

Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி

News Letter

- 9 -

செய்தி மடல்



ஷேத்திர(வயல்)விநாயகர் ஆலயம்,
ஸ்ரீ முன்னேஸ்வரம், சிலாபம், இலங்கை.

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ஷேத்திர(வயல்)விநாயகர் ஆலயம், ஸ்ரீ முன்னேஸ்வரம், சிலாபம், இலங்கை.
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This news letter solely contains the questions and answers of the discussions held on the full moon day of the month August 15th September.2008, at this temple grounds with the devotees which will be useful to all.

1. Explain the position of Lord Ganesha in veda, the philosophical significance and the meaning of the most important 12 namavali (auspicious names) in a simple manner without using sophisticated technical terminology?

i. Ganesha in the Vedas

Ganesha or Ganapati is called Vighneshvara or Vighnahartaa, the Lord of and destroyer of obstacles. Devotees always worship Him requesting for success (siddhi) in undertakings, and intelligence (buddhi) Lord of and destroyer of obstacles is always worshipped at the beginning of any new venture is commenced. He is considered the God of education, knowledge and wisdom, literature, and all the fine arts.

*VakratuNDa mahAkAya sUryakoTisamaprabha
NirvighnaM kuru me deva sarvakAryeshhu sarvada ||*

Oh! Ganapati, One with a curved trunk, a large body, and a brilliance equal to a crore (10 million) suns!
Oh! God, always make all my undertakings free from obstacles

Ganesha is also one of the six main Gods the worship characterized by Adhi Sankaraacharya swamigal; the other five are Vishnu, Siva, Devi (Sakthi), Skanda and Surya(Sun).The Vedic hymns normally chanted in the Ganesha puja are given below;

Rig Veda contains the following verses (R^ich's) in praise of Ganapati. Ganapati is identified with Brahmanaspati (Brihaspati), and, sometimes with Indra or Maghavan, Agni and even Rudra.

*gaNAnAn.h tvA gaNapatiM havAmahe kavim kavInAm upamashravastamaM |
jyeshhTharAjaM brahmaNAn.h brahmaNaspata A naH shR^iNvannUtibhiH sIda sAdanaM ||
(Rig Veda 2.23.1)*

We appeal to You, Oh Ganapati of the Ganas Who are Brahmanaspati of the brahmas (prayers), the wisest among the wise, Who abound in treasure beyond all measure, the most brilliant one. Do listen to our prayers, come with Your blessings and assurances of protection into our home, and be seated.

*ni shhu sIda gaNapate gaNeshhu tvAmAhurvipratamaM kavInAM |
na R^ite tvat.h kriyate kinchanAre mahAmarkaM maghavan.h chitramarcha ||
(Rig Veda 10.112.9)*

Sit down among the Ganas (troops or worshippers), Oh Ganapati, the supreme sage among the sages. Exclusive of You nothing could be done anywhere. Accept with honor, Oh wealthy One (dhanavAn.h), our immense and honoured hymns.

Both these R^ik's (verses) are part of the Ganesha sooktha that is usually recited during the rituals. The contents of the Ganesha sooktha, according to the ceremony of panchAyatana pUjA manual of Sringeri, and other famous places is as follows ,in sequence:

Rig Veda Mandala 8, sooktha 81, R^ik's 1-9,
Mandala 10 sooktha 112 R^ik's 9-10,
Mandala 2, sooktha 23, R^ik 1.

Another sooktha that is usually recited is the Brahmanaspati sooktha, a collection of 62 R^iks selected from different parts of the Rg Veda. This particular sooktha consists of the following R^iks in sequence:

Rig Veda Mandala 1 sooktha 18 R^iks 1-5,
Mandala 1 sooktha 40, R^iks 1-8,
Mandala 2 sooktha 23, R^iks 1-19,
Mandala 2 sooktha 24, R^iks 1-16,
Mandala 2 sooktha 25, R^iks 1-5,
Mandala 2 sooktha 26, R^iks 1-4,
Mandala 7 sooktha 97, R^ik 3,
Mandala 7 sooktha 97, R^ik 9,
Mandala 10 sooktha 155, R^iks 2-3,
Mandala 10 sooktha 128, R^ik 11

The principal significant hymn linked to Ganesha upasana is the Ganapati Atharva Shirsha Upanishad. This amazing upanishad seeks to compare Ganeshavidya with Brahavidya.

namaste gaNapataye | tvameva pratyakshhaM tat.h tvaM asi |

Translation: Salutations to You Ganapati. You are indeed the perceptible representation of (the Vedic utterance) ``tat tvam asi".

