has been a target of special criticism. "He has a blue lotus, a pomegranate, a *vīṇa*, an ear of paddy, a *gulaganji* (abrus pectorius), and a rosary in his hands. He is dark complexioned." This is the description of *Ucchishṭa Gaṇapati*.

नीलाब्जदाडिमीवीणाशालिगुञ्जाक्षसूत्रकम् ।

दधदुच्छिष्टनामा यः गणेशः पातु मेचक्रः ॥

According to another description he has placed his trunk in the *yoni* of *devi* and is infatuated with love (passion).

“योनीविनिहितकरम्” “नारीयोनीरसास्वादलोलुपं काममोहितम्”

The second description has caused a feeling of disgust in many people, and it is quite natural. "This *Gaṇeśa* is the imagination of only lustful people who have done so just to satiate their bad taste. This is the meanest among imaginations"—This is the wrath expressed by many. By worshipping this form of *Gaṇeśa* how can the mind get pure?"—Questions like these occur naturally. We shall give hereby, answers to some of those questions.

The answers should be taken here with discrimination which is free from preconceived notions. The male and female genital organs are created in the body for a specific purpose, just like the hands, feet, eyes, etc. They are not vile by

themselves. They become vile only when they are used in a sinful way which is opposed to *Dharma*. If they are used as per precepts for righteous progeny and for *Kāma* not opposed to *Dharma*, they won't be sinful or vile. Scriptures state that the *Gaṇeśa* described above should be worshipped by those who desire the *purushārtha* viz *kāma* which is not opposed to *Dharma*, with a pure mind. There is no rule that all should worship this *ucchishṭaGaṇapati*. But others need not look at such worshippers or that idol with contempt. One should not forget that there is also a form of *Gaṇeśa* viz. '*yoga Gaṇapati*' who, in the *Yogārūḍha* posture, becomes *yogapaṭṭābhirāma* and shines like the morning sun, wears a sapphire coloured cloth, holds the *pāśa*, a sugarcane staff, a rosary and a *yogadanḍa*, and wards off obstacles to *yoga*.

योगारूढो योगपट्टाभिरामः

बालार्कभश्चेन्द्रनीलांशुकाद्यः ।

पाशेक्ष्वक्षान् योगदण्डम् दधानो

पायान्तित्यं योगविघ्नेश्वरो नः॥

It is Lord *SiddhiVināyaka* who is worshipped on *Gaṇeśacaturthī* and not *ucchishṭa Gaṇapati*. Even then, incidentally we shall discuss about *ucchishṭagaṇapti* who figures in the *Gaṇeśadevatākālpa*, as his form has caused disturbance in minds of a lot of people, and with the

intention that the peace of mind required for the worship of *Gaṇeśa* shall not get affected.

1) Why is the name ‘*ucchishṭā Gaṇapati*’ given to the above form of *Gaṇeśa*?

Ucchishṭā generally means defiled food (*enjalū* in Kannada). Is it proper to associate an adjective that denotes an impure thing with god who is very pure?

Answer to this question is as follows:- Though the *samskr̥ta* word *ucchishṭa* means defiled food in common usage, it does not connote the same sense in all the contexts. The literal meaning of the word is, "Remaining at the top". The usage has come into vogue because some left over food remains after lunch. This is correct also. And this word can be applied widely to *paramātman* also. Because it is only *Paramātman* who is visualized after all the inborn defects related to nature in us vanish. The *Atharvaśruti* says that *R̥k*, *Sāma*, *Yajus* and *Purāṇetihāsas* - all these are born of *Paramātman* and are called by the name ‘*Ucchishṭa*’. Also, in the usages of learned persons as in

ऋचस्सामानि यजूंषि पुराणं सेतिहासकम् ।

उच्छिष्टाज्जिरे सर्वे भवानेकः शिष्यते शेषरूपः ॥ (भागवत-दशमस्कन्ध)

योगाष्टाङ्गैरुज्ज्वलितज्ञानमयाग्नौ दग्ध्वात्मानं ज्ञं परिशिष्य विदुर्यम्”
(श्री शङ्करभगवत्पाद-“हरिमीडे” स्तोत्र) the words ‘*śishṭa*’, ‘*ucchishṭa*’, and *pariśishṭa* which are the derivatives

of the same verb root, denote the *paramātman* only. So it is proper that the word ‘*ucchishṭa*’ has been used as an adjective of God at some places, who is indeed the pure thing that remains after all the attributed defects are gotten rid off.

2) Observing that ‘*Ucchishṭa Gaṇapati*’ is described as keeping his trunk in the *yonī* of devi, some have criticized—“This is a vile imagination. It is a mark of the uncultured. Only lustful and gluttonous people have imagined a form of god according to their whims”—This is right, isn’t it?

