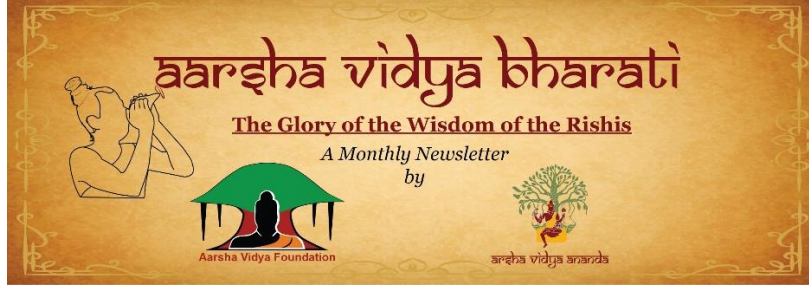

Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Sep 2021

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Welcoming Ganesha into our homes and hearts

By Rashmi Kaikini, Mumbai

Adored and worshipped by millions, *Śrī Gaṇeśa*, the most exalted, is firmly entrenched in the hearts of his bhaktas (devotees). *Śrī Gaṇeśa* is invoked as *Vighnahartā*, one who removes the obstacles at all **three levels**, *ādhyātmika* (obstacles centered on one's body and mind), *ādibhautika* (obstacles caused by disturbances in the immediate environment) and *ādidāivika* (obstacles caused by natural disasters) and bestows *jñāna* (knowledge) and *aiśvarya* (prosperity).



ŚrīGaṇeśacaturthī is one of the most spectacular and magnificent festivals of India celebrated on the 4th day of *Śuklapakṣa*, in the month of *Bhādrapada*. As kids, my brother and I eagerly looked forward to this festival as we **welcomed** *Gaṇeśa* in our home, handed down by our forefathers and my father continues the tradition. Chanting appropriate mantras, panditji performs the *homa* (fire ritual) and *prāṇa pratiṣṭa* (invoking the subtle form of the deity) in the *mūrti*. Pujas, chanting, bhajans, japa, and of course modakas and a platter of 21 delicacies are prepared and offered to our *Gaṇeśa* on this day as we invoke his blessing for our *puruṣārthas*.

Lokmanya Tilak was the first person to install a large clay *mūrti* of *ŚrīGaṇeśa* in a public place and started the 10-day long celebrations which turned into a **National festival**. He used the celebration as a means to bind the fragmented Hindu community and oppose the British government ban on Hindu gatherings.

Each Hindu family takes pride in celebrating this festival. Some learn and chant the *SaṅkaṭanāśanaGaṇeśastotram*, some sing bhajans, some listen to *GaṇapatiAtharvaśīrṣaupaniṣad*, some volunteer in *Gaṇeśotsava* Mandals and arrange cultural programs, organize free blood donation and medical camps, some make special offerings and donate to temples, some visit mandals, friends and relatives where the *mūrti* is worshipped and seek the grace of *Gaṇeśa*.

Symbol or a form is a carrier of some meaning. When the mind is all over, to arrest the mind a form is worshipped. *Gaṇapati* is the one with the face of an elephant, and four arms, each having a certain thing. One has a *paśa* which pulls us towards him, second has an *aṅkuśa* to cut all that we don't need, another has *abhaya* mudra, which is a gesture of blessing. His entire body is smeared with reddish looking *gandha* (sandal paste). We worship him with *dūrvā* grass and red flowers (hibiscus) as revealed in the *Gaṇapati Atharvaśīrṣa Upaniṣad*.



Everything in this jagat is in the form of groups and the **lord of all groups** is *Gaṇapati*. I choose to see *Bhagavān* in *Gaṇapati*. So, while I am doing the puja, I never lose sight of the fact that *Gaṇapati* is jagat *kāraṇam* being the *kartā*, the creator, *dhartā*, the sustainer and *hartā*, everything resolves into him. The entire *sṛṣṭi* (creation) which we might understand as *prakṛti* (manifest form), has come from him. Where there is *prakṛti*, there is *puruṣa* - there is no separation.

This year **Śrī Gaṇeśa Caturthī**
will be celebrated on Sep 10th

In the *Gaṇeśa gāyatri* mantra, we pray to *Gaṇapati* not just for wealth, pleasure, or even dharma, the prayer is for *pracodanamkuryāt*, may *Gaṇapati* **direct our minds** in the right direction! May we make the right choices. If we think clearly, make the right decisions, we will be able to deal with everything. If we have the blessings of *Gaṇapati*, life's journey is a beautiful pilgrimage.

I contemplate on *Gaṇapati* with the mantra given to me by my guru, Swaminiji. The *Gaṇeśa* mantra is a sound form for absorption and meditation. The mantra becomes powerful when the *bījākṣara* is added to it. Just as the seed has the potential for an entire tree, the *bījākṣara* of a mantra holds the potential for a lotof

siddhis. These siddhis when used in the service of the *paramparā* blesses us and brings immense clarity in knowledge. The **mantra unclogs the clutter** of helplessness, alienation and disconnection. I meditate again and again and seek the grace of *Gaṇapati* who is always present at the *mūlādhara* in me. As the mantra blesses me more and more my bhakti moves slowly from *ekarūpa* (form) to *arūpa* (formless) and see all that is here is only consciousness.

After the 10 days of intense prayers, japa, *sevā* and feasting, on *Ananta Caturdaśi*, accompanied by the traditional dhol and lazim, *Gaṇeśa* is taken for *visarjana* (immersion). The processions make their way to the river or sea with loud *jai-kāras*, ‘Ganapati BappaMoraya, Pudhachyavarshilavakarya’, O Dear *Gaṇeśa*! Come back soon next year. As the *mūrti* is ceremoniously immersed in the waters, *Gaṇeśa* returns to his abode carrying all our *Saṅkaṭa* (difficulties) with him. Firmly established in our hearts, the manifest form returns to the unmanifest.



[Playlist](#) of 6 videos on the meaning of *GaṇapatiAtharvaśīrṣaupaniṣad*



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