

# BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the  
Hare Krishna Movement



## FOUNDER

(under the direction of His Divine Grace  
Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī  
Prabhupāda) His Divine Grace  
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

BTG INDIA: **EDITOR** Śyamānanda Dāsa  
• **ASSISTANTS** Nima Suchak, Murāri Gupta  
Dāsa, Nanda Dulāla Dāsa, Mukunda Mālā  
Dāsa • **EDITORIAL CONSULTANT** Caitanya  
Caraṇa Dāsa • **CORRESPONDENT** Gadādhara  
Paṇḍita Dāsa • **PROOFREADER** Rādhā  
Rasikrāja Dāsa • **PUBLISHER** Yudhiṣṭhira  
Dāsa (Ujwal Jajoo) • **PRODUCTION** Sat Cit  
Ānanda Dāsa (Sanjiv Maheshwari), Sundar  
Rūpa Dāsa (Sudarshan Sapaliga) •  
**GENERAL MANAGER (CIRCULATION)**  
Panduraṅga Dāsa (Rajendra-kumar Pujari)  
• **ACCOUNTS** Sahadeva Dāsa (S.P.  
Maheshwari)  
• **SUBSCRIBER SERVICES** Manjari Devī  
Dāsī (Mira Singh)  
**OFFICE** Back to Godhead, 33 Janki Kutir,  
Next to State Bank of Hyderabad, Juhu,  
Mumbai 400 049, India.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS** Back to Godhead is  
published twelve times a year. Subscriptions  
charges - one-year: Rs. 150/-, two-years:  
Rs. 300/-, five-years: Rs. 700/- You can start  
subscription from any month. Send the amount  
to **Back to Godhead**, 302, Amrut Industrial  
Estate, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Western Express Highway,  
Mira Road (E) 401 104. Tel: (022) 32556701  
E-mail: BTGINDIA@pamho.net

To change your address or clear up any  
questions about your subscription, write to  
BTG Service Center & Marketing Office at  
above address.

We can answer your questions faster if you  
send a recent mailing label or invoice. Allow  
eight weeks for changes to show up on your  
mailing label.

**PRINTING** Magna Graphics Pvt. Ltd.,  
Mumbai.



© 2009 The Bhaktivedanta  
Book Trust International. All  
rights reserved. (Trustee for the  
Bhaktivedanta Book Trust: Jayādvaitya Swami.)  
ISSN: 0005-3643. Published for The  
Bhaktivedanta Book Trust by Ujwal Jajoo, 33,  
Janki Kutir, Next to State Bank of Hyderabad,  
Juhu, Mumbai and printed by him at Magna  
Graphics Pvt. Ltd. 101-C&D, Govt. Industrial  
Estate, Kandivli (W), Mumbai-400067, India.  
Editor: Śyamānanda Dāsa, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-  
Gopinātha Temple, Chowpatty, Mumbai-400  
007, India.

# C O N T E N T S

Founded 1944. Special Issue

## Features

### 2 FOUNDER'S LECTURE

**DO IT FOR KṚṢṆA**  
*Bhakti means we  
should simply do that  
which is favorable to  
Kṛṣṇa.*

### 7

**REMOVER OF  
OBSTACLES**  
*Lord Gaṇeśa is known  
for removing obstacles  
from the path of pure-  
hearted souls.*

### 14

**GANEŚA WORSHIP  
IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**  
*Holding on to the traditions  
is a wise choice in the  
modern times.*

## Columns

**13** Special Prayers on  
Gaṇeśa Caturthī

## Departments

**EDITORIAL 16**

*How to worship more than  
9,00,000 gods every day?*

### 4

**BIRTH OF  
GANEŚA**

*A little known  
account of the  
divine origin of  
Lord Gaṇeśa.*

### 8

**THE AUSPICIOUS  
JEWEL**  
*Hearing and reciting a  
story on Gaṇeśa  
Caturthī award great  
benedictions.*

### 6

**LORD GANEŚA  
AGREES TO WRITE**

*The scripting of  
Mahābhārata displays  
a special mood of  
mutual love.*

### 12

**WHEN ŚRĪ RĀDHĀ  
WORSHIPED  
GANEŚA**

*In the presence of all  
the demigods Śrī Rādhā  
offered worship to  
Gaṇeśa.*



The cover  
page was  
designed by  
BTG artist  
Janardan  
Salkar.

## OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

# DO IT FOR KṚṢṆA

*Bhakti means we should simply accept and do that which is favorable to Kṛṣṇa.*

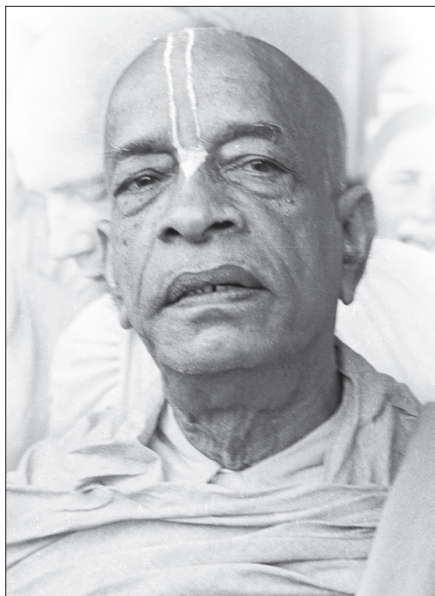
by His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu described a small portion of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*. *Bhakti rasa amṛta*. In *bhakti*, devotional service, there is a *rasa*, taste, and the taste is *amṛta*, eternal.

Here also, we have got a taste for any relationship. Just like we have our relationship with master and servant, this relationship is a perverted reflection of the real master and servant. Here it is perverted because the master does not love the servant, and the servant also does not love the master. The servant serves the master so long as there is payment. If the payment is stopped, then the servant will not be available anymore. But in the spiritual world, Kṛṣṇa's servants are eternal; that is eternal, without any payment. *Mama janmani janmaniśvare bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī* [Śikṣāṣṭaka 4]. *Ahaitukī*. The servants of God, or Kṛṣṇa, they serve Kṛṣṇa not for any material gain. *Ahaitukī*, without any cause of motive. This is real *bhakti*. Therefore the word *bhakti* is applicable only in relationship with God, or Kṛṣṇa. In the material world, there



cannot be any use of the word *bhakti*, because here the so-called devotional service is motivated. So this word *bhakti* is monopolized by Kṛṣṇa, and nobody else. Go on.

## FIRST CLASS DEVOTIONAL SERVICE

*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam  
jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam  
ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-  
śīlanam bhaktir uttamā*

[Brs. 1.1.11]

This is the first statement of *bhakti* given by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. "First class devotional service is known by one's tendency to be fully engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, serving the Lord favorably." Not unfavorably. *Ānukūla, prātikūla. Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpa prātikūlyasya varjanam. Bhakti* means we should simply accept what is favorable to Kṛṣṇa. That which is not favorable to Kṛṣṇa, we shall not accept.

Just like Arjuna, in the beginning he declined to fight. He was thinking favorably to his own senses, "If I kill my brother, grandfather, nephews, who are on the other side...they have come to fight with me so I can kill them. I can own victory over them, but what is the profit? If my relatives, friends, and all others die, then what is the use of my becoming victorious?" That means he was thinking in his favor. But Kṛṣṇa wanted: "You must fight. You are a *kṣatriya*. It is your duty to fight. You are My friend. If you go away, from this battlefield, what will people say? That 'Kṛṣṇa's friend has gone away.'