Answer: - This criticism is certainly not correct. Womb and phallus are *Karmendriyās*, like the hands, feet, tongue and the anus; they are not vile by themselves. Nor are they despicable. If they are used for despicable and evil purposes, they become evil. If they are used naturally and within the parameters of *Dharma*, they become pure only. For example, hands and feet become evil if they are used for beating and kicking innocent persons. The tongue gets degenerated by bad speech. But if these sense organs are used for worshipping god, going to the temple and for praising the lord, they become great, as they are used for commendable endeavours.

"Devotees of god tell this very thing.—‘जिह्वे कीर्तय केशवम्, पाणिद्वन्द्व समर्चय, हरेः गच्छाङ्घ्रियुग्मालयम्’” (*Śrī Kulaśekhara’s mukundamāla stotra*). So also, no

blemish is incurred if good householders use the above private organs for obtaining spiritually inclined progeny, and enjoyment not opposed to *Dharma*, at appropriate times. As they become instruments for only *Dharmasādhana* They become pure. (‘‘प्रजातिरमृतमानन्द इत्युपस्थे’’ - तै.उ.) If *brahmacāris* and *sanyāsis* use them for the above activities or even think of such activities, the organs become sinful (evil). There is no doubt in the fact that if the energies are not allowed to flow down through the organs, and on the other hand, are drawn upwards through *Dhyāna* etc, they become extraordinarily useful for the *Ātmalābha* of all.

3. Is there proof in the *śāstras* to state that those private organs are pure? Are there details?

Answer: - What is said above is a description conforming to the *Śāstras* only. The genital organs are purified in the ritual of *garbhādhāna* by the *mantras* like विष्णुर्योनिं कल्पयतु त्वष्टा रूपाणि पिङ्गशतु’ (Let *Vishṇu* create the *yonī*). In the *tantra Śāstras*, invoking of gods in them and worshipping them (the gods) is prescribed. In *mantrayoga*, *Bijāksharanyāsa* is prescribed in those organs also at the time of *aṅganyāsa*. Scriptures state that after external purification of hands, feet and other organs of action by water and mud, they should be purified specially by the remembrance and worship of

parañjyoti. The scriptures list the two abovesaid private organs in the same category.

This opinion gets substantiated if one peruses the declaration ‘‘वाक् पाणिपादपायूपस्था मे शुद्ध्यन्तां ज्योतिरहं विरजा विपाप्मा भूयासगं’ स्वाहा’’. made in *virajā’ mantra* of *yājñikī upanisath*. It is indeed lack of judgement to term the above said (genital) organs despicable, which are instruments in the *retoyajna*, which (the *retoyajna*) the *Vedas* call ‘‘यज्ञो हि श्रेष्ठतमं कर्म’’

4) But why are they called private organs?

Answer:- Private organs are the organs which have to be guarded carefully by a person. A person’s natural disposition itself has kept them well guarded. They should be guarded still better. They are called private organs with the intention that a person may cover his shame, should protect them physically, and to see that they do not incense the *samskāras* of the functions of the senses at improper times. They need not be termed as vile organs. By contemplating on god and keeping oneself entertained in profound thoughts, one should take care that they do not get incited at inappropriate times. Learned men say that it is wrong even to think of their downward tendency at improper times. Forgetting this and indulging in wantonness amounts to beastly behaviour.

5) It is agreeable that *sanyāsis* and

Brahmacaris who follow *Nivṛttidharma* are supposed to stop the downward flow of the *Guhya Indriyas* completely, and householders should use them for *Dharmakāryas* like progency etc as per precepts, at the proper time. But should we suppose such a conduct of *Grhasthadharma* in deities also, whom we worship?

Answer: - Yes. Certainly. Only by envisaging upon such gods who are in that *Dharma*, the *pravṛtti* of house holders becomes really pure.

6) Are there examples in *Śāstras* for this opinion?

Answer: - Yes. Here we may observe the concept of of ‘*vaishṇavāgni*’ and ‘*sāmbhavāgni*’ stated in the in *Āgamas*. "One should meditate upon *LakshmīNārāyaṇa* or *Pārvatīparamēśvara*, and should (suppose) that pure fire was created when *deva* had a union with his *devī* who had a bath after menstruation. Then, *jātakarma* and other sacraments should be performed for that pure ‘*agni deva*’, and special fire sacrifices related to *Vishṇu* and *Śiva* should to be performed."—Say the *Śāstras* clearly.

7) Do those great deities also perform *garbhādhāna* like humans?

Answer: - Yes, they do. But not like the ordinary humans. With divine *Dharma* they place

their infallible and sacred (semen) in (divine) nature (*prakṛti*) and expand their *Dharma*.

"The great nature (*prakṛti*) is my womb (*yonī*), and I impregnate it"

"O *Brahma*! You have placed the infallible seed in water (which) is the source of creation".

(“मम योनिर्महद् ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहम्” “यदमोघमपां बीजमन्तरुतमज त्वया”) are the words of *Bhagavadgīta* and great poets, which declare the above purport.

