

Ganapati Homa

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Homa is the unique worship to propitiate the Almighty, in the traditions of India (**Bharaateeya Sampradaaya**). Since time immemorial, this has continued to occupy the most important slot among other Godly duties, stipulated for every house holder. Vedas, the bedrock of this great culture of Bharat, have specified the format, procedure, time, eligibility and benefits of Homa, along with different patterns. Keen analysis and scrutiny of these sentences would bring out the fact that the essence remains the same, although the modus operandi is different.

Stipulation by scriptures

Rituals are important to be observed. However, some important points shall be noted before we undertake the austerity.

- What is the source text, based on which we conduct this program?
- Who is eligible?
- What are the benefits?
- What is the stipulated procedure?

Unless we observe these points, mere conduct of a ritual will not yield the desired effect. In some cases, it may also become counter- productive too. In mundane routine works, action and reaction/ results can be figured out rationally through analysis, based on cause and effect theory. However, in matters of divinity, long term observation based stipulations enacted by our Forefathers, the great Sages are very important to derive an outcome from a ritual practice.

Therefore, adherence to the stipulation and scruples of Vedic Commandments is very much necessary, as the Ritual procedures are not mundane.

Sincerity and Concentration

Needless to say, any perfect job is based on the twin traits of sincerity and concentration. These practices, connected with God require higher sense of uninterrupted attentiveness to yield the intended result.

Gana & Ganapati

Vivacious readers need not be reminded about the story of Ganapati and the queer turn of events leading to his coronation as Ganapati, the chieftain of Ganas (Forces); as recited annually during Vinayaka Chaturthi day. However, we need to examine these words and their purport, along with synonyms in Veda.

Gana

Gana literally means a group. This Grouping of various forces is contextual in strict sense of analysis. Few atoms grouped together form an object. These objects, in turn, constitute the world. Based on the forms, shapes and properties physicians and chemists categorise these objects of the world, into different groups.

Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda Swamiji, a great Upaasaka of Ganapati in contemporary, correlates these Ganas with Chakras, Yogic centres of energy, in a composition.

- ∈ Mooladhaara - Creatures
- ∈ Swaadhishtaana - Grains symbol Sustaining factors such as Food and Water
- ∈ Manipoora - Forms of Wealth
- ∈ Anaahata - Gases (Air/ Atmosphere)
- ∈ Visuddha - Celestials
- ∈ Ajna - Energy Forces
- ∈ Sahasraara - Concepts of Philosophy about Self (Jeevaatma & Paramaatma)

In this depiction, every being is represented by an energy centre of Human Body. Though these energy centres are not physical, the philosophical imagination is a vivid depiction of the macro world (cosmos) at the micro body level. Thus, Gana(s) can be termed as the sequential grouping of both the celestial and worldly elements/ beings.

Ganapati

Ganapati literally means the boss of Ganas. Anyone, controlling a group, thus can be classified as Ganapati. However, the nomenclature, in practice, is reserved for the Supreme Commander of all the forces. Vedic parlance is little divergent from the Puranic descriptions. A description of team leaders is often repeated in every Homa (Abhyaataana Mantras). Primarily, the listings seem to be divergent.

- € Agni - Head of all Beings
- € Indra - Head of all leaders
- € Yama - Head of the Earth
- € Vaayu - Head of ¹Antariksha (Ether in effect).
- € Surya - Head of Cosmos/ Heaven
- € Chandra - Head of the stars
- € Bruhaspati - Head of knowledge/ wisdom
- € Mitra - Head of Truth
- € Varuna - Head of Water/ Liquids
- € Samudra - Head of all streams & flows
- € Annam - Head of Empires
- € Soma - Head of Grains/Herbs
- € Savita - Head of Motivators/ Preceptors
- € Rudra - Head of Animals (both 4 Legged and 2 Legged)
- € Vishnu - Head of Mountains/Hills
- € ²Marut - Head of various forces of the Universe.
- € Fore Fathers of three generations, Pitru, Pitaamaha, Prapitaamaha; representing/ heading each clan/ family.

This list is representative of the different narrations of various groups and their heads. Different quotations in Vedas are abundant, to give a detailed view of the plethora of celestial forces (Ganas). Rudra Adhyaya, enlists innumerable forces, factors of natures, classes of creatures, professions of humanity as different aspect of the God. Aaruna Ketuka Chayana also vividly describes various Ganas. Whatever be the name, the essence remains the same. Any force, which works in tandem with other aspects of the system; to maintain an orderly system is said to be a Gana. This extends to the circumambulation of planets in their respective orbits, various evolutions of creation, governance and features of the world etc. The presiding authority or the Supreme Commander of these forces is the Almighty. This commanding aspect is called Ganapati.