So this is not good.” When Arjuna was not convinced, Kṛṣṇa spoke the whole *Bhagavad-gītā*. After speaking *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa inquired from Arjuna, “What is your decision now? Are you going to fight or not?” Arjuna said, “Yes, my illusion is over.” *Naṣṭo mohaḥ smṛtir labdhā tvat-prasādān mayā-cyuta...kariṣye vacanaṁ tava*: “Yes, I shall fight.” [Bg. 18.73] This is favorable to Kṛṣṇa.

We have to see what is favorable



In the beginning of war Arjuna declined to fight.

to Kṛṣṇa, not see sense gratification—“not favorable to me, or to my country, or to my society.” No self-interest; only Kṛṣṇa’s interest. That is *bhakti*. So by fighting, Arjuna became a great devotee. *Bhakto 'si priyo 'si me* [Bg. 4.3]. Kṛṣṇa certified, “You are My greatest devotee. You are My very confidential friend.” But what did he do? He

did not read *Vedānta* philosophy. He was a *gṛhasṭha*, a king, engaged in fighting. He knew how to fight only. He did not know what is *Vedānta* philosophy. But still he became a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa. *Bhakto 'si*. So what is the criterion? That he fought favorably.

### LUST ISN'T LOVE

The difference between *kāma* and *prema* is described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. *Prema* is love,

and *kāma* is lust. They appear similar. In the material world, lust is going on in the name of love. A boy loves a girl, a girl loves a boy, but actually the boy wants sense gratification and the girl also wants sense gratification. That is not love. As soon as there is any difficulty in sense gratification, immediately there is divorce. So there is no love in the material world. There is only lust. Therefore the author of *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* has distinguished between love and

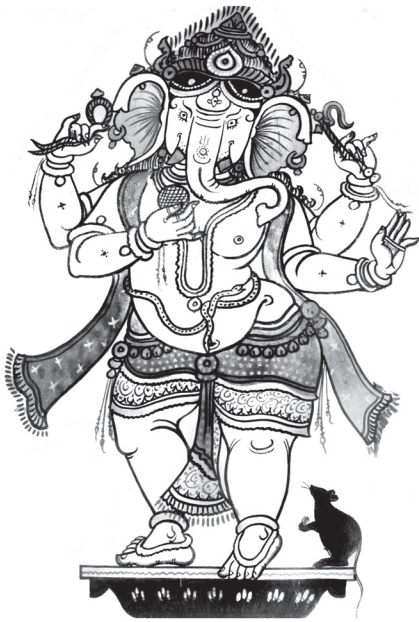
lust. He says, *ātmendriya-prīti-vāñchā tāre bali kāma*. When you want to satisfy your senses it is called lust. *Kṛṣṇendriya-prīti vāñchā dhare prema nāma*: when you want to satisfy the senses of Kṛṣṇa, that is love. [Cc. Ādi 4.165]

Just like Arjuna, in the beginning he wanted to satisfy his own senses. “I shall not fight because if

the other party, my brothers and grandfathers live, I shall be happy.” So that is *kāma*. That is not *prema*. But then he agreed to fight because Kṛṣṇa wanted it... *Nimitta-mātram bhava savya-sācin*: “O Arjuna, you can be but an instrument in the fight.” So that is *prema*. So *kṛṣṇa-prema* can be executed in so many ways. Simply Kṛṣṇa should be satisfied. That is *prema*. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. So at the present moment, Kṛṣṇa, in the *Bhagavad-gītā* wanted: *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja* [Bg. 18.66]. Kṛṣṇa wanted Arjuna—meaning everyone—to surrender to Kṛṣṇa and be engaged in the service of Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is propagating to serve Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa demanded, “You surrender unto Me,” and we are preaching, ‘You surrender unto Kṛṣṇa.’ What is the difference? There is no difference. We Hare Kṛṣṇa people preach the same thing that was spoken five thousand years ago by Kṛṣṇa personally. We don’t change. We present, therefore, *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is*. Kṛṣṇa says that everyone should surrender unto Him. We are preaching the same philosophy that ‘You surrender to Kṛṣṇa.’ Kṛṣṇa says *man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī mām namaskuru* [Bg. 18.65]. We say the same thing. We ask everyone that ‘You become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. You think of Kṛṣṇa constantly. You worship Kṛṣṇa. You offer you obeisances unto Kṛṣṇa.’ So this is favorable. If we preach what Kṛṣṇa said five thousand years ago, that is favorable. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness. To act in favor of Kṛṣṇa means Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.

Thank you very much. ❁



# Birth of GAṆEŚĀ

*A little known account of the divine origin of Lord Gaṇeśa*

This description of the appearance of Lord Gaṇeśa is given in *Gaṇapati Khaṇḍa of Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa*. The popular story of how Mother Pārvatī created Lord Gaṇeśa from her cosmetics is given in *Rudra-samhita, Kumāra Khaṇḍa of Śiva Purana*, where Lord Brahmā confirms the version presented below. The different versions mentioned in the *Purāṇas* are due to variation in pastimes that take place in different yugas.

Lord Nārāyaṇa explained that after the birth of Kārtikeya—the commander-in-chief of the demigods—Mother Pārvatī requested Lord Śiva for one more son. On the request of his beloved wife, Mahādeva asked her to perform a *puṇyaka* ceremony (*vrata*) to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The procedures include singing *kīrtana*, offering *bhoga*, flower garlands, *tulasī* lamps to Lord Hari.

After explaining the details, Lord Śiva, who can award the fruit of penances, went to perform meditation on Lord Hari.

Following the order of Lord Śiva, Pārvatī arranged for all the paraphernalia required to be used in the ceremony, with Sanat-

kumāra the head priest of the ceremony. On the day beginning a year long observance, everyone arrived on Mount Kailāsa, including Lord Viṣṇu, to greet and offer their blessings upon Pārvatī for the successful completion of the ceremony. The host Lord Śiva made comfortable arrangements for the guests.

After satisfying the guests, Lord Śiva requested Lord Viṣṇu to sit on the elevated throne and inquired: “O all cognizant Lord Śrīnivāsa, kindly instruct us on the performance of this ceremony.” Smiling gently, Lord Viṣṇu replied: “O master of Pārvatī, the essence of performing any activity or any ceremony is devotion to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa which is very rare. It is by His devotees’ mercy only one can get devotion to Him. A devotee becomes qualitatively equal with the Lord, he never perishes even after annihilation of this world and returns back to the Lord’s abode Goloka Vṛndāvana. O Śiva, you devastate the whole world, but you cannot harm My devotee, nor does powerful illusory energy delude them because of My mercy upon them.”

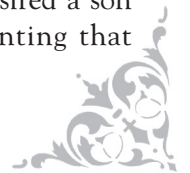
“Your wife is mother of all living entities in this material world. By the influence of this ceremony, Pārvatī will beget the child who will

be the partial representative of Lord Kṛṣṇa. By My blessing, he will receive the first worship in any auspicious occasion.”

After completion of the sacrifice, the head priest Sanat-kumāra requested Pārvatī to give Lord Śiva as his remuneration. On hearing this demand Mother Pārvatī fell unconscious. Then Lord Nārāyaṇa descended from the sky. He told Mother Pārvatī that she should give Lord Śiva in charity, but then exchange her husband with the offering of a cow to the sage. Pārvatī did as instructed and her husband was returned.

## LORD KṚṢṂA APPEARS

At that time a brilliant globe of light appeared there which was brighter than crores of suns. All the demigods present glorified that effulgence of Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa. After Pārvatī’s prayers, Lord Kṛṣṇa became pleased with her and revealed to her His charming, eternal, youthful form, holding a flute, decorated with a forest flower garland, peacock feather on his head, yellowish garments, and an enchanting smiling face. His beauty defeated the beauty of millions of Cupids. Seeing this form, Pārvatī desired a son like Him. Instantly granting that





boon Lord Kṛṣṇa disappeared.