8) Don't those great deities undergo any *vikāra* because of such an impregnation?

Answer: - They have the capacity to evolve their *Dharma* giving no room for any *vikāra* to happen in their own *svarupa Dharma*. The same ideal should be followed by human couples also.

9) Does the above state exist in supreme gods also all the time?

Answer: - They will not be in that state all the time. Only sometimes they get into such a state. We see that these deities manifest themselves in a posture, with their weapons, *yantras* and beautiful lotuses (in their hands) all pointing upwards, and in accordance to these symbols, they with their gaze and gait upwards, keep enjoying the supreme bliss at the highest level, and with a blissful facial image, which is expressive of that (bliss). When they are

meditated upon in the abovesaid postures, *Yogasiddhi* is obtained.

ऊर्ध्वद्विरेतं विरूपाक्षं विश्वरूपाय वै नमः

Those who desire the *Brāhmī* state should meditate on them this way only. “ऊर्ध्वलिङ्गाय नमः” But, for those who desire to perform *Dharmakāryas* there are *upāsanas* which involve the meditation of great deities who are in the *pravṛtti* mode. Even in that state, *upāsana* purity will certainly be there in those forms of deities and their limbs. There won't be any vile, wicked or unrefined elements in them. Those who worship *ucchishṭa Gaṇapati* for obtaining *Kāma* and *Artha* within the parameters of *Dharma*, should suppose HIM, only with this pure view. Those who don't have that attitude need not do that *Upāsana*. But they should not have any stained imagination regarding that divine form. The supreme deities, who, though established in the supra sensory state, make their powers flow through the *indriyas* for the sake of gracing the world, without leaving the *Atīndriya* state. So, one should not measure them from a beastly mindset, which has the disposition of reveling only in the sensory world.

10) We see the forms of ‘*Śakti Gaṇapati*’, *Umā Maheshvara* and *LakshmiNārāyaṇa*, only in the posture of embracing their consorts. Do they have such great love for their consorts? Do they appear in

the same posture even when they give *darśan* to their devotees outside? Can we get a spiritually elevated state of mind by meditating upon such gods in whom *kāma* is so predominant?

Answer: - The answer to this question can be found in the answers given to the previous questions itself. Still we wish to provide some details. By taking a keen look at those forms of god, one can see that the weapons and the instruments in their hands are pointed upwards. The marks of the *pundras* are also seen pointing upwards, or, they will be in the shape of *Bindu*, *Kalā* etc, which are sighted in the *Yogabhūmi*. Even his vision has moved above the eyebrows leading to the facial expression of experiencing the *paripūrṇabrahmānanda* described in words such as ‘*turīya*’, ‘*turīyātīta*’ etc., The lotus in the hand of *devī* who is his *sahadharminī* in the *Jnāna Yajna* of God, is also pointing upwards and her *mukhamudra* is stayput in the state of *brāhmī sthiti* in which her husband is immersed. The Lord of Lords, drawing her to himself has embraced her so that she remains within the boundary of *śuddhasamādhi* only, with the auspicious *saṅkalpa* that she (the *Prakṛti*) should always be the divine *Prakṛti* and should not flee towards demonical *Prakṛti*. Those who take *darśana* of such divine forms with a pure view, will have their dispositions also rendered divine and

dwell in the *Paramātmabhāva* only. Though the weapons and instruments held by some gods are seen pointing downwards, they are the ones which cause the *Paramātmabhāva* that resides above, to descend to the world and take the world (i.e. the *Jīvas*) to the state of the supreme spirit that remains in the uppermost regions. Their course is (ceasing from worldly acts) *nivṛtti*, or active worldly life in accordance with *nivṛtti*.

We see a story in *Śrīmadbhāgavata*, where a character by name *citraketu* incurred the curse of the goddess when he did not salute the *Brahmajñānamūrtis* i.e. *Pārvatī parameśvara*, and did not behold them with a pure mind, but instead looked at them with a mean view, ridiculed them and ended up taking birth in a demoness.

Thus it becomes clear that nothing base can be found in *ucchishṭa Gaṇapati*, when HIS *darśan* is had with a mindset, refined with (the study of) the explanations stated above.

May this *seva* of discussion be offered at the feet of the Lord who is *Ūrdhvareta*, *Virūpāksha* and *Dharma brahma svarūpa*.

The *Gaṇeśa mūrti* (idol) that is specially worshipped on *Gaṇeśa caturthi* is called '*VarasiddhiVināyaka*'. We shall explain in brief the

modalities of the worship of that Lord *SiddhiVināyakasvāmi*.

Though there are many precepts pertaining to the worship of *Gaṇeśa*, people who worship '*SiddhiVināyaka*' on *Gaṇeśa caturthi* usually follow the modalities stated in '*skanda purāṇa*'. Though *Gaṇeśa* himself is the Lord of obstacles, and the remover of obstacle is to be worshipped, he himself is worshipped briefly in the beginning so that no obstacle may come in the way of his worship. After worshipping him with *Shoḍaśopacāras* like *Dhyāna* and *Āvāhana* the special worship is performed.