Shri upanishhadbrahma yogin's interpretation is given as follows:

*AUM laM oN^kaaralakshhyaturyaruupaM te tubhyaM gaNapataye
namo .astu, aavayoraikyamastvityarthaH |
yadvaa laM iti muulaadhaarabiijaM muulaadhaarasya gaNapatisanadanatvaat.h |
yadoN^kaaraarthagaNapatitattvaM lakaaravaachyapaarthivaaMsha muulaadhaare vibhaati
tasmai
lakaaravaachyamuulaadhaarasadanaaya gaNapataye namo .astviti |
tvameva shrotraadi pratyakshhaM pratikaraNaM tattadvishhayapravR^ittinivR^ittinimittatayaa
yachchaitanyaM vartate tattvamasi sarvaniyantaa .asiityarthaH|*

I offer obeisances to You Ganapati who are of the form of the turiya (fourth state), indicated by the Omkara syllable. May there be complete identity between You and me. Or, my obeisances to You who are the Ganapati-tattva, the meaning of the Omkara, who abide in the Muulaadhaara (chakra) as Your abode. This muulaadhaara is indicated by the laM, the seed-syllable of the elemental earth standing for the muulaadhaara. You guide the organs such as that of hearing, and control their respective activity and withdrawal from activity. You are the inner consciousness and the controller of all.

tvameva sarvaM khalvidaM brahmAsi |

Translation : You are the all pervading reality, the Brahman .You are the representation of the Vedic utterance, "sarvam khalvidam brahma."

Sri Upanishad Brahma Yogi interpreted this upanishad This Yogi is said to have been the only pundit or commentator on all the 108 upanishads. The GaNapati atharva shiirsha is the most commonly recited text amongst devotees of Ganesha.

The upanishads like the Ganeshapurvatapini, the Ganeshottaratapini, and the Heramba upanishads; are usually not considered as one of the upanishads belongs to the category of immense 108 upanishads.

ii. Philosophical Significance of Ganesha's form

The Mudgala Purana explains elephantine head and human body of Lord Ganesha's as given below in:

*tvaMpadaM narashcha tatpadaM gajashcha etayorabhedAtmako
gaNeshadehaH pratyakshhabrahmAtmakatvAt.h || (Mudgala Purana)*

Ganesha's human body representing "tvam", His elephantine countenance representing "tat" and their joining together signifies the nondifference of "tvam" (You) and "tat" (Brahman). Thus, the body of Ganesha is the visible representation of the highest reality, Brahman, realized from "tat tvam asi."

Some scholars are of the view that Ganesha's head symbolizes Atman the Highest Reality, while the Body below the neck represents mAyA, the principle theory of phenomenal survival. The Atman's association with the world is characterized by the supposition of mind and speech.

Ganesha's large winnowing baskets like ears, show the philosophical significance as follows; Just as one uses a winnowing basket to separate grains from dust and other unwanted materials, one must use discrimination (knowledge, budhdhi or viveka) to separate the real (Brahman) from the unreal (mAyA) in day to day life. Here the grains stand for Brahman and the unwanted materials symbolizes mAyA. Hence Lord Ganesha's ears signifies that such discrimination between Brahman and mAyA is to be achieved by taking resort to shravaNa or hearing. Learning the religious scriptures under the guidance of a appropriate Guru will lead to proper discrimination and realization. Of Brahman The vehicle of Lord GaNapati is rat, although there are rare references to the lion (Heramba GaNapati), peacock as the vehicle in various texts.

The Mudgala Purana. Shows the significance of the rat (muushhaka) as the vehicle of Ganesha. Which is explained as below,

*IshvaraH sarvabhoktaa cha choravattatra saMstihitaH
sa eva muushhakaH prokto manujaanaaM prachaalakaH
maayayaa guuDharuupaH san.h bhogaan.h bhun^kte hi choravat.h || (Mudgala Purana)*

Lord (Ganesha) resides everywhere and in all things and experiences everything. He is called muushhaka because He maneuver unnoticed like a thief, concealed by maayaa, and experiences all phenomena.

A Ganesha stotra from the Narada Purana

nArada uvAca:
Narada said:

*praNamya shirasa devaM gaurIputraM vinAyakaM |
bhaktAvaasaM smaren.h nityaM AyuH kAmArthasiddhaye || 1 ||*

One should bow the head and offer obeisance before the son of Gauri, Vinayaka, whose abode is the devotees, and remember Him always for the purpose of obtaining longevity, and desired objects (prosperity).