Then Pārvatī distributed immense charity, and after the ceremony, she and Lord Śiva spent time together at their residence. When they were engaged in union, a *brāhmaṇa* knocked on the door desperately calling for food. His body was emaciated by penances, and he was very hungry. Both Śiva and Pārvatī received the untimely guest. The *brāhmaṇa* explained his condition and asked for food which was prepared in the *puṇyaka* ceremony. Lord Śiva and Pārvatī went to bring the foodstuff, but suddenly the *brāhmaṇa* disappeared. Shocked, they lamented for not being able to serve him. At that time, a divine voice spoke from the sky, “O Pārvatī. Do not lament. Go inside the residence and see the newborn child that has appeared there. The *brāhmaṇa* was none other than Lord Janārdana.”

Pārvatī rushed inside and to her amazement a beautiful child had appeared on the bed. Delighted, her heart filled with joy just like a poverty-stricken person becomes happy after getting a big treasure house, or like people suffering from drought become happy upon the arrival of rain. She called for Lord Śiva to see the child and both of them embraced the child heartily.

### ŚANIDEVA’S ARRIVAL

Lord Śiva, then distributed charity to the *brāhmaṇas*. Hearing the news of a new-born baby in the home of Lord Śiva, all the sages, demigods, Gandharvas, and Kinnaras arrived at their residence to see the child and offered their blessings upon him.

Amongst them was the son of the sun-god, Śanideva. His face was gently bowed down, eyes were half closed in meditation, his mind was fixed on Lord Kṛṣṇa and internally

and externally he was remembering Lord Kṛṣṇa. He went in the chambers where Mother Pārvatī was sitting with her child, Gaṇeśa but did not glance at them. Mother Pārvatī asked him, “What is the matter? Why have you lowered your head instead of seeing the new born child?”

Śanideva replied: “Since my childhood, I was a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and was always engaged in his meditation. Once, my wife desired to have a union with me while I was in meditation on the Lord’s lotus feet. Being oblivious to the surroundings I could not respond to her desire and she cursed me, saying that whomever I glance at will be destroyed. To avoid violence now I don’t glance at anyone.”

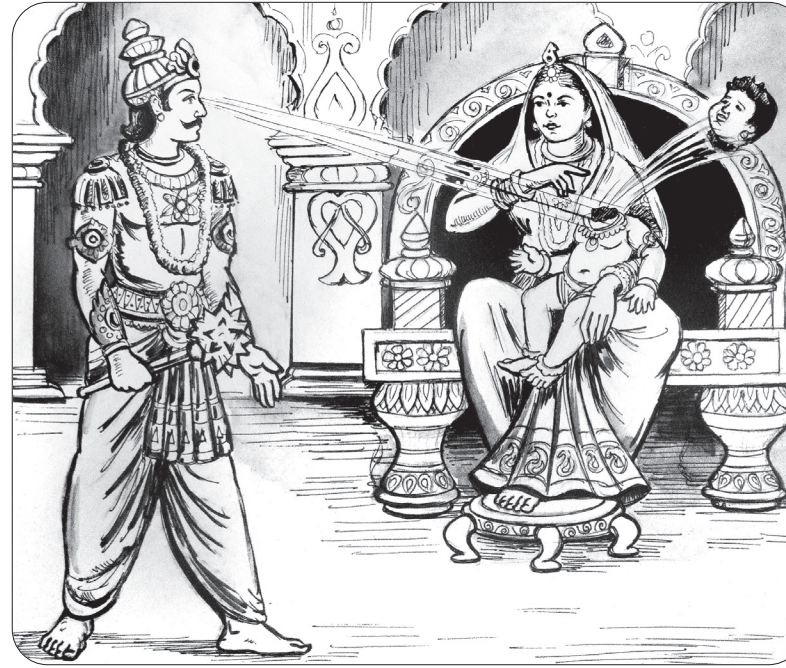
Pārvatī remembered Lord Hari, “Everyone is controlled by the Lord’s desire,” she replied, and asked Śanideva to look at her and her son. Śanideva hesitated. Avoiding the mother, he just glanced on the child from the corner of his left eye. At once, the child’s head got separated from his trunk and went back to Goloka, where it merged into Lord Kṛṣṇa. As Pārvatī saw her dead son, she fell unconscious. Everyone stood stunned, including Lord Śiva.

Seeing this condition, Lord Hari went to the northern side of the bank of the River Puṣpabhadra where an elephant was resting in the

forest facing north. The Lord immediately cut off its head with Sudarśana *cakra* and brought it back to Mount Kailāsa. He placed that head on the trunk of the dead child and revived his consciousness.

Seeing the child alive, the whole atmosphere filled with joy and bliss. In this way, the child became known as Gajānana.

Lord Viṣṇu said to Pārvatī, “Everyone has to face the result of his



As soon as Śanideva glanced at the child his head got separated from the trunk.

own karma. Only Lord Kṛṣṇa is the bestower of the results of karma, the controller of death, time, the supreme protector and ultimate shelter. We Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are His expansions. In that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Vīṇayaka situated. ❀

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Some articles in this issue have been taken from the book *Vinayaka Chaturthi* by Shri T. S. Raghavendran, of S.M.S.O. Sabha. We are grateful to him.

—Editor

# GANEŚA agrees to WRITE

*The scripting of Mahābhārata displays a special mood of mutual love.*

by Nanda Dulāl Dāsa



Art by Janardan Salkar

Vedic deities are very popular in and around the Indian subcontinent. Sometimes, however, this multitude of deities seems to create an idea of pantheism in the immature minds of the uninformed. Some even go to the extent of imagining some form of rivalry between these deities. To understand the reality better, let us examine a pivotal incident from time bygone.

We have to travel back in time around 5,000 years. The end of

Dvāpara-yuga loomed ahead on the horizon of time. Śrīla Vyāsa, impelled by compassion for the masses of the future, thought of putting down in writing all knowledge that was available at that time in sound form. To help the needy, Vyāsa compiled the *Veda* and then divided it into four, viz. *Sāma*, *Yajur*, *Ṛg* and *Atharva*. After this, he further explained the text in histories called *Purāṇas*. At this point he felt that these texts would be difficult for the common man of Kali-

yuga to comprehend. He wished to compile for them something that would explain the same subject matter of the *Vedas* in a simple, attractive and lucid form, easily understandable by ordinary man. At this point he thought of compiling the *Mahābhārata*.

Lord Brahmā gave his blessings and advised Vyāsa to take help from Lord Gaṇeśa for the purpose of writing the composition.

Even though Vyāsadeva had a son of the caliber of Śrīla Sukadeva Gosvami and disciples like Vaiśampāyana, Lord Brahmā's selection for this valuable task

was Gaṇeśa. It is also interesting to note that Vyāsa himself is an incarnation of Nārāyaṇa and whenever anyone chants the Vedic literature, one offers obeisances to him. Before reaching this point, Śrīla Vyāsadeva had already compiled the *Vedas* and had even summarized it in the form of the *Vedānta-sūtras*. Clearly, there is no doubt about the capabilities of the compiler himself or his followers in the form of his son or his disciples. Yet, Lord Brahmā ordered Vyāsa to commission Lord Gaṇeśa for this important service. Clearly Lord Gaṇeśa is a personality specially chosen for this important service.

Lord Gaṇeśa agreed but said, "O Vyāsa! I shall agree on one condition—while writing, my pen shouldn't stop even for a moment."

Vyāsa replied, "You too may not write a single alphabet without properly understanding its meaning." Lord Gaṇeśa gave his assent by replying with the 'Om' sound and thus agreed to write.