The *Mahā Gaṇapati* idol made of clay is sprinkled with holy water and consecrated with life force and a prayer is made for his gracious presence in the idol till the *pūja* is completed. Then the doorkeepers are worshipped, the *Mahāyogapitha* is contemplated and the Lord is meditated upon. Pedastals and instruments like *Ādhāraśakti* are contemplated there and worshipped. Then his nine great powers viz - *tīvrā*, *jvalinī*, *nandā*, *bhogadā*, *kāmarūpiṇī*, *ugrā*, *tejovatī*, *satyā*, and *vighnanāśinī* are meditated upon along with his entourage, weapons, vehicles, and ornaments. Then *SiddhiVināyaka* adorned with all these is meditated upon and worshipped.

"The Lord has the trunk of an elephant which

is bent towards the left. He is a lustrous form, shining like fire-refined gold, effulgent like a crore of suns, possesses a large body, has four shoulders and one tusk. His four arms are adorned with a noose, a hook, a *Varada Mudrā* and *Abhaya Mudrā*. The tip of his trunk is enjoying the *Modakas*. And he is seated on the *mūshakavāhana* in the posture of *vīrāsana* or *padmāsana*." - Keeping these in mind, he should be meditated upon.

“ध्यायेद्भजाननं देवम् तप्तकाञ्चनसन्निभम्
चतुर्भुजं महाकायं सूर्यकोटिसमप्रभम् ॥
एकदन्तं शूर्पकर्णं दन्तमोदकधारिणम्।
मोदकासक्ततुण्डाग्रं भगवन्तं विनायकम् ॥
पाशाङ्कुशधरं देवं वरदाभयपाणिनम्।
सर्वाभरणभूषाढ्यं मूषकोपरि संस्थितम् ।
एवं रूपमिमं देवं ध्यायेत्सिद्धिविनायकम् । ”

After offering meditation as above, *Āvāhana*, *Āsana*, *Arghya*, *pādyā*, *Ācamanīya*, *madhuparka*, *pañcāmṛta*, *snāna*, *śuddhodakasnāna*, clothing, *yajnopavīta*, ornaments, *gandha*, *akshatā*, turmeric powder, vermilion powder, saffron powder and flowers are offered in the stipulated order. Among sandal pastes, red coloured paste is dear to *Gaṇeśa*. *Vaidika mantras*, and *ślokas* from devotional literature and *Āgamas* are used in these services. After the twelve parts of his body are worshipped with *Dvādaśanāmas*, *Arcana* is done with twenty

one leaves, as the number twenty one is dear to *Gaṇeśa* in the *tāttvik* sense. Then worship is offered with the leaves of the trees viz. *mācīpatra* (medicinal plant), *brhatī* (white egg plant-brinjal), *bilva* (bael tree), *dūrvā* (*garika*-bent grass), *dattūrā* (thorn apple), *badarī* (elaci -jujube tree), *apāmārga* (*uttaraṇi*- common weed), *tulasī* (holy basil), *cūta* (mango tree), *karavīra* (red oleander), *Vishṇukrānta* (small creeping herb (*clitoria ternatea*), *dāḍimī* (*dalimbe*-pomegranate), *devadāru* (deodar), *maruvaka* (mint), *sindhuvāra* (*vitex negundo* lin (shrub), *jātī* (*jājī*- jasmine), *gaṇake* (pot herb *solarium indicum*), *śamī* (*banni*-*prosopis spicigera* lin tree), *aśvattha* (*araḷi*-peepul tree), *arjuna* (*matti*-*terminalia tomentosa*), and *arka* (*ekka* - swallow wart). In place of some of the above leaves, the leaves of *bhṛngarāja* (*garaga*- common weed-eclipta alba hassk), *Āśmātaka*, *kalmaragi*, and *gandalīka* (*balligarika*- white bent grass) are also used.

In the worship of *Gaṇeśa* with twentyone types of leaves, there is a custom of including *Tulasī* also generally. But most people do not pay attention to the aspect that it is forbidden for the worship of *Gaṇeśa*. The *purāṇās* clearly say "All deities dwell in *tulasi*. It is dear to all *devatās* and especially to *Nārāyaṇa*. But it is forbidden only in the worship of *Gaṇeśa*.

