

Vighneśvara

Commence the class with the Opening Prayer. Take attendance. For the Memory Time, children will learn to chant the verses given in the Prayers section.

TOPIC OF THE DAY

The topic of the day consists of:

- ◆ Gaṇeśa's Vehicle
- ◆ Symbolism Of Mouse
- ◆ My Mind Has Gone To Sleep
- ◆ What Is A Mind?
- ◆ I Am Recording!
- ◆ Symbolism Of Vighneśvara

Gaṇeśa's Vehicle

One day, sage Parāśara was strolling near his *āśrama*. He saw a child laughing away in his innocence and was struck with wonder at its strange form—it had four arms, an elephant face, pot-belly, and red complexion. He took a close look at the child and saw divine signs on his legs, hands, and forehead. The sage could not resist hugging the cherubic little child. The child smiled and looked so lovable that the sage took him home. The sage's wife, Vatsalā also fell in love with the boy. They brought him up with all love and care. Lord Śiva and Pārvatī also were very happy to know that Gajānana was safe.

Gajānana mastered all the knowledge and arts, which his foster father, sage Parāśara imparted. When he was nine years old, a strange thing happened. A huge mouse appeared in the *āśrama* and started destroying everything in the *āśrama*. This mouse was so huge that even the creatures of the forest were afraid of the mouse.

Even mother Vatsalā and the sage were also helpless against the ferocious mouse. Gajānana was playing outside and when he came in, he saw his parents terrified of the mouse. Gajānana made a loop with a rope and threw it around the mouse's neck. The mouse was caught. Gajānana drew the mouse closer and mounted on it and made it his vehicle.

Humbled mouse then narrated a story. It said, "I am really a *gāndharva* (a celestial being). Once in a hurry to come out of Indra's court, I trampled on sage Vāmana. He cursed me to be born as a mouse. When I pleaded for mercy, he said that I would meet Gajānana in sage Parāśara's *āśrama*. Once I become Gajānana's vehicle, I will become worthy of worship by all, even gods."

Gajānana looked with love at the mouse and said, "Okay, sit at my feet. When I need to go some place, I will sit on you and ride!"

Symbolism Of Mouse

In the representation of *Śrī* Vināyaka, we always find a mouse sitting amidst the beautiful, fragrant ready-made food, but if you observe closely, you will find that the poor mouse is sitting looking up at the Lord, shivering with anticipation, but not daring to touch anything without his command. And every now and then, he allows the mouse to eat.

A mouse is a small little animal with tiny teeth, and yet, in a barn of grain, a solitary mouse can bring disastrous losses by continuously gnawing and nibbling at the grain. Similarly, there is a “mouse” within each one of us which can eat away even a mountain of merit in us. This inner mouse is the power of desire. Once our mind says, “I want it,” one may even compromise with the values one holds.

The wise person has so perfectly mastered this power of desire that the mind is completely held in obedience to the will of the master. When we listen well, think, discriminate, and store the wisdom, we become the master and our desires, like the mouse near Gaṇeśa have no power over us.

My Mind Has Gone To Sleep

Ask children to stand in a circle. One of them goes out of the classroom. The person who has gone out is called, “IT.” One child is selected, whose mind has gone to sleep! “IT” enters the classroom. Ask one child to begin: Gaṇeśa says, “Turn your head to the right.” Everyone turns their head to the right, except the child whose mind has gone to sleep; he/she turns his/her head to the left. Children can keep on adding different actions by saying, “Gaṇeśa says...,” all children do exactly as commanded except the child whose mind has gone to sleep.

“IT” has to find out whose mind has gone to sleep!

Inference: When we listen well, think, discriminate, and store the wisdom, we become the master and our mind becomes obedient. An obedient mind listens to the commands, and is alert!

What Is A Mind?

What is a mind? How does it function? To understand the mind let us first see what is a tape recorder and a video recorder. A tape recorder is an instrument, which can record sounds and replay what is recorded. A video recorder is an instrument which can record the sound and also pictures, and it replays for our entertainment. In both cases, what we record, that alone is played back. If you have recorded songs of the band “U2” on the tape, and even though your mother prays to hear the classical music, the recorder can not play classical music as it has only songs of “U2.” Such miracles do not happen. Think, do we ever record, what we do not like to hear or watch? We only record what we like to watch and hear. Then,

why with our mind we record what we are never going to use or like?

We know that a video recorder is more sophisticated instrument than an audio recorder as it entertains two sense organs—eyes and ears. Now, imagine an instrument that can cater to all our sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin. Here also, what is recorded alone is played back. This instrument is our wonderful mind.

If we record all good things, good alone will play back. If we never record any bad words, our mind would never play back bad words! What we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste gets recorded in our mind and that alone is going to play back. Therefore, we should only see, hear, smell, taste, and touch what we want to replay in our life! Remember, as the mind so is the man!

Thus, the mouse within will be completely held in obedience to the will of the master, the intellect.

I Am Recording!

Brainstorm with children on what can we do to get the right kind of recording in our minds.

- ♦ Watch uplifting shows on TV
- ♦ Read good books
- ♦ Keep good friends

Add to the list.

Symbolism Of Vighneśvara

The name Vighneśvara, the Lord who removes all obstacles, clearly shows that he is a master of all circumstances and not even the Divine forces can ever obstruct his path. Since he is the Lord who removes all obstacles, no Hindu ritual or auspicious act is undertaken without invoking him. With his grace, it is believed that no undertaking can fail due to subjective or objective obstacles. For example, you have prepared well for a test but fall sick and could not take the test; sickness is the objective obstacle. Other times, even when you have prepared well for the test, the news that dad has lost his job and the vacation that you were planning to take is on hold, resulted in you not performing well in the test as the news ruined your mood; this mood change is the subjective obstacle.

If we listen well to the message of the scriptures, think about it, discriminate, digest the knowledge, and act accordingly, Lord Vināyaka will chop off our attachments to the world-of-pluralities, tie us with the rope and draw near, bless us with *modakas* (sweet rewards of success), and draw us nearer and nearer to him till we ourselves become Vighneśvara.

Symbolism Of Gajānana



Elephant Ears And Big Head
Listen Well, Think, And Analyze

Trunk
Discriminate And Be Efficient

One Tusk
Evaluate And Decide

Pot-Belly
Digest And Store All Knowledge

Four Hands
Axe: Cuts Attachments
Rope: Draws Us Closer To Him
Modaka: Rewards His Devotees
Blessing: Blesses And Protects

Mouse
Obedient Mind

Vighneśvara
Remover Of All Obstacles

CLOSING

In this lesson, we discussed that:

- ♦ Our mind is an instrument like a recorder. If we record all good things, good alone will play back. Therefore, we should only see, hear, smell, taste, and touch what we want to replay in our life. Thus, by mastering the mind, we will be able to control our desires, the mouse within. Desires can make us compromise our values and bring disaster in life.
- ♦ If we listen well to the message of the scriptures, think about it, discriminate, digest the knowledge, and act accordingly, Lord Vināyaka will chop off our attachments to the world-of-pluralities, tie us with the rope, bless us with *modakas* (sweet rewards), and draw us nearer and nearer to him till we ourselves become Vighneśvara.

Conclude the class with the following:

- ♦ Quiet Time: Follow one of the techniques given in the Appendix to make children's mind quiet.
- ♦ Closing Prayer: Chant the Closing Prayer given in the Prayers section.