*prathamaM vakratuNDaM cha ekadantaM dviIyakaM |
iR^itIyaM kR^ishhNapi.ngAkshhaM gajavakraM chaturthakaM || 2 ||*

Twelve names of Ganesha are mentioned.
first the name Vakratunda, One with a curved trunk,
second ekadanta, the single-tusked One,
third Krishnapingaksha, the black and red-eyed One,
fourth gajavakra, the God with the face of an elephant,

*lambodaraM panchamaM cha shhashhThaM vikaTameva cha |
saptamaM vighnarAjam cha dhUmravarnaM tathAshhTamaM || 3 ||*

fifth lambodara, the God with a large belly,
sixth vikata, the gigantic One,
seventh vighnaraja, the Lord (and destroyer)
of obstacles,
eighth dhumravarna, the smoky-colored God,

*navamaM bhAlachandraM cha dashamaM tu vinAyakaM |
ekAdashaM gaNapatiM dvAdashaM tu gajAnanaM || 4 ||*

ninth bhalachandra, One whose forehead is adorned by the moon,
tenth, vinayaka, the great leader (of Shiva's army),
eleventh, ganapati, the lord of (Siva's) gaNas, and
twelfth gajanana, the elephant-faced One.

*dvAdashaitAni nAmAni trisandhyaM yaH paThen.h naraH |
na cha vighnabhayaM tasya sarvasiddhikaram prabho || 5 ||*

Anyone who chants these twelve names during the three sandhyas (morning twilight, noon, evening twilight), will not experience any obstacles, and will achieve all successes, O Lord (Ganesha)!

*vidyArthI labhate vidyAM dhanArthI labhate dhanaM |
putrArthI labhate putrAn.h mokshhArthI labhate gatiM || 6 ||*

One who desires knowledge (vidyA) gets it; one who desires wealth gets it; one who desires children will get them; one who desires moksha attains it.

*japed.h gaNapatistotraM shhaDbhir.h mAsaiH phalaM labhet.h |
saMvatsareNa siddhiM cha labhate nAtra saMshayaH || 7 ||*

One gets desired results if this Ganapati stotra is chanted everyday for six months; a complete success is confident indisputably, at the earliest

*ashhTabhyo brAhmaNebhyashcha likhitvA yaH samarpayet.h |
tasya vidyA bhavet.h sarvA gaNeshasya prasAdataH || 8 ||*

iti nAradapurANe sankaNishanagaNeshastotram sampUrNaM ||

Anyone who writes this stotra and presents it to eight devotees, will obtain all kinds of knowledge, by the grace of Lord Ganesha.

The form of Lord Ganesh shows the ideals of perfection as conceived by Hindu sages and illustrates some philosophical concepts of profound spiritual significance.

The lord, whose form is AUM. Ganesha is also defined as (Aumkara), that is "having the form of Aum Ganesha is considered the bodily incarnation of the entire Cosmos. He who is at the base of the entire phenomenal world (Vishvadhara, Jagadoddhara).

The large head of an elephant symbolizes fidelity, wisdom, understanding, and a discriminating intellect that one must possess to attain perfection in life.

The wide mouth of Lord Ganesha represents the natural human desire to take pleasure in life in the world.

The large ears denote wisdom, ability to listen to people who seek help and to reflect on spiritual truths. They signify the importance of listening in order to assimilate ideas. Ears are used to gain knowledge. The large ears indicate that when God is known, all knowledge is known, and the large ears signify that a perfect person is the one who possesses a great capacity to listen to others and assimilate ideas.

The curved trunk indicates the intellectual potentialities which manifest themselves in the faculty of discrimination between real and unreal. The trunk of the Lord Ganesha can uproot huge trees and yet lift a needle off the ground. Likewise, the human mind must be strong enough to face the ups and downs of the external world and yet delicate enough to explore the subtle realms of the inner world.

The two tusks on either side protruding from the mouth denote the two aspects of the human personality,

wisdom and emotion. The unbroken tusk indicates Ganesha's ability to overcome all forms of dualism and emotion. The broken tusk of Ganesha, as described above, stands primarily for his ability to overcome or "break through" the illusions of duality and conveys the idea that one must conquer emotions with wisdom to attain perfection.

An elephant normally has two tusks. The mind also frequently proposes two alternatives: the good and the bad, the excellent and the expedient, fact and fantasy, which mislead and endanger it. In order to do anything, the mind must nevertheless become determinate.