यत्रैकस्तुलसीवृक्षः तिष्ठति द्विजसत्तम ।
 तत्रैव त्रिदशास्सर्वे ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवादयः ॥
 केशवः पत्रमध्येषु पत्राग्रेषु प्रजापतिः ।
 पत्रवृन्ते शिवस्तिष्ठेत्तुलस्याः सर्वदेव हि ॥
 लक्ष्मीः सरस्वती चैव गायत्री चूतिका तथा ।
 शची चान्या देवपत्न्यः तत्पुष्पेषु वसन्ति वै ॥ (पद्मपुराण, क्रियायोगसार)

Gaṇeśa vākyaṃ:-

पत्राणां सारभूता त्वं भविष्यसि मनोरमे ।
 कलांशेन महाभागे स्वयं नारायणप्रिया ॥
 प्रिया त्वं सर्वदेवानां कृष्णस्य च विशेषतः ।
 पूजा विमुक्तिदा नृणां मम त्याज्या च सर्वदा ॥ (ब्रह्मवैवर्त-गणेशखण्ड)

As there is a clear statement prohibiting the use of *tulasī*, it is better to use some other appropriate leaf in its place, in the worship of *Gaṇeśa*.

The *purāṇās* quote *Gaṇeśa* telling *Tulasī* "I do not love you. You also have no desire in me".

"The fragrance and touch of *tulasī* are not agreeable for the worship of *Gaṇeśa*. They cause an adverse effect. They do not open up the spiritual centers pertaining to *Gaṇeśa* in the body".—This is the purport of the statements. We should note here that all the leaves used in worship are excellent medicinal herbs and, in the view of both the *Āyurveda* and *yogaŚāstra* which happens to be the spiritual part of (*Ayurveda*), they are superior medicinal herbs.

After the worship with leaves, *Gaṇeśa* is worshipped with twentyone flowers viz., *karavīra* (*kanigile*-oleander), *jāji* (jasmine), *campaka* (*sampige*-yellow fragrant flower), *vakula* (*pagade*-minusops elengi lin), *mālatī* (a kind of jasmine), *ketaki* (*tāle*- fragrant screw pine), *kalhāra* (*sougandhika*- white water lily), *kunda* (*molle*- a kind of jasmine), *ataśī* (agase- flower of flax), *kirikarnikā* (*śankha*), *pārijāta* (night jasmine), *Sevantikā* (chrysanthemum), *sugandharāja* (fragrant flower of tuberosa), *japā* (*dāsavāḷa*-china rose), *kuravantikā* (*goranṭi*- yellow *amaranth*), *nandyāvarta* (*nandibaṭṭalu*- white flowers-tabernaemontana *corneria* br.), *droṇapushpa* (*thumbe*-lukus *linifolia*), *mallikā* (*mallige*-jasminum *samabac* ait) and *sugandhikamala* (fragrant lotus). *Dūrva* (panic or bent grass). *Japākusuma* among leaves and *dāsavāḷa*- (China rose) among flowers are most dear to *Gaṇeśa*. When suitable flowers and leaves happen to be unavailable, this *dūrva* and *japākusuma* may be used in their place for the worship of *Gaṇeśa*.

After the worship with flowers, *Gaṇeśa* is worshipped with *dvādaśa nāmāvalī*, *ashtottara nāmāvalī*, *ashtottarasahasranāmāvalī* etc and then *Dhūpa*, *dīpa* and *naivedya* are offered in the prescribed order.

In the *Naivedya pūja*, items such as *modaka*, *apūpa*, *cakkuli*, *pr̥thuka* and eatables prepared using green gram, *eLLunḍe*, different kinds of fruits, sugar cane juice, curds, milk, honey, ghee and sugar etc should be offered as *mahā naivedya*. The *naivedya* offered should be tasty with six *rasas* (salt, sweet, bitter, sour, pungent and astringent). Among these, *Modaka* is most dear to the Lord.

Here we respectfully recall the words of *Śrīraṅagurudeva* who said- "*Modaka* means a thing that brings happiness, joy and delight. "*mudā karāttamodakam sadā vimuktisādhakam*". If that special dish is prepared with the right combination of ingredients and offered to the god of gods and later taken as *prasāda*, it not only causes delight to the senses but also helps to experience suprasensory joy i.e. (*paramātmamoda*) by *Dhātu prasannatā*. As is evident from the scriptural words—“सात्विकाः मधुरप्रियाः” “मुमुक्षोः माधुर्यम्”, this ‘*madhurarasa*’ is helpful for *Mokshadharmā*. For this very reason *Śrī śaṅkarabhagavatapāda* has sung the praise of God, bracketing *Modaka* and *Vimukti* together "*mudā karāttamodakam, sadā vimukthisādhakam*". The number of *modaka-naivedya* to be offered to *Gaṇeśa* is twenty one. The following *śloka* indicates the special place of *modaka* among the other items of *naivedya*.