The counter-condition put forward by Vyāsa is another striking  
(please turn to page 11)





# Remover of Obstacles

*Lord Gaṇeśa is well known for removing obstacles from the path of pure hearted souls.*



**G**okarṇa, a temple town in Karnataka, also known as Gokarṇa Mahābaleśvara, is famous for the presence of one of the twelve *vyotirliṅgas* of Lord Śiva. Lord Gaṇeśa is said to have established this *liṅga*. The glories of the deity of Vināyaka Gaṇeśa of Gokarṇa are described by Śrī Vādiraja Mahan in *Tīrtha prabandhaḥ*, *paścima prabandhaḥ*:

*duṣṭānām vighnakartā sucarita  
sujanastoma vighnāpahartā  
tasmād vighnādhiḥo 'ham mata iti  
sudhiyām spaṣtam ājñāpanāya |*

*Duṣṭānām vighnakartā—* Vināyaka states: “I spoil the intentions of the bad, wicked and evil-minded people.” *sucarita sujanastoma vighnāpahartā—* “I am the destroyer of the hurdles on the path of *sādhus*, pious people.” *Tasmād vighnādhiḥo 'ham—* “Therefore I am called the king of hurdles.”

The truth is that Gaṇeśa removes all obstacles on the path of pious, *sātvik* souls, and creates

hurdles on the path of evil persons. There is an interesting story in this regard which is related to the establishment of Gokarṇa. Here Gaṇeśa helped the demigods overcome a great obstacle.

Once Rāvaṇa offered prayers to Lord Śiva, and Lord Śiva then gave him a *siva-liṅga* and said that as long as he possessed this *liṅga*, he would be invincible. Śiva, however, also warned him not to place this *liṅga* on the ground until he reached Laṅkā because once he placed it on the ground, the *liṅga* won't move.

When the demigods learned about the benediction Rāvaṇa had received, being fearful they requested Gaṇeśa for help. Gaṇeśa agreed. When Rāvaṇa was on his way, he stopped to take a bath at Gokarṇa. Gaṇeśa, in the disguise of a *brāhmaṇa* boy, appeared before him and offered to hold the *liṅga* until Rāvaṇa finished his duties. So Rāvaṇa gave the *liṅga* to Gaṇeśa. As soon as Rāvaṇa went to take his bath, Gaṇeśa installed the *liṅga* at that place.

When Rāvaṇa came back, he tried his best with all his might to lift the *liṅga*, but failed. While trying to lift the *liṅga*, it took the shape of an ear of the cow and so it is known as “Gokarṇa” and as Rāvaṇa exercised all his might to lift it up it is also called Mahābaleśvara.

This story is narrated in the

*Skanda Purāṇa, Brahmottara Khaṇḍa, chapter 202.*

The *Brahmā-saṃhitā* (5.50) explains how Gaṇeśa derives his power to remove obstacles from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Govinda:

*yat-pāda-pallava-yugaṃ vinidhāya  
kumbha- dvandve praṇāma-samaye  
sa gaṇādhirājaḥ vighnān vihantum  
alam asya jagat-trayasya govindam  
ādi-puruṣaṃ tam ahaṃ bhajāmi*

Translation: “I worship the primeval Lord, Govinda. Gaṇeśa always holds His lotus feet upon the pair of *tumuli* protruding from his elephant head in order to obtain power for his function of destroying all obstacles on the path of progress in the three worlds.”

A devotee who is aspiring to obtain pure devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead may pray to Gaṇeśa to remove all impediments on the path of spiritual progress.

*vakratuṇḍa mahākāya sūryakoṭi  
samaḥprabha nirvighnaṃ kuru me  
deva sarvakāryeṣu sarvadā*

Translation: “Vināyaka (Gaṇeśa) is effulgent like millions of suns. In all our matters, we pray to him to remove all our hurdles and impediments.” ❀



# THE AUSPICIOUS JEWEL

*Hearing and reciting a special story on Gaṇeśa Caturthī awards great benediction*

(Based on Skanda Purāṇa)

There was a city called Candrajyoti. It was reigned by a king Dharmakānta, who was very much involved in religious activities. He was very kind to all the subjects and animals. Dharmakānta had a splendid queen called Svarṇakāntā. She was intently devoted and loyal to her husband and was very sober and polite.

Once, the queen was sitting in the private apartments of the king and hearing the glories of Gauri from a brāhmaṇa. King Dharmakānta entered the private place, but at that time the queen Svarṇakāntā was so engrossed in hearing the Purānic stories that she did not notice the arrival of the king. King Dharmakānta saw his wife in the company of the brāhmaṇa and misunderstood the situation, and immediately left the palace.

A long time passed, but the king never returned. The queen was upset and struck by the loneliness, so she took shelter and refuge in Gaurī.

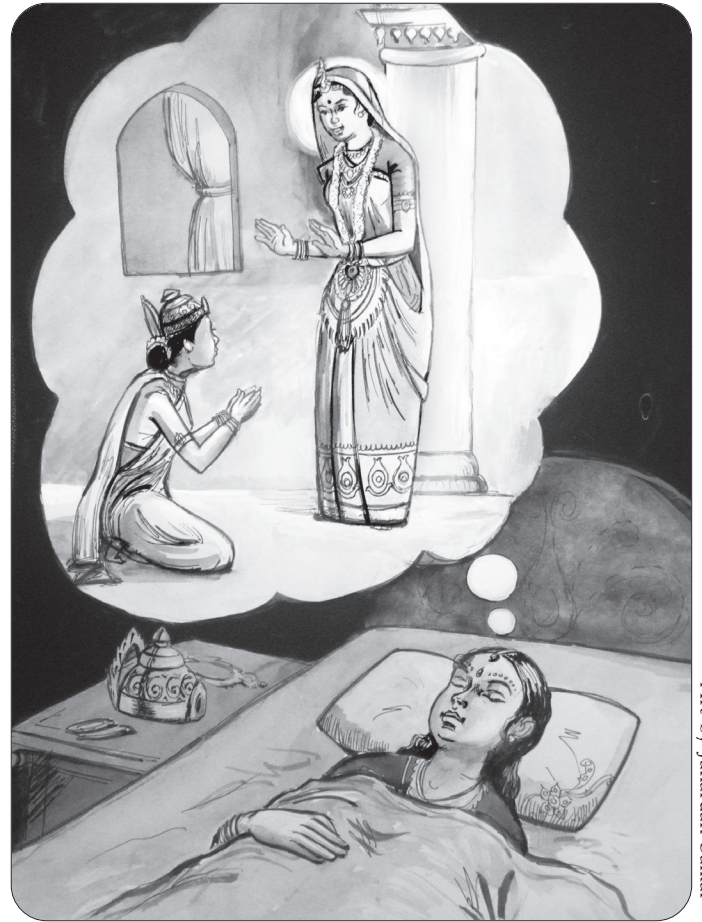
## MOTHER PĀRVATĪ APPEARED IN A DREAM

Gaurī appeared in a dream of queen Svarṇakāntā and said: “Don’t fear. Your husband will return soon and make you happy.

“O my dear! I will tell you the reason why although innocent you were misunderstood by the king. You had seen the moon on the day of Bhādrapada month, Śukla-pakṣa, Caturthī day. Because of this act, the king has doubts about your character. Let me explain the reason why one should not see the moon on this day.”

Then mother Pārvatī narrated the story of the birth of Gaṇeśa, his preventing Lord Śiva from entering the house, Lord Śiva cutting Gaṇeśa’s head, Pārvatī’s lamentation and Lord Śiva’s bringing back Gaṇeśa to life after replacing his cut head with an elephant’s.

