

# Pearls of Wisdom

## Mantra Pearls



### Mantra Pearl

Hindu worship is truly democratic in spirit. One can choose the form of the Lord suitable to one's own disposition from among the myriad forms presented by the Vedic sages. One of the most important and most popular of these forms is Gaṇapati.

One of the many names of The Lord is Śiva, the auspicious one. For the devotee, the Lord alone is auspicious and sacred. The creative faculty, the infinite power of the Lord, is called Śakti. Gaṇapati is the offspring of Śiva and Śakti; a combination of the attribute-less Brahman and the power that is the origin of the universe. Thus, Gaṇapati is the saṅuṇa (with attributes) Brahman.



Etymologically, Gaṇapati means the Lord of groups. In this universe, living beings exist and thrive in groups. Each of these groups is called a gaṇa. This psychology of living in groups applies to the gods, humans and all other life forms. These groups exist in one Supreme Reality, Brahman. That is why It is called Gaṇapati; the Supreme Lord of all gaṇas.

Adapted, with kind permission by the author, from the book 'Gaṇapati Upaniṣad' by Śrī Svāmī Tattvavidānanda Sarasvatī.

# Gaṇeśa

## om̐ gaṁ gaṇapataye namaḥ

The above mantra is one of many that may be utilized for the practice of japa\*. This particular mantra indicates Gaṇapati. Om̐ invokes Īśvara (God) which protects the one who chants it.

gaṁ is the bīja or seed mantra associated with Gaṇapati. Namaḥ, in this context, means 'that which is surrendered to'. This mantra can be unfolded to mean, 'I surrender to Īśvara, who manifests in the form of Gaṇeśa'.

Gaṇapati is Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed boy, son of Śiva and Pārvatī (Śakti). He is the presiding deity of wisdom. Gaṇapati is associated with the mūlādhāra cakra, which is located at the base of the spine. Just like the spine, Gaṇapati supports everything (every thing). He is 'the infinite-support', which indicates sat (an 'attribute' of Īśvara). Sat can be 'understood' as that which exists; the nature of existence; the immutable essence of everything. This is the 'nature' of Īśvara. Īśvara can be seen from numerous angles. Primarily, Īśvara is 'existence-awareness-fullness'. Īśvara is also the presiding deity over all 'cause-effects'.

Īśvara takes the form of Gaṇapati as the 'giver of the fruits of action' and 'the giver and remover of obstacles'. By earning the grace of Īśvara as Gaṇapati, we can neutralize potential obstacles which may obstruct us from our desired objective. These obstructions can be seen in a relative material sense, but may also be seen as obstacles which could potentially obstruct us from gaining knowledge (freedom). These obstacles can be moderated through the grace of



Īśvara /Gaṇapati.

In prayer, Gaṇapati is invoked first. He is the majestic elephant. By moving ever-forward, nothing will stop him from his objective. The elephant goes forth in majesty and removes all obstacles; Īśvara in the form of elephant.

Yad bhāvaṁ tad bhavati; as one worships, so one becomes. When one admires the qualities of Gaṇapati, one begins to see these same qualities in oneself. Gaṇapati is a vegetarian; very powerful but gentle. That means that there is a dharma quality about him: dharma, in this context meaning 'the conscious application of Vedic and universal values'.

We invoke Īśvara in the form of Gaṇapati: 'gaṇa patiḥ'. Gaṇa means 'groups; countable things; all material objects'. Pati means 'father; lord; leader'.

Gaṇapati may be unfolded to mean 'the Lord of all groups; the Lord of any thing that can be counted'; from amoebas to blue whales; from the Higgs boson to black holes.

Gaṇapati does not try to control anything but is simply giving existence-awareness; very much like the sun.

That is why Gaṇapati is sūrya koti samap prabhā; like the brilliance of a thousand suns. That is Gaṇapati's effulgence. In truth, Gaṇapati is self-effulgent. He is the Sun of suns. His face is bright and shiny. He is happy in and by himself for no reason. Gaṇapati's nature is that of unconditioned-happiness; untouched by time and space. He is happy because he is ānanda svarūpaḥ (of the nature of absolute-fullness).

With his massive ears, Gaṇapati is a great listener. One may acquire the ability of focused listening by invoking Gaṇapati while listening to a qualified teacher unfold Vedic scripture. One learns to profoundly listen, always looking for the implied meaning. Like Gaṇapati, we go beyond mere words, because words are limited. The implied meaning of the words being spoken may even be the opposite of what is actually being said. Yet, one 'sees' the implied meaning



when one deeply focuses on the intention. Gaṇapati is listening to Vedāntic texts.

He loves to listen to the Vedas being unfolded because he is reveling in the implied meaning of the Upaniṣads (Vedic scriptures). It is said that an elephant never forgets. Because Gaṇapati remembers everything, he represents the power of cognition and retention. He has the ability to listen to the words of the Upaniṣads; to grasp not only the surface meaning but also the deeper, implied meaning.

His 'mind' covers all of time and space. Every attribute of Gaṇapati represents our qualities in absolute measure. His 'form' represents all 'forms'.\*\* His 'head' is all 'heads'. His 'eyes' are all 'eyes': 'sahasra-śīrṣā-puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ-sahasrapāt'.

Īśvara with a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. In this context, the literal meaning of sahasra is one thousand, but the implied meaning is infinite. All 'heads' are Īśvara's 'head', including my 'head'. There is no 'me'; there is only Īśvara.

There are many types of Gaṇapatis. This particular mantra invokes Jñāna Gaṇapati, who is shown indicating tattvamasi (the oneness between the individual and the total). He indicates this with his right hand in the form of the cinmudrā. The cinmudrā also indicates absolute fear-less-ness. If we understand that our intrinsic nature is 'one without a second', fear becomes impossible. I cannot fear anything because there is no other thing to fear. That is absolute protection. That is what is invoked through Gaṇapati's grace; through Īśvara's grace. The one thing that will always protect me is knowledge. Specifically, the knowledge that my intrinsic nature, and the intrinsic nature of Īśvara are one and the same.

by Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī.

\*Repetition of the Lord's name; e.g., om̐ namaḥ śivāya, (often done with a rosary/mālā).

^In the vision of the Vedas there is neither one god nor many gods; only **God**.

\*\*Īśvara as a sacred mirror; a 'place-holder' where one can deliberately superimpose any object as an upāsana (action of meditation).



# Vighneśvara Prārthanā

om̐ śuklāmb̐baradharam̐ viṣṇum̐  
śaśivarṇam̐ caturbhujam  
prasannavadanam̐ dhyāyet  
sarvavighnopaśāntaye om̐

Lord Gaṇeśa, who dons a white vesture –  
who is all-pervasive – who has a bright complexion  
(like the full moon) – who has four hands (representing  
infinite power) – who is ever-smiling in  
reason-less fullness – I invoke You to remove all  
obstacles (in my desire for knowledge).

om̐ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