एकविंशतिसङ्ख्याकान् मोदकान् घृतपाचितान् ।
नैवेद्यं सफलं दद्यां नमस्ते विघ्ननाशिने ॥

Afterwards the following viz.,-*karodvartana*, offering *phala* (fruits), *tāmbūla* (betel leaf rolled with betel nut, spices and caustic lime), *suvarṇapushpa* (golden flower), *bhūṣhaṇa* (ornaments), *uttaranīrājana*, *mantrapushpa*, *dūrvāsahitapushpāñjali* (offering flowers along with bent grass with both hands), *pradakshiṇanamaskāra* (offering salutation-obeisance with circumambulation), *pūrṇa phala* and *dakshiṇā* (sacrificial fee) are offered. And then the desired things are prayed for. After this, services like *chatra* (parasol), *cāmara* (the bushy tail of the yak), *nṛtya* (dance), *gīta* (singing of songs), *vādya* (instrumental music), *stotra* (hymns of praise), *Āndolikā* (palanquin), *aśvavāhana* (riding horse carriage), *gajavāhana* (riding elephant carriage) etc are offered in keeping with one's ability and devotion, either directly or in the form of *Saṅkalpa*.

How many circumambulations should be done in the worship of *Gaṇeśa*? We come across the custom of this *Pradakshiṇa* being done either once, thrice, four times or seven times, as per one's practice and tradition. But scriptures state that the number of circumambulations should be conforming

to the *devatā bheda*. The rule depends on how many circumambulations occur in the deep meditation done upon that (particular) deity in the inner spiritual world.

Three circumambulations have been prescribed for *Gaṇeśa* and *pitrs*. In some *kalpas* only one circumambulation to *Gaṇeśa* is stated.

‘एकवारमेव ते प्रदक्षिणं प्रशस्यते’. The number of circumambulations is one to *durgā devī*, seven to *sūrya* (sun), three to *Vināyaka*, four to *Nārāyaṇa* and *ardhapradakṣiṇa* to *Śiva* according to the following *śloka*.

एका चण्ड्या रवेः सप्त तिस्रः कार्या विनायके ।

हरेश्चतस्रः कर्तव्याः शिवस्यार्धप्रदक्षिणा ॥

After the worship is completed the idol of *Vināyaka* together with a pair of clothes and *prasāda* are gifted to a worthy recipient. This is called ‘*upāyanadāna*’. That *dana* will be *Sāttvika dāna*, only when the presenter does away with pride and egotism, and entertains the feeling that all the three i.e. the donor, the donee and the bestower of the fruit of *dāna*, are that almighty only. This *upāyanadāna* is prescribed in the *vratas* of all the deities. By such a kind of gifting the donor will have his desires fulfilled well. The recipient will also remain unaffected from *pratigrahadoshā*. The

ślokas related to *upāyanadāna* as a part of *Vināyaka pūja*, are note worthy here:—

“विनायकस्य प्रतिमां वस्त्रयुग्मेन वेष्टिताम् ।

तुभ्यं दास्यामि विप्रेन्द्र गणेशः प्रीयतां मम ॥

गणेशः प्रतिगृह्णातु गणेशो वै ददाति च ।

गणेशस्तारकोऽस्माकं गणेशाय नमो नमः ॥”

When the *udvāsana* is done, an auspicious desire will be there as follows:- "May that god who is pleased with the worship, grant the fulfillment of our desires and may HE return again at the time of auspicious worship"

“यान्तु देवगणास्सर्वे पूजामादाय मत्कृताम् ।

इष्टकाम्यार्थसिद्ध्यर्थं पुनरागमनाय च ॥

यथासुखं यथास्थानं उद्वासयामि,

शोभनार्थं क्षेमाय पुनरागमनाय च”

During *udvāsana* the idol of god is moved a little to the right, with the abovesaid contemplation. This is an indication of the movement of circumambulation which is in accordance with the path of the gods and we think it is appropriate to quote it here for performing *visarjana*.

1. There is a custom of offering *Prasannārghya* to the Lord at the end of worship and then *udvāsana* is done. As we know, *Arghya* will have been offered earlier already during *shoḍaśopacārāpūja*. Thus, a question may arise "Then why this offering of *Arghya* again at the end?" The answer to that

question lies in the distinct name of *arghya* itself. The offering of *upacāras* like *Arghya* etc is performed to please god himself. That is, to obtain his grace. God has been already pleased by the offering of those services. By the grace of god who is pleased, we too will have obtained *Dhātuprasannatā* and tranquility of the mind. In this ambience, *Prasannārghya* is the service offered by us with pleased senses and mind and with gratitude to the Lord who is pleased.

2. Now, let us take up the auspicious send off of the Lord, which is performed next. After the *udvāsana* is done at the place of worship, the idol is taken in a procession, with auspicious musical instruments like the (sound of) the bell etc, in the streets with the pomp one can afford, and is later immersed in the water of either a river, lake, lotus pond, well or a reservoir of water. There is a custom of performing a brief worship to god again at the bank of the reservoir, before immersing (his idol) in water. One may ask - Already *Udvāsana* has been done as per precepts and (the idol) has been moved from the place of worship. Once the *Udvāsana* is done as per precepts, the *Devatāsānnidhya* will not be there at all. So, is it not a waste to offer worship to the idol near the reservoir which has no *DevathāSānnidhya*? But it has to be noted that the *Udvāsana* performed earlier happens to be the last

Upacāra. But that itself is not the auspicious completion of the worship. Thereafter, and also till the immersion of the idol, the *devatāsānnidhya* in the idol will be very much there. The *upasamhāra* of the divine force will not have occurred yet. That is why all the pomp of the *Maṅgalavādya* continues midway also, during the procession of the idol up to the reservoir.