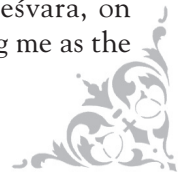
She continued, “That day was



*Gaurī appeared in the dream of the queen Svarṇakānta*

Bhādrapada month, Śukla-pakṣa, Caturthī day, and so my husband Lord Śiva gave the boon that my son Vināyaka would fulfill all the desires of one who worshiped him on this day. Then Vigneśvara, on the Caturthī day, keeping me as the

Art by Janardan Salkar





witness to all the happenings earlier, visited all the places and received the *pūjā* offered to him and ate all the offerings on that holy day.

“In the night, Vighneśvara ate a large quantity of food and mounted a small rat. He was traveling when suddenly a snake came before them. On seeing the snake, due to great fear, the rat became unconscious and fell down and so did Gaṇeśa and his belly exploded and all the sweet balls fell out. Gaṇeśa picked up all the sweets from the ground and put them back into his belly tying it up with the very same serpent which was moving there. Seeing this, Candra began to laugh.

“This disrespectful laughter greatly infuriated Vighnarāja, and he cursed Candra, saying ‘You insulted me by laughing; I curse you that in the future no one will be able to see you.’

“Then, pulling out one of his tusks, Gaṇeśa hit Candra and cursed him to decrease day by day.

“When cursed, Candra immediately fell before Gaṇeśa and begged for mercy. Gaṇeśa diluted the original curse and said that Candra should decrease day by day in *kṛṣṇa-pakṣa* (the dark fortnight of the month) and that no one should see the moon at least on one day—Bhādrapada Śukla Caturthī—as punishment for the offence committed by him. After cursing Candra, Gaṇeśa left for his abode.”

Gaurī continued. “O dear wife of the king, you have actually seen the moon on that prohibited day and as a consequence, all this happened. But there is a verse of the *Purāṇas*, which when heard with devotion, the sin gets liquidated.”

“Tell me please,” Svarṇakānta begged. “Kindly tell me that verse so that not only me, but the entire

world would be blessed.

### THE STORY OF THE SUPREME THIEF

Gaurī replied:

*siṃhaḥ prasenaṃ avadhīt  
siṃhaḥ jāmbavatāhataḥ  
sukumāraka mārodih  
tavahi eṣa śamantakaḥ*

Translation: A lion killed the king Prasena; Jāmbavān killed the lion. Dear and beautiful child, don’t cry; this Syamantaka jewel has been brought for you only. (Text 46)

*etat ślokasya śravaṇāt  
kṛṣṇe nindāpahāritā  
tat-kathā sumahāpuṇyā  
śrotavyā kṛṣṇa-saṃśrayā*

Translation: By hearing this verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa got rid of the criticism leveled against Him. That story relating to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is of great piety and by hearing it one attains His shelter. (Text 47)

Note: *Kṛsne nindāpahārita*—this is only for the benefit of the world. Lord Kṛṣṇa is above all these.

Queen Svarṇakānta asked: “What is that Syamantaka jewel told by you? Who is that Prasena? Who is Lord Kṛṣṇa? Which is the story which when heard, clears off all sins? Please narrate to me all this entirely. Kindly crush and destroy all my sins.”

Saying this, the queen Svarṇakānta waited for the sweet words of Pārvatī Devī.

Gaurī spoke:

*vakṣyāmi śṛṇu bhadraṃ  
te sā kathā pāpa-hāriṇī  
sarvā-nindāpahantrī ca  
śrotavyā tad-dīne naraiḥ*

Translation: My dear, I am narrating to you that story which will

destroy all sins. Please hear the same. Hearing this story will clear all the unwanted gossip and censure on the listeners.

All people should hear this story on the particular day of Vināyaka Caturthī, without fail. Mother Pārvatī then recited to Queen Svarankānta the story of Syamantaka Jewel, as mentioned in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Canto ten. The same story is translated beautifully by Śrīla Prabhupāda in Kṛṣṇa book, and is reproduced briefly in the end. As mentioned by mother Pārvatī, everyone should hear this story on the day of Gaṇeśa Caturthī for the complete pleasure of Lord Gaṇeśa and our supreme benefit.

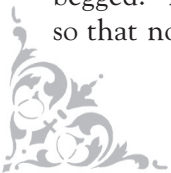
It is also said that because Lord Kṛṣṇa had seen the moon that Caturthī day in Bhādrapada month, He also had to face criticism. This fact has to be understood very cautiously. The curse of Gaṇanātha cannot bring any effect on the Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is beyond all this. But Lord Kṛṣṇa decided to obey such a curse just to set an example as mentioned in *Bhagavad-gītā* (3.21):

*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas  
tat tad evetaro janaḥ  
sa yat pramāṇam kurute  
lokas tad anuvartate*

Translation: Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues.

Here Lord Kṛṣṇa, being the supreme in all respects set His own example for others to follow.

Lord Kṛṣṇa further says: Whoever accidentally sees the moon on this day will be redeemed of all the sins by hearing with devotion My



story related to the Syamantaka jewel. He will be cleared of all obstacles and grief. He will get all happiness and joy of supreme order.

Therefore, it is mandatory that all should hear this sacred story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa on that day without fail. Gaurī said, “If you hear that story, then definitely, without doubt, your husband will join you and will show

doubts were removed and he again developed great love for his wife and lived happily with her.

*kathām cora prasāṅgām hi  
kṛṣṇasyāsya mahātmānaḥ  
śṛṇvanti ye narāḥ bhaktyā  
teṣām vighna vināśanam*

Translation: Those who hear with great devotion this incident of accusation of Lord Kṛṣṇa with theft (Syamantaka jewel story), for them all troubles and hurdles will be destroyed by the virtue acquired by hearing the sacred story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Text 86: All desires will be fulfilled and they will be victorious in all

endeavours. Merely by hearing this story all sins will be removed.

Text 87:  
*vidyārthī labhate vidyām  
dhanārthī ca labhet dhanam  
kanyārthī ca labhet kanyām  
sukhārthī ca labhet sukham*

Translation: By devotedly hearing the story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whatever is aspired for is obtained. Those who want education, wealth, wife happiness—they will get everything as per their wish.

Text 88: Therefore by making all attempts to the maximum extent, this Syamantaka-*maṇi* story related to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa should be heard by all on that Caturthī day. That will remove all

blemishes and sins in the devoted bearers.

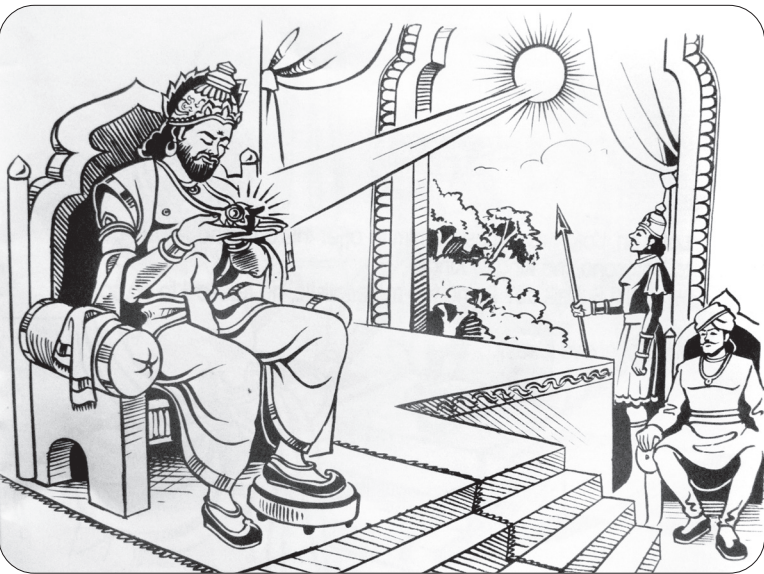
Text 89: Those who always hear this story and those who always read it, all of them will be totally free from all sins and achieve the supreme abode (*parama gati* or *mokṣa*).