Synonyms and Correlation

The nomenclature Ganapati, is used in various contexts in Veda. Primarily, the Mantras extolling the deity are contextually interpreted by learned commentators such as Swamy Vidyaranya and Bhatta Bhaaskara. Puraanik (Mythological) description of the traits of Ganapati, is somewhat different from the traits described in Veda.

¹ Antariksha – The Void/Space between this planet and others.

² Marut- Group a Group of Celestial Forces.

Although the physical traits of Elephant face, Large Belly, Dwarf body do not find direct references in the Veda Mantras, they have been inferred upon, by lateral texts (such as Saama Vidhaana Braahmana etc.) corroborating the utility of these Mantras.

In this context, it is extremely relevant to examine some of the synonyms used for Ganapati. Examination of these will reveal the metaphysical characteristics of the deity, thru which the correlation is easier, rather than physical traits. Hence, any analysis of the nomenclature to denote a deity should be done at different levels of physical and metaphysical planes.

Some Names describing Functions of Ganapati

- € **Ganapati/ Gana Naatha/ Gana Naayaka** - Chief of Ganas
- € **Vinaayaka/ Maha Ganapati/ Maha Ganaadhipati** - Great Leader (of Ganas)
- € **Vighnesha(shwara)/ Vighna Raaja** - Head of Obstacles

Some Universally applicable Metaphysical Characteristics

- € **Hrushta Stuta** - Praised by the delighted
- € **Pramoda/ Aananda** - Blissful
- € **Avyaya** - Not Expendable

Some Synonyms depicting the physical traits

- € **Gaja Mukha/ Gajaanana/ Gaja Vaktra/ Hasti Mukha** - Elephant Faced Deity
- € **Vakra Tunda** - Deity sporting Trunk with a Curvature
- € **Shoorpa Karna/ Gaja Karna** - Wide ears (similar to an elephant)
- € **Lambodara** - Large Belly
- € **Mooshika Vaahana** - Rider of a mouse
- € **Modaka Hasta** - Sweet laden Palm

Some Synonyms depicting the Story Line

- € **Skanda Poorvaja** - Earlier born than Subrahmanya
- € **Shankara Suta** - Son of Lord Shiva
- € **Paarvati Priya/ Suta/ Tanaya/ Gouriputra** - Son of Goddess Parvati/ Gouri

Traditional commentators have explained each physical trait of Ganapati, with a metaphysical inference, to bring out the true purport of the description. This correlation has eased the task of identifying the relevant Mantras from vast ocean of Vedas.

Identification of Mantras

Identifying a Mantra for a deity is based on Logic of establishing similarity of either a word or its meaning, connoting a function of the Deity. Following this system, Sages have stipulated a set of Mantras for Ganapati. Contextually, these are related to Indra and Brahmanaspati. However, critical examination of these terms (Indra or other names) establishes the vital fact that all are synonyms for the same God (Paramaatma.)

Let us examine four instances from Four Vedas.

Ganapati Sukta (Rigveda) Aa Too na Indra ..

This Sookta, describes the great Leader Indra, with mighty great hands to control and support the world. Here, the term Maha Hasti, aptly establishes the link between the deity and the Mantra.

Hasta has different meanings such as Hand, Elephant's trunk, Ability. Maha= Great. Hence, an able hand to support/ help; the ability and willingness is called Maha Hastee. If we interpret this term to a physical trait, it results in the physical the mighty trunk of Ganapati's elephant face.

Brahmanaspati Mantras (Yajurveda)

Most Popular Mantra Ganaanaam twaa ... is found in this cluster of Yajurveda's Kamyashti Prakarana. The context describes the Deity as Brahmanaspati, the head of wisdom/ Vedic Wisdom/ Education. Correlation with the above mentioned term of Ganapati/ Vinaayaka, amply stipulates the importance of relationship of leadership with wisdom. Invention, Innovation, Control of Wisdom coupled with just and meticulous usage should be the trait of a leader. Kaveenam Kavi – Best of the Innovators/ Inventors/ Authors implies this trait.

Even a perfect technology or procedure can result in disaster, if deployed by a wrong hand or in a wrong time or with a pervert intention. Current maladies of the society stand testimony to this principle. Thus, the term Brahmanaspati of Yajurveda, extols Ganapati as the head of Wisdom and Innovation.

Poorvarchika Mantras (Samaveda) Adardarut ...

This mantra is chanted by Samaveda practitioners. Basically, this hymn located in the Aindra Kaanda; describes the great deity as capable of holding/ controlling mountains and oceans. The connotation is of a super natural force, controlling various aspects of nature and sparing the creatures from the future.

Ganesha Atharvana Sheersha (Upanishat of Atharva Veda) Namaste ...

