GANESHA
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The great elephant-faced deity of dharma and auspiciousness is a potent unifying force among Hindus. Worshiped before all other Deities, His dynamic presence is timelessly compelling.

Text:

Lord Ganesha has been prayed to, worshiped and adored in one form or another since time began; and time itself began with His creation. He, above all others, is the God, the great Mahadeva, to be invoked before every act and especially worshiped and prayed to when changes occur in our lives as we move from the old established patterns into new ones. Lord Ganesha is always there to steady our minds and open the proper doors as we evolve and progress. He never, ever fails. He is always there for us when we need Him.

Hindus around the world pray to Lord Ganesha for help and guidance as He leads us out of an agricultural age through the technological and information eras and on into the new age of space. In the villages of Vedic India, Lord Ganesha was for thousands of years and is today a powerful and immediate presence in everyone's lives.

Worship of Lord Ganesha is immediate. One has but to think of His form to contact His ever-present mind. Close your eyes for a second, visualize His large elephant head and experience the direct communication that has immediately begun. This is similar to punching in a code at a personal computer terminal which gives immediate access to the entire network of computers, large and small. On this remarkable and universal Innernet, obscure and necessary information and answers to every question are now available through the direct link with Lord Ganesha. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we can use the computer terminal of our

own brain and code in the divine image of Lord Ganesha and gain complete access to His vast computer-like mind. Ganesha's mind has been programmed by the history of experience over eons of time and naturally encompasses the intricacies of the universe and the cycles of life in all their ramifications and simplicities.

Our great God Ganesha sits contentedly upon the muladhara chakra. This chakra controls the forces of memory within every creature. Worship of Him strengthens your memory, builds character and brings knowledge from the within. It also protects you from the lower forces which reside in the little-known chakras below the muladhara. These darker chakras govern fear, anger, jealousy and the confused thinking centered around self-preservation.

Wherever His devotees are--in the home, the factories, the offices, the hospitals, the marketplace, orbiting in space or tilling the soil on the farm--Lord Ganesha is ever there. Intimate access is acquired by simply loving Ganesha and holding His robust image in your mind. Carefully visualize the large head and ears, His long trunk, massive body, big belly and the objects He holds in His many hands. Look into Ganesha's eyes. Train yourself to see Him within your own mind with your eyes closed. This is the key. Hold His form steady in your mind through the power of visualization. Now you can talk to Him. Pronounce the words mentally into His ear. He is listening, though He will never speak back but take into His vast mind your prayer and slowly work it out. You must simply speak all of your questions and your problems into His right ear. When you are finished, open your eyes. Go on with your day and go on with your life. Wherever you are, remember this simple way of making contact with Lord Ganesha and, as a good seeker, exercise this siddhi.

You will notice how He answers questions and solves problems for you through the course of your daily life. You will notice how He influences events and decisions slowly and subtly, in unseen ways. Situations will change for you, unexpected doors will open, and accustomed ones will close as you are propelled through His grace toward your inevitable glorious future. When you approach the Deity inthe temple, you should believe that Ganesha feels your presence, that He sees you just as you see Him. In thus seeing Him in very human terms, you will get to know Him better. You will develop a very human relationship with Him. It is especially important that you develop this relationship with Lord Ganesha. It will not be difficult to nurture a friendly feeling for Him, because Ganesha is the Deity who governs our instinctive-intellectual state of mind. He governs the instinctive mind of all the animals, the insects, the birds, the fish and of all the forces of nature. Lord Ganesha is also the Deity who governs the higher intellectual mind, of science and profound knowledge. This is why they call Him Lord of Categories. As Lord of Categories, He

organizes and clears the intellectual mind so that individual awareness can flow unhindered in the many areas of developing thought. As Lord of Obstacles, He creates and removes obstacles so that karma becomes more and more perfect as the refinement process of living through the experiences of life continues.