Note: *Satatam* means always. Therefore this story should always be heard and always be spoken. Its hearing and recital should not be confined to Vināyaka Caturthī day only. Such reading, preaching, hearing of this story of Śrī Kṛṣṇa will lead ultimately to *mokṣa*.

### STORY OF SYAMANTAKA JEWEL

Satrājīta was a great devotee of Sūrya, the sun-god, and out of great affection Sūrya gave him the Syamantaka jewel. Each day the gem would produce eight *bhāras* of gold, and the place in which it was kept and properly worshiped would be free of diseases and calamities. When Satrājīta entered Dvārakā wearing the jewel, he looked as brilliant as the sun-god, and all residents, except Lord Kṛṣṇa, mistook him to be Sūrya himself. By possessing the jewel, Satrājīta became so greedy that when Lord Kṛṣṇa once requested him to give the jewel to King Ugrasena, Satrājīta refused.

Once Satrājīta's brother, Prasena, went hunting to the forest wearing the jewel. A lion killed Prasena and his horse and took the jewel. But when the lion entered a mountain cave he was killed by Jāmbavān, who wanted the jewel. Within the cave Jāmbavān let his young son have the Syamantaka jewel as a toy to play with. Meanwhile Satrājīta, not seeing his brother return, became deeply troubled. He said, “Kṛṣṇa probably killed my brother, who went to the forest wearing the jewel on his neck.” The general populace heard



King Satrājīta received the Syamantaka jewel from the sun-god Sūrya.

all love and mercy upon you.” Saying this, Gaurī left for her abode, Kailasa, to serve Lord Śiva. Queen Svarṇakānta gladly woke up the next morning. That day being Vināyaka Caturthī, she worshiped Gaṇeśa and devotedly heard the story of the Syamantaka jewel connected with Lord Kṛṣṇa.

### RESULTS OF HEARING THE SYAMANTAKA JEWEL STORY

After some time, the king Dharmakānta thought calmly again and again about his hasty action. The king sent for the *brāhmaṇa* and heard his version of the incident and learnt about the perfect conduct of both the queen and the *brāhmaṇa*. The king's





this accusation and began whispering it in one another's ears. When Lord Kṛṣṇa heard this rumor, He wanted to remove the stain on His reputation. So He took some of Dvārakā's citizens with Him and set out to retrace Prasena's path. In the forest they found Prasena and his horse, both killed by the lion. Further on they found the lion dead on a mountainside, slain by Jāmbavān. The Lord stationed His subjects outside the terrifying, pitch-dark cave of the king of the bears, and then He entered alone. Inside the cave the Lord saw the little child playing with the jewel. Determined to take it away, He approached the child. The child's nurse cried out in fear upon seeing that extraordinary person standing before them. When Jāmbavān heard her cries, he angrily ran toward the Lord. Unaware of His true position and thinking Him an ordinary man, Jāmbavān angrily began fighting with the Supreme Lord, his master. The two

fought furiously in single combat, each determined to win. The fight



*Jāmbavān offered Kṛṣṇa his daughter Jāmbavatī together with the jewel.*

went on without rest for twenty-eight days. Finally Jāmbavān understood that his opponent was not an ordinary mortal. He surrendered to the Lord realizing that Kṛṣṇa was the

Supreme Personality of Godhead. He begged forgiveness by offering Him his maiden daughter, Jāmbavatī, together with the jewel.

After returning to Dvārakā, Lord Kṛṣṇa in the presence of King Ugrasena, announced the recovery of the jewel and then formally presented it to Satrājit. Hanging his head in shame, Satrājit took the gem and returned home, all the while feeling remorse for his sinful behavior. The best way to beg forgiveness, he thought, was to hand over the jewel and also his daughter to the Lord in marriage. The Lord then married Satyabhāmā in proper religious fashion. Lord Kṛṣṇa told Satrājit, "We do not care to take this jewel back, O King. You are the sun-god's devotee, so let it stay in your possession.

Thus We will also enjoy its benefits."

(Based on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, Canto 10, Ch. 56) ❀

### Gaṇeśa agrees...

(Continued from page 6)

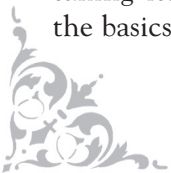
feature of this whole episode. The *Mahābhārata* primarily follows the lives of the Pāṇḍavas, who as staunch and unshakeable devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa faced many difficulties in their lives. Yet in the face of reversals, their devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa never wavered. The culmination of this poetry is in the great war. The best of all instructions, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, was spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa just before the start of this war to guide His dear devotee Arjuna. The *Bhagavad-gītā* is glorified as a succinct spiritual textbook taking its hearer(or reader) from the basics to the advanced levels of

spirituality. For this, it is highly respected throughout the world.

The text clearly explains how the pantheism that is alleged by modern man against the Vedic conception of authority is not true, and establishes clearly Lord Kṛṣṇa's position and His relationship with other deities (Bg. 7.20-23 and 9.20-24). It is clear and transparent for the student to understand that there is no such thing as rivalry even in a subtle form between the different Vedic deities. The Vedic texts certainly do not promote pantheism of any sort. And if this was written by Gaṇeśa, then as per Vyāsa's condition, he must have understood these concepts clearly before writing them

down. If these words would have explained anything contradictory to the real understanding, Lord Gaṇeśa wouldn't have put it down in writing. Thus, this simple incident proves that the Vedic deities are in harmony with each other and Lord Gaṇeśa is happy to render service of glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa, by glorifying His words that form a part of the *Mahābhārata*. ❀

*Nanda Dulāl Dāsa has a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering. He is a part of the editorial team of Indian English BTG. He stays at ISKCON Mumbai where he teaches Kṛṣṇa consciousness to college students.*



# When ŚRĪ Rādhā worshiped GAṆEŚĀ

*In the presence of all the demigods  
Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī offered worship to Śrī Gaṇeśa.*

(Excerpts from *Brahmā-vaivarta Purāṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa janma khaṇḍa chapter 122-123*)

**N**ārada muni asked Lord Nārāyaṇa, “In the past the demigods worshiped Rādhā Mādhava in Siddhāśrama. At the same place how did Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, in the presence of

Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, and other great personalities choose to first worship Gaṇeśa? Kindly narrate to me this entire pastime.

Lord Nārāyaṇa replied: Nārada! In the three worlds, the earth is auspicious. On that earth Bhārata is the bestower of auspicious result of actions. In that Bhārata there is a great,

auspicious place, Siddhāśrama, that bestows fame and liberation. Brahmā, Sanat-Kumara, Kapila, Mahendra and many others performed austerities here and achieved perfection. Gaṇeśa eternally resides here and there is a beautiful deity of Gaṇeśa made of priceless jewels, which is worshipped on Vaiśālī Pūrṇimā by all men, demigods, demons, Gandharvas and sages. On that occasion Pārvatī, Śiva, Kārtikeya, Brahmā, Śeṣanāga, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Nanda and even Rādhā reached there with a happy heart. Then Śrīmatī Rādhā who possesses beautiful teeth, bathed and dressed in fresh clothes. Then Rādhārāṇī, who purifies the earth, washed Her feet, fasted and controlled Her senses and entered the *maṇimandapa*. With a desire to obtain Lord Kṛṣṇa, She bathed Gaṇeśa with Ganges water. Then, She, who is the mother of the four Vedas, Vasus, all the worlds, and the *jñānīs*, the personification of beauty, that Supreme Rādhā, taking white flowers and reciting prayers, began to meditate on Gaṇeśa who is just like Her son. She then offered various articles and chanted *stotra* and mantra in praise of Gaṇeśa.