The *Devatāsānnidhya* gets withdrawn from it after the final *Udvāsana* is done with the hymn

अभ्यारमिदद्रयो निषिक्तं पुष्करेमधु ।

अव तस्य विसर्जने ॥

ऋग्वेद 8-7-11

This (explanation) happens to be the answer to the question raised above, regarding the offering of worship once again before letting off of the idol in the reservoir, which (i.e. the worship) is indeed appropriate.

Some have asked us a question:-

3. "These days rivers, lakes, wells and other reservoirs of water are not available in villages or cities. So people immerse the idol in water that is filled in buckets and other vessels. Is this correct?" Our answer is, it should be done only when it is inevitable and this is only an *Āpatkalpa*. Reservoirs of water such as rivers, tanks, ponds, and wells must be there in all the villages and cities for the use of people who practice *Dharma*. If there are no

natural reservoirs, artificial large reservoirs should be constructed. They should be kept full to the brim and clean. This is an important rule pertaining to the building of a village or city. **Śrīgurudeva used to tell that dwelling places without the above arrangements, are *Kugrāmas* and *Kutsitanagarīs*.**

When such reservoirs do not have water as a result nature's fury, one may immerse the idol made of clay in a vessel filled with pure water. After the idol gets dissolved in that water, the water should be let in some clean place.

4. Some devotees ask - "*SvarṇaGaurī vrata* is celebrated along with *Gaṇeśa caturthī vrata* and the idol of *Gaurīdevī* is also installed along with the idol of *Gaṇeśa*. Should the idol of *Gaurī* be placed by the side of the idol of *Gaṇeśa* or should it be placed at a higher level?" We do not find any *Śāstravākyas* in this regard. But as *Gaurī* is renowned as the mother of *Gaṇeśa*, it is proper to keep her idol at a level a little higher than that of *Gaṇeśa*. If there is lack of space to do so, the idol of *Gaṇeśa* may be placed in front of the idol of *Gaurī* or by the side of it, and this won't amount to any offence either. Nevertheless, the sentiment that *Gaurī* is the revered mother of *Gaṇeśa*, should be unceasing.

5. Some people ask "Should *Gaurī* be

worshipped after installing her separately, or, should she be worshipped along with *Gaṇapati*?" When the festivals of *Gaurī* and *Gaṇeśa* fall on different days, the *prāṇapratishṭhā* and worship must be done separately for the two. The *pūja* and *prāṇapratishṭhā* may be done together. Both of them may be placed in the same altar and worshipped, because the relationship between *Gaurī* and *Gaṇeśa* is very profound one. It is renowned that *Gaṇeśa* is the elder son and the dearest son of *Gaurī*. We have noted earlier that even though the day of worship of *Gaṇeśa* is *caturthī*, it will be most commendable if that *caturthī* is touched by *Trītiyā*, which is the day of *pūja* of *Gaurī*. But there is nothing wrong in worshipping them in different altars. Worshipping of *Gaurī* among *Gaurī* and *Gaṇeśa* by all is not in vogue. *Gaurī pūja* is specially performed for *saumaṅgalya-saubhāgya*. Women perform this worship specially. Men also may worship the auspicious goddess *Gaurī* for the welfare of the family. *SiddhiVināyaka* is worshipped for the (removal of obstacles)- and *vidyālābha* (the benefit of spiritual and material knowledge). As there is *Devatābheda* here, *prāṇa pratishṭhā* of both must be done.

1."As a part of *svaṇṇaGaurī vrata*, *devī* is invoked either in a *Kalaśa* or *sand* and worshipped.

Then the idol of *Gaurī* idol made of clay is placed along with that of *Gaṇeśa* and worshipped without *prāṇa pratishṭa*. Is it right?" is the question of some. Worshipping an idol without performing *prāṇa pratishṭā* does not have the consent of the *Śāstrās*. If *devi* has to be worshipped in the idol also, then the rite of *prāṇapratishṭha* should be done for the idol also.