The eyes of the elephant are said to possess natural deceptiveness that allows them to perceive objects to be bigger than what they really are. Thus the elephant eyes symbolize the idea that even if an individual gets "bigger and bigger" in wealth and wisdom, he should perceive others to be bigger than Him; that is, surrender one's pride and attain humility. The left side of the body of the Lord Ganesha symbolizes emotion and the right side symbolizes reason and knowledge.

The position of his legs (The right foot dangling over the left foot, one resting on the ground and one raised) indicates the importance of living and participating in the material world as well as in the spiritual world; the ability to live a successful life in the world without being of the world, utilizing knowledge and reason to overcome emotions. The four arms of Ganesha represent the four inner attributes of the subtle body, that is: mind (Manas), intellect (Buddhi), ego (Ahamkara), and conditioned conscience (Chitta). Lord Ganesha represents the pure consciousness - the Atman - which enables these four attributes to function in us.

An axe in the upper left hand is a symbol of the retrenchment of all desires, bearer of pain and suffering. With this axe Ganesha can both strike and repel obstacles. The axe is also to prod man to the path of righteousness and truth.

A lotus (padma), in the upper right hand symbolizes the highest goal of human evolution, that in order to attain spiritual perfection, one should relieve oneself of worldly attachments and conquer emotions. This enables one to live in the world without being affected by earthly temptations, just as a lotus remains in water but is not affected by it but is not affected by the mud from which it springs.

The lower left hand holds a whip, symbol of the force that ties the devout person to the eternal beatitude of God. The whip conveys that worldly attachments and desires should be got rid of.

The lower right hand (turned towards the devotee) is shown in a blessing pose, which signifies that Ganesha always blesses His devotees. It is a pose of blessing, refuge and protection (abhaya).

Ganesha's pot belly contains infinite universes. It signifies the bounty of nature and equanimity; the ability of Ganesha to swallow the sorrows (capacity to face all pleasant and unpleasant experiences of the world) of the Universe and protect the world.

The human body possesses a human heart, which is a symbol of kindness and compassion towards all. Ganesha's body is usually portrayed wearing red and yellow clothes. Yellow symbolizes purity, peace and truthfulness. Red symbolizes the activity in the world. These are the qualities of a perfect person who performs all duties in the world, with purity, peace, and truthfulness.

A mouse symbolizes the ego that can nibble all that is good and noble in a person. A mouse sitting near the feet of Ganesha indicates that a perfect person is one who has conquered his (or her) ego. A mouse gazing at the Laddus, but not consuming them, denotes that a purified or controlled ego can live in the world without being affected by worldly temptations. The mouse is also the vehicle of Ganesha, signifying that one must control one's ego in order that wisdom shines forth.

According to one interpretation, Ganesha's divine vehicle, the mouse or 'mooshikam' represents wisdom, talent and intelligence. It symbolizes minute investigation of a cryptic subject. A mouse leads a

clandestine life below the ground. Thus it is also a symbol of ignorance that is dominant in darkness and fears light and knowledge. As the vehicle of Lord Ganesha, a mouse teaches us to remain always on the alert and illuminate our inner-selves with the light of knowledge.

Some interpret this, to say that the mouse (Mushika or Akhu) represents the ego, the mind with all of its desires, and the pride of the individual. Ganesha, riding atop the mouse, becomes the master (and not the slave) of these tendencies, indicating the power that the intellect and the discriminative faculties have over the mind. Moreover, the mouse (extremely voracious by nature) is often depicted next to a plate of sweets with his eyes turned toward Ganesha while he tightly holds on to a morsel of food between his paws, as if expecting an order from Ganesha. This represents the mind which has been completely subordinated to the superior faculty of the intellect, the mind under strict supervision, which fixes Ganesha and does not approach the food unless it has permission.

Lastly it is a very evocative presentation of how humble and modest one should be. Ganesha in spite of his huge physical, mental and intellectual prowess conducts and carries himself so lightly that he can very well be carried by a very small (compared to the size of Ganesha) and insignificant being—the mouse. In the north of India, on the other hand, Ganesha is often portrayed as married to the two daughters of Brahma: Buddhi (intellect) and Siddhi (spiritual power). Ganesha is accompanied by Saraswathi (goddess of culture and art) and Lakshmi (goddess of luck and prosperity), symbolizing that these qualities always accompany him who has discovered his own internal divinity. Symbolically this represents the fact that wealth, prosperity and success which accompany those who have the qualities of wisdom, prudence, and patience.