Lord Nārāyaṇa said: “Nārada! The chaste Rādhā offered orna-



Art by Janardan Salkar





ments made of precious jewels to Gaṇeśa. Seeing Śrī Rādhā's worship and hearing Her prayers, the peaceful Gaṇeśa spoke to the peaceful natured mother of the three worlds, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī."

Śrī Gaṇeśa said: "O universal Mother! This worship of Yours is to teach the world. O auspicious one, You are the personification of Brahman and reside at the chest of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Brahmā, Śiva, jñānīs, and demigods, Sanak and other sages, liberated devotees, Lord Kapila—all of them meditate on Your beautiful and rare lotus feet. You are the life of that Lord Kṛṣṇa, and more dear to Him than His own life. You have originated from His left side. Mahālakṣmī has come from Your left side. You have given birth to Vasu, You are the chief Goddess, the controller of the Vedas and the world, the original prakṛti. O Mother! All the natural females in this creation are Your expansion. You are the cause of the universe. During the annihilation when Brahmā disappears, that is one nimeṣa of Śrī Hari. At that time the intelligent yogi who first recites Rādhā and then Kṛṣṇa's name (chants Hare Kṛṣṇa) he easily enters Goloka.

"You are the mother of the universe and Śrī Hari is the father; but mother is more worshipable than the father. In this pious land of Bhārata, if any dull-headed person worships the cause of all causes Lord Kṛṣṇa or some other demigod but disrespects Rādhā then he obtains misery and pain in this world, his family is destroyed, and he resides in hell.

"When a living entity in each of his life chants the names of demigods, he achieves devotion to the rare lotus feet of Durgā. When he takes shelter of the mantra of Śambhu, the cause of material world, then he attains Your (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's) extremely rare lotus feet. And having once possessed them, that pious soul never even for a moment lets go of them. One who receives both of Your mantra from a Vaiṣṇava and with full-devotion chants it, he delivers thousands of generations."

Then Gaṇeśa requested Rādhārāṇī to gift all the offerings to the brāhmaṇas, and Rādhārāṇī did so, thus extremely pleasing Gaṇeśa. Mother Pārvatī met Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and embraced Her while talking sweet words. All the demigods including Brahmā, and Mahādeva, Ananta, Manus, and other sages humbly prayed and glorified Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. ❀

*paramārādhanaenaiva kṛṣṇasya paramātmanaḥ  
puṇyakena vratenaiva yaṁ prāpa pārvatī sati*

This verse explains that Śrīmatī Pārvatī Devī obtained Śrī Gaṇeśa as her son after observing a Puṇyaka vrata, consisting of worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa who is the Paramātmā in everyone's heart.

- from SāmaVeda

## SPECIAL PRAYERS ON GAṆEŚA CATURTHĪ

Śrīla Madhvācārya describes in his *Mahābhārata Tātparya Nirṇaya*, chapter 20, that Gaṇeśa was born to Rukmiṇī Devi and Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Cārudeṣṇa.

Lord Kṛṣṇa married 16,108 queens and settled in Dvārakā. Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā and Jāmbavatī were among the principal queens. Each of the 16,108 queens gave birth to ten sons and a daughter. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (10.61.8-13) lists the names of the sons born to the main queens.

*cārudeṣṇaḥ sudeṣṇaś ca cārudehaś ca vīryavān  
sucāruś cāruguptaś ca bhadracāruś tathāparaḥ  
cārucandro vicāruś ca cāruś ca daśamo hareḥ  
pradyumna-pramukhā jātā rukmiṇyāṁ nāvamāḥ  
pituḥ*

Translation: The first son of Queen Rukmiṇī was Pradyumna, and also born of her were Cārudeṣṇa, Sudeṣṇa and the powerful Cārudeha, along with Sucāru, Cārugupta, Bhadracāru, Cārucandra, Vicāru and Cāru, the tenth. None of these sons of Lord Hari was less than his father. Cārudeṣṇa mentioned here is an incarnation of Gaṇeśa or Vināyaka.

*bhānuḥ subhānuḥ svarbhānuḥ prabhānur  
bhānumāms tathā  
candrabhānur bṛhadbhānur atibhānus  
tathāṣṭamaḥ  
śrībhānuḥ pratibhānuś ca satyabhāmātmajā daśa  
sāmbaḥ sumitraḥ purujic chatajic ca sahasrajit  
vijayaś citraketuś ca vasumān draviḍaḥ kratuḥ  
jāmbavatyāḥ sutā hy ete sāmābādyāḥ pitṛ-  
sammatāḥ*

Translation: The ten sons of Satyabhāmā were Bhānu, Subhānu, Svarbhānu, Prabhānu, Bhānumān, Candrabhānu, Bṛhadbhānu, Atibhānu (the eighth), Śrībhānu and Pratibhānu. Sāmba, Sumitra, Purujit, Śatajit, Sahasrajit, Vijaya, Citraketu, Vasumān, Draviḍa and Kratu were the sons of Jāmbavatī. These ten, headed by Sāmba, were their father's favorites.

One who recites the above verses describing the sons of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and understands that Vināyaka was born to Rukmiṇī Devī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa as Cārudeṣṇa, will acquire great virtue. ❀

# Gaṇeśa worship in 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

*A look at the modern trends shows that we have much to gain by sticking to the traditional practices*

By Murāri Gupta Dāsa

Devotion, like love, is eternal—a natural inclination to worship the Lord with deepest heartfelt offerings and with the sole motivation of pleasing Him. Although the principles of Supreme Lord, devotee, and devotional service are eternal, the details of serving the Lord may vary according to time, place, and circumstances. For example when Nārada Muni advised the child Dhruva about the practice of devotional service, he made some adjustments because Dhruva was located in a forest, where all the paraphernalia for elaborate Deity worship was impossible to obtain [Bhāg. 4.8.54].

Still in the name of liberalism we cannot whimsically change the principles, a common occurrence that eventually drains the practice of its sanctity leaving behind just a body of ritual, much bedecked, but

dead without any spirit. Such a ritual may appear like the original act of devotion, but with purity of the tradition missing, it simply boils down at best to another obligation that has to be fulfilled or at worst to a selfish perversion in the name



*Offerings to the Lord*

of religion. The latter, unfortunately, is the trend that is gradually creeping into modern day Gaṇeśa worship.

**THE FORM OF GAṆEŚA**  
*Tantrasāra-saṅgrhā* (4.91) mentions the form of Gaṇeśa as:

*mahodro gajamukhah  
paśadantakuṣabhye  
bibhrayeyo vighnaharah  
kāmdastvarayā hyayam*

Translation: This Vighneṣa is big-bellied, with the face of an elephant and holds in his hands a rope, a tooth, a hook, and *abhaya mudrā*. One should contemplate that he removes all obstacles and speedily grants our desires, as supported by authorities.

It also says: *raktāmbaro  
raktatanu raktamalyanu-  
lepanaḥ*

Translation: Vighneṣa wears red garments, has a red body and wears red garlands with a body anointed with *sandal* and *kumkuma*. (Text 90)

These verses tell us about the form of Lord

Gaṇeśa and also the objects that he holds. The deity therefore should be made according to this direction. One should not reduce the sacred science of deity sculpting to a platform of expressing creativity and whimsically sculpt a form of Gaṇeśa. Unfortunately nowadays we have people using the Gaṇeśa festival as





opportunities to depict Gaṇeśa as some kind of comic book hero who can metamorphosise into a new *avatāra* to cater to his devotees in modern times. So now we have Gaṇeśa with a peacock feather, holding a flute, or a *viṇā*, or a cricket bat, or wicket-keeper's gloves, or sitting in a yogic pose, posing like a popular god-man. Why speculate?