"What about the grace of the Deity?" seekers often ask. Grace is received from the God when you are consistent in your worship, consistent in your discipline, consistent in your bhakti, your devotion. With such a foundation in your life, a great shakti, a force or power, will come from Lord Ganesha. This is grace. It is uplifting. It comes unexpectedly. When grace comes, your mind may change and your heart may melt. Your sight will become clear and penetrating. You may say, "I have been graced to see everything differently." New doors will begin to open for you, and as you go through them, your life will become more full, more wonderful. And the grace of it is that it would not have ordinarily happened to you.

Seekers also inquire, "What is the difference between grace and a boon from the Gods?" Grace is not exactly a boon. A boon comes as the result of something that you ask for and receive. A boon is quite specific. Grace comes because of the state of the soul in conjunction with its particular karma. It comes because we have done everything right up to a certain point in time according to the laws of dharma. It is then that the grace of the God comes. Grace is not for a specific need or event in our life, as a boon would be. Grace is more of a complete transformation--a metamorphosis. After receiving grace of a God, the devotee can never be the same again, never look at life again in the old way. By grace we are directed deeper into spiritual life, pointed in the right direction, carefully guided on the San Marga, the straight path to our supreme God. After grace has been received, our thoughts are enlivened, our life is inspired with enthusiasm and energy, and we live daily in the joyous knowledge that everything is all right, everything is happening around us in accord with our karma, our dharma and God's gracious will.

A Meditation on Lord Ganesha

Bhakti is a yoga, a definite discipline and practice to be perfected according to the aptitude of the devotee. Here is a meditation that you can follow when you worship that will, when diligently and consistently practiced, bring its own rewards.

After bathing and preparing the mind, approach Lord Ganesha in the shrine or temple, bringing a small gift or flower to be placed at His holy feet. Consider that you are approaching and about to meet the most important person in the world. Make your offering and prostrate. In your prostration feel the energies of love and devotion flow along your spine and out through the top of the head and into the home shrine altar or sanctum sanctorum of the temple, and offer those pure actinic energies to Lord Ganesha. Rise and walk slowly three times around the sanctum, always clockwise. Sit before the Deity and bring up the images of your own father and mother, then the family guru and finally the darshana of the elephant Lord. Now meditate upon His form, His eyes, His ears, His trunk, His two tusks, His belly in which rests the whole world. The first time your mind wanders into the thought patterns of daily life, bring it back to your parents, your guru and the first Lord to be worshiped before proceeding on to any other of the 330 million Gods of our ancient Sanatana Dharma.

The objective is to maintain an unbroken continuity of thought and to not allow the mind to wander away from the darshana of the God. You can begin this meditation by pondering the obvious physical properties of the worshipful image. If it is made of stone, think of the stone. How large is it? Where was it quarried and how was it carved? What are the various parts of the Deity and what do they mean? What are his symbols and what do they mean? Recall them to memory. If it is a picture of Ganesha, ponder how that picture was produced. Continue to explore our loving Ganesha with your mind. Later you can move on to less physical points of concentration. You will find that your awareness or mind will wander to unrelated areas, to concerns of the past or worries of the future. When it does, bring awareness back to your point of concentration--the Deity, Lord Ganesha. Begin again your stream of thoughts toward Him, and when the mind once again wanders, use your willpower to bring it back to His darshana. This may be difficult at first, but constant practice will unfold new knowledge from within you, knowledge that you never knew existed and did not learn from the outside. When that happens, concentration is strong and meditation is not far away. You should be able to have twenty, thirty or even fifty thoughts on loving Ganesha in sequence without awareness being distracted into areas of the external mind. It will help if you learn to breathe diaphragmatically during these exercises. Breathe deeply but naturally, without strain or effort. As we control the pranas of the breath, we simultaneously control awareness so that it remains steady and does not move here and there. You also have to teach the body to sit still, to remain poised and not restless. All of this will come in time, not immediately. Be patient. Never become upset with yourself when distractions arise, for that is a greater distraction still. Simply accept each departure from your concentration as an opportunity to become stronger and more one-pointed, and then quietly and firmly bring awareness back to its subject, Lord Ganesha.