Representations of Shri Ganesha are based on thousands of years of religious symbolism that resulted in the figure of an elephant-headed god. In India, the statues are impressions of symbolic significance and thus have never been claimed to be exact replications of a living figure. Ganesha is seen not as a physical entity but a higher spiritual being, and mortis, or statue-representations, act as signifiers of him as an ideal. Hindu deities are seen to be accessed through points of symbolic focus known as mortis.

2. Explain the prayer of Vinayaka (devotional Thevara devotional song) . Praises To God by Saint Thirumoolar in his Thirumanthiram

1. Praises To God.

Adoration to the Holy Feet enshrined in my Consciousness
The Feet of His whose arms are five,
Whose face has the Elephant's majesty
Whose single tusk rivals the crescent moon
Who is the darling child of Nandi
And who is wisdom pure and overflowing.

In Praise of God

The One is He, the Two His sweet Grace
In three He stood, in all the Four witnessed
The five He conquered, the Six He filled
The Seven Worlds pervades, manifests the Eight
And so remains

1. The One -The Uncreated Eternal Being-Sivam.
2. The Two-Siva and Sakthi. Sakthi is the dynamic aspect of static Sivam. She confers grace on the Jivas.
3. The Three-Triads are many:
 - a) Primal Sakthi evolves into three subsidiary Sakthis: Ichacha (desire), Jnana (knowledge), and Kriya (action).

- b) The three Gods: Brahma or Aya (of creation) Vishnu or Mal(of preservation), and Siva or Rudra (of dissolution)
- c) The three primal gums: Rajas, Thamas, and Sathwa.
- d) The entire creation represented by the three genders he, she and it.
- e) The three theological categories Pathi, pasu and pasam
- 4) The Four -
 - a) The four *Vedas: Reg, Yajur, Sama, Adharvmana.*
 - b) The four steps to God-realization: Charya, Kriya, Yoga and Jnana.
- 5) The Five
 - a) The five senses.
 - b) The five acts: creation, preservation, dissolution obfuscation, and liberation.
- 6) The six
 - a) The six schools of philosophy.
 - b) The six adhvas or steps to final realization: padam (sound), ezhuthu (letter), manthram (syllable), kalai (light), tathvam (principles of matter), and bhuvanam (world).
 - c) The six adharas or plexuses (chakras): i) mooladhara, ii) swadhishtana, iii) Manipooraka, iv) anahatha, v) vishudhi, vi) ajgna
- 7. The Seven
 - a) The Seven Higher worlds -
 - i) Bhooloka, ii) Bhoovarloka iii) Suvarloka, iv) Makarloka, v) Thapoloka, vi) Sathyaloka, vii) Janarloka(Sivaloka).
 - b) The seven Lower worlds-
 - i) Atala, ii) Vitala, iii) Sutala, iv) Talaatala, v) Mahatala, vi) Raasaatala, vii) Paataala
 - c) Seven Islands (sapta dweepa)
 - i) Shalmal dweepa, ii) Kusha dweepa, iii) Krauncha dweepa, iv) Shaka dweepa, v) Pushkara dweepa, vi) Jambu dweepa, vii) Lavana dweepa
 - d) The seventh chakra - sahasra located in the cranium.
- 8. The Eight-Preservation through
 - i) earth, ii) water, iii) fire, iv) air, v) sky, vi) sun, vii) moon viii) Jeeva.

3. **Explain the Essentials of Buddhism?**

The Essentials of Buddhism are briefly given below

Four Noble Truths

1. Suffering exists
2. Suffering arises from attachment to desires
3. Suffering ceases when attachment to desire ceases
4. Freedom from suffering is possible by practicing the Eightfold Path

Noble Eightfold Path

Three Qualities	Eightfold Path
Wisdom (<i>panna</i>)	Right View Right Thought
Morality (<i>sila</i>)	Right Speech Right Action Right Livelihood
Meditation (<i>samadhi</i>)	Right Effort Right Mindfulness Right Contemplation

Three Characteristics of Existence

1. Transiency (anicca)
2. Sorrow (dukkha)

3. Selflessness (anatta)

Hindrances

1. Sensuous lust
2. Aversion and ill will
3. Sloth and torpor
4. Restlessness and worry
5. Sceptical doubt

Factors of Enlightenment

1. Mindfulness
2. Investigation
3. Energy
4. Rapture
5. Tranquillity
6. Concentration
7. Equanimity