### SUBSTANCE OF THE FORM

In *Śiva Purāṇa* Lord Śiva describes that the deity of Gaṇeśa should be made of metal, coral, white *arka* flowers or clay. (*Rudrasamhitā*, chapter 18, text 42-43) Lord Kṛṣṇa also describes to Uddhava the substances that are used to make a Deity. "The Deity form of the Lord is said to appear in eight varieties—stone, wood, metal, earth, paint, sand, the mind or jewels." (*Śrīmad-*

*Bhāgavatam* 11.12.27)

The traditional way of worshipping deities made of clay and painted with natural dyes perfectly harmonizes with modern day feeble ecological conditions; it is so eco-friendly. Clay dissolves quickly, a mere two or three dips of the deity are enough for melting down and submersion, and the colors are of vegetable origin and easily bio-degradable without any toxic residue. On the other hand, the statues that are made presently with Plaster of Paris (PoP) and painted with chemical dyes are ecological disasters. They take more than a month to melt in sweet, stationary waters. Often the cut parts of the deity float offshore to the horror of the worshiper. In Mumbai the giant PoP statues have to be cut into pieces by mechanized saws, right before the devotees, which is so distasteful. The need of the current century, therefore, is to shift to the age-old tradition.

### SIMPLICITY OF TRADITION

*Rudrasamhitā*, *Śiva Purāṇa* mentions about Gaṇeśa worship as follows: "The Gaṇeśa deity should be worshiped with all purity, with divine scents of various kinds, sandal paste, and flowers. After the first *prahar* of the night, one should take bath and worship with *druva* grass. Then worship with incense, lamps, different kinds of food-offerings, betel and eulogize with hymns and then worship the crescent moon."

The mood is of devotion.

The current trend of Gaṇeśa worship, however, is something like an all-night party. Loud film music, drinking, and gambling, and anti-

social elements, especially during the submersion parade, play a major role. Now the trends are in favor of mega festivities sponsored by corporate giants with huge banners everywhere that are full of advertisements (often of derogatory products using garish images) but a small Gaṇeśa depicted in a tiny corner. Devotion pales in an atmosphere surcharged with commercialism.

### OFFERINGS TO LORD GAṆEŚA

Lord Gaṇeśa wrote *Bhagavad-gītā* after fully understanding the meanings of the words of Śrīla Vyāsadeva. There in chapter 3, text 13, Lord Kṛṣṇa mentions that the devotees of the Lord accept food that is offered in the *yajña* or sacrifice. Food should be offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa and then eaten by the devotees. Lord Gaṇeśa is a natural devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and he will be pleased to accept the *mahā-prasāda* of Lord Kṛṣṇa and offer it his own devotees. The worshipers in Madhva-sampradāya who celebrate Gaṇeśa festivals, therefore first make all the offerings to a *śālagrāma-silā*, which is Lord Kṛṣṇa's Deity form, and then offer the *mahā-prasāda* to Gaṇeśa. The same practice can be followed by everyone.

In conclusion, we should try to keep the mood of sincere, selfless devotion while worshipping the Lord and see that the traditional practices are upheld and followed in true spirit. Earnest heart-felt dedication should take precedence over a gaudy show with commercial interest foraying in the background. We should simply aspire for pure, unmotivated devotion to the Supreme Lord, and pray to Him to remove all obstacles in the path of our devotion and guide us to the ultimate shelter. ❀



Scriptures mention specific guidelines for making a form of Lord and worshipping him.



## How to worship more than 9,00,000 gods every day?

In order to help individuals having different propensities and qualifications, the great sage Vyāsadeva, the compiler of *Vedas*, suggested various means of achieving transcendental realization. Thus he described *karma-kāṇḍa* activities (donating food, clothes, medicines, performing rituals etc.), speculative knowledge (scrutinizing study of the *Upaniṣads*), mystic powers (*haṭha-yoga*), and finally pure devotional service (*bhakti*). In various *Purāṇas* he recommended worship of different demigods.

To many people Hinduism's strength lies in its emphasis on choosing any particular deity of your choice—there is no coercion. This contrasts with other faiths, who feel that their religion is monotheistic while Hinduism is polytheistic. This puts Hinduism in the same category as some ancient form of paganism.

Is this true?

Take the case of the newly elected government in India. There are many ministers (too many, according to some political pundits), but there is only one Prime Minister. In fact because he is alone he can be called “prime.” Also, all corporations have a Chief Executive Officer, and if we can compare a country or a company with the cosmos we can safely deduce that the cosmos too requires systematic management. So how is it possible to have that kind of management if every manager is the boss? Obviously some managers are extremely powerful personalities, but nonetheless they obey the command of their superior.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* explains the position of the multifarious demigods and the Supreme Personality of Godhead with the analogy of the root and the tree, or the stomach and the other limbs of the body. We do not water all the individual parts of the tree but simply pour water on the root. Similarly we only feed the stomach and do not worry about nutrition reaching other parts of the body.

A frequently asked question goes like this: Isn't it true that when someone worships the demigods he also worships Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord? And there is no need for any separate worship of the Supreme.

Well, although it is not untrue, this kind of worship is called *avidhi-pūrvakam* or worship performed in a wrong way, according to the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It is almost like bribing a doorman to enter the room of a great person. These demigods display a fraction of Lord Kṛṣṇa's opulence, but ultimately He is much more than any of His creations.

Lord Kṛṣṇa clearly wants all of us to surrender to Him alone. Kṛṣṇa derides demigod worship, and He says, in effect, that trying to satisfy material desires—by worshipping the demigods or by any other method—is like pouring fuel on fire. Sensual gratification is not the path of liberation

but the path of bondage.

Although we are indebted to the demigods for the necessities of life they provide, the demigods are never independent of Lord Kṛṣṇa in supplying these necessities. We can pay our debts to them by worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa, as He requests.

Since we can get the highest knowledge from the *Gītā*, why should we cling to a lower level of knowledge? From the *Gītā* we learn that full satisfaction—material and spiritual—comes from worshipping Lord Kṛṣṇa. Why should we turn to the demigods?

Besides, worshipping Kṛṣṇa is easier than worshipping the demigods. Especially in the present age, by the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation as Śrī Caitanaya Mahāprabhu, we don't need any prior spiritual qualifications to begin practicing *bhakti-yoga* and thereby attain Kṛṣṇa. We simply have to chant the holy names: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare. Because chanting connects us with Kṛṣṇa, the reservoir of all pleasure, it will satisfy all our desires and awaken our original love for Kṛṣṇa.

*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (5.7.6) gives the complete understanding of demigod worship through the sterling example of Mahārāja Bharata: “After performing the preliminaries of various sacrifices, Mahārāja Bharata offered the results in the name of religion to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Vāsudeva...Mahārāja Bharata expertly understood how the offering made to different demigods was simply an offering to the different limbs of the Lord. For instance, Indra is the arm of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and Sūrya [the sun] is His eye. Thus Mahārāja Bharata considered that the oblations offered to different demigods were actually offered unto the different limbs of Lord Vāsudeva.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda further illustrates in the purport to this verse: “All the demigods are different parts of the Lord, and if we offer service to them, we actually serve the Lord Himself...We should worship the demigods in that spirit. Because the goddess Durgā satisfies Kṛṣṇa, we should therefore offer respects to goddess Durgā. Because Lord Śiva is nothing but Kṛṣṇa's functional body, we should therefore offer respects to Lord Śiva. Similarly, we should offer respects to Brahmā, Agni, and Sūrya.”

To conclude, Hinduism (or Vedic *sanātana-dharma*) is not polytheistic (all forms of God are equal) nor is it narrow-minded (my way or the high-way), but it requires knowledge coming down in *paramparā* to understand this issue.

Otherwise, you may end up having to worship more than 9,00,000 forms everyday to finish worshipping 33 crores demigods in one year!!



—Śyamānanda Dāsa