7. Again some ask a question - "There is a custom of worshipping *Gaurī* in a *Kalaśa* in which a lemon or a coconut is placed. Which is better? Placing a lemon or a coconut?" Our answer is as follows: True. Lemon is a great fruit. *Pitta* is reduced by seeing, touching and taking it (as juice or in food items). The tranquility of mind necessary for the *pūja* is obtained thereby. Placing a coconut in a *kalaśa* also is best. Because, coconut is a '*pūrṇa phala*'. It is a wish yielding fruit. It is "*trinetra-hara sammata*". There is no doubt that it is an auspicious thing which represents the cheek and the head of a *brahmajñāni*. If possible, one may place both a coconut and a lemon in (or on) the *Kalaśa*. If that is not possible, at least the coconut should be placed.

8. Some people have a question "Should *Gaṇeśa* be given a send off along with *Gaurī devi* on a day which is pure with the suitable *Tithi*, *vāra* etc? Or should suitable days be found for both"—We have the following answer to this-

Those who perform the *uttarapūja* at night on the day of worship, do the *visarjana* of both (i.e. of *Gaurī* or *Gaṇeśa*) on the same night without looking for the purity of the day. This is an unavoidable option. But if one can be afford, it is better to perform the concluding worship separately, and then do the *visarjana* in water. If one is doing *visarjana* this way, the purity of the day has to be found for both. When both *Gaṇeśa* and *Gaurī* are installed together, the custom of finding a good day for performing *Visarjana* of *Gaurī* and immersing both *Gaurī* and *Gaṇeśa* on the same day is in vogue. *Visarjana* of *Gaurī devi* is not done on Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Mondays. On Tuesdays neither *Gaurī* nor *Gaṇeśa* are immersed in water. *Friday* is not a prohibited day for the *visarjana* of *Gaṇeśa*.

There is a custom of doing *visarjana* of *Gaurī* and *Gaṇeśa* together, if they are worshipped together. *Visarjana* of *Gaṇeśa* is done on the same day as the *visarjana* of *Gaurī devi* after finding an auspicious day. Then, *Visarjana* for both is done on that day, which happens to be an odd day (like the first, third, fifth days etc) counted from the day of installation of *Gaurī*, and at the same time, the day should be good with the required *Śuddhi*. So, more importance to *Gaurī*, as far as *Dina niyama* and *Vāra niyama* are concerned. The rules forbidding

travel on Tuesdays and Fridays apply specially to women.

9. Some people question—"What is the significance of the form, the dress, ornaments and retinue etc of *SiddhiVināyaka*?—We would like to give an abridged answer as follows:-

SiddhiVināyaka is a divine form and a matter of inner realization of the *jnanis*. The purport of his form, true form and glory are-Lordship over twenty one *tattvas*, removal of obstacles, and the ability to grant knowledge (*Vidhyālābha*) and prosperity and other benefits.

Present day people are conjuring up different physical meanings for his trunk, tusk, head, carriage, ornaments etc in an arbitrary way. Some others are interpreting them to suit the philosophical systems they follow like *dvaita*, *advaita*, and *viśiṣṭādvaita* etc. Making use of the deity to suit one's philosophy has also been done.

So, we shall now take note of the messages that are conveyed by God through his divine auspicious form, divine weapons, divine ornaments, divine vehicle and devine retinue etc., which are comprehensible to all the *Yoganubhavis* in the *yogabhūmi*. The divine form of *Gaṇeśa* which is in a triangle pointing upwards (*Ūrdhvamukha*) is the form of *praṇava* itself. Especially the curve of his

trunk is the divine form of *praṇava*. "ॐकाराकृतिवक्रतुण्डम्". If his trunk is bent to the left, it is *bhogaprada* and if it is bent to the right, it is *mokshaprada*. His sacred single tusk (*Ekadanta*) is the pure divine knowledge that manifests to the focussed mind "अमलज्ञानैकदन्तम्"

The serpent which is his ornament is nothing but *kunaḍalinī* which is renowned in the *Yogaśāstra*. The *pāśa* is the noose of delusion of the three *guṇas* that binds (the soul) to the worldly life. He is a supreme *yogi* who keeps under control the infatuated mind elephant which is agitated, with his hook. The weapon '*śakti*' held by him is nothing but his natural supreme power (*mahā śakti*). And that hook is an instrument that keeps under check all the powers, so that they may not cross their bounds. *Siddhi*, *Buddhi*, *vallabhā* and others who are considered his wives are also his divine powers. The (*modaka*) in his hand represents his supreme bliss and it proclaims *muktānanda*. "मुदाकरात् मोदकं सदा विमुक्तिसाधकम्" The lotuses held by him and his divine consorts, represent the '*mūlādhāra*' lotus which is their auspicious abode. His big belly proclaims the twenty one *tattvas* which are under his reign. The mouse which is his carriage, is the *śakti* of obstacles that are always under his control either in use or in withdrawl. Riding on them. He

exercises complete power to use and withdraw them at will, at any place and time.

We offer our salutations to that Lord *SiddhiVināyaka* who is an embodiment of *tattva*, and who is endowed with form, appearance, dress, ornaments, carriage, divine weapons, retinue etc which are full of *tattvas*, and we wish auspiciousness (to all).