Upanishad Texts consist of sentences, elucidating philosophy of every element of the Universe. Many of these texts correlate the macro organism to the principles of existence. Few of them suggest the ways to connect the inner self to the macro cosmos and describe the methods of worship.

Atharva Sheersha in praise of Lord Ganapati, starting on a philosophical note illustrating the deity as Para Brahman, continues to explain the Mantra of Ganapati and some physical attributes of the Lord in the form of Ganapati. This scripture stands out as the basis for most of the worship procedures related to Ganapati. The last part of the Upanishat lists out the procedures to please the Deity.

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| € Evening Recitation | - Exterminates the sins committed during day |
| € Morning Recitation | - Destroys the sins committed during night |
| € Regular Recital | - Purity (Blemishlessness), Removal of Obstacles and
Attainment of Purushaartha |
| € Recital of 1000 times | - Attainment of all just needs & righteous desires |
| € Ablution (Abhisheka) | - Oratory Skills and Palatable & Convincing Speech |
| € Meditation and Fasting on Chaturthi | - Excellent Academic Credentials & Ultimate Salvation |
| € Homa with tender Grass (Durva) | - Ample Wealth |
| € Homa with Popped Paddy | - Intellect and Brilliance |
| € Homa with 1000 Modaka | - Easier Achievements of Great Goals in life |
| € Homa with Samit & Ghee | - Everything needed for a comfortable life |
| € Meditation during Solar Eclipse | - Body Charm, Rejuvenation and Strength apart
from mastery over the Mantra |

Gana Homa - Other Usage

The term, Gana Homa is also used as a means to exterminate all the sins to attain Purity of Body and Soul. In this practice, Mantras from Ashwamedha Ritual called Maha Prushthya, are recited and Aahuti are offered to groups of deities to cleanse the mind and body.

Removal of Obstacles

Generally, Ganapati is the first deity to be worshipped to achieve success. It is implied that he will remove the hurdles to success, as He is the Universal Chieftain of all forces, moreover the hurdles. Here, the term hurdle needs to be carefully looked at. Hurdle is not something external to a body, situation. It is a combination of known and unknown factors both physical and meta- physical.

For an example, the success of an academic career depends on the intellect, perseverance, aptitude and attitude of the student. Role of Guru (Teacher), Parents and Classmates are other factors, apart from the common causes of ambience, opportunity, place, time, society, external influences, Calamities etc. Imbalance of any of these could impair the education and the right combination shall ensure success. Similarly, for a business venture, demand - supply chain, right environment, convenient taxation regime, loyal workers and customers will be required for its exponential success.

However, we should note that the success is not the same for every individual, in spite of same set of opportunities. What impacts the individual success or failure – is the question for us to grapple. In this process, we get the clue for hurdles/ obstacles. In this direction, the theory throws light on the fact that your previous Actions (Merits/ Sins) are primarily responsible for the environment you are in and the factors you deal with. (An infant born in an impoverished family in the horn of Africa, cannot get the standards of its compatriot in an affluent family of Western world. Similarly, it is saved from the ravages of materialistic lust, over usage of resources elsewhere.)

Hence, it is clear the outcome of our previous actions stalks us in the form of Obstacles in our career path. To be saved from the Democle's Sword dangling behind us, it is important for us to pray to the Great leader, who is leading us from front, and providing the support from behind, for the coveted success in every job of ours. This is the essence of Ganapati Homa and Worship. Thus, it is has become a custom and tradition for a common devotee to perform Ganapati Homa thru qualified Pundits, to attain the grace of the Almighty.

We should also understand the fact that, absence of Ganapati does neither necessarily leads to the failure of a job, nor Ganapati unleashes his cohorts upon non-worshippers in the form of obstacles. If at all, some factors impair the success in our jobs, it is the direct result of our previous acts and deeds. By offering the Puja or Homa to Ganapati (the Supreme Commander of Forces), Vinayaka (The great leader), we do pray for the clemency to be spared from the vagaries of our past negative deeds and also promise to adhere to righteous behaviour and better conduct. With this process, we convince the God of our resolve and present our credentials and eligibility for an accomplished life, in order to share our success with others around us.

Devotees, with the right mindset, intention, adherence to the procedures will surely achieve the intended success due to the conduct of Ganapati Homa. Gam Ganapataye Namah.

भक्त प्रार्थनम्

असंख्याका भक्ता स्तव पद युगे नम्र शिरसः इमां निष्प्रत्यूहां विरचय समारिप्सित कृतिम्।

अहं पारं यानी त्यनिशमभि वाञ्छन्ति बहवो गणेश त्वं कल्पे नृषु वितर चिन्तामणि शुभम्।।