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Subject

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Hindu festival

Ganesh Chaturthi is a prominent Hindu festival that is celebrated each year in India. This festival is organized all over the world for celebrating the birthday of Lord Ganesha. There are many other names of Ganesh such as Ganpati, Vinayaka, Pillaiyar, Ekadanta and Heramba. This festival still remains one of the most significant deities for worship. An elephant's head on the human body is used for referring to Ganesh. In Hindu religion, he is known as the son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. There are different mythologies associated with this specific event such as he is considered as the patron god of travelling. Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra are two common places where the festival is celebrated each year for ten days. It is a joyous event and holds great worth for the Hindus. People also celebrate this tradition at their homes and hymns and make offerings to Ganesha. Sweets are distributed all over India with the belief that Ganesh adored them.

Myths have significant connections with traditional beliefs and events. They include narratives that are prevalent in cultures and set in primordial times. Myths are transmitted from old traditions and works to illustrate the natural and social occurrences that are normally characterized by supernatural nature. It is also known as symbolic tales of the distant past that is linked to the belief system and rituals. They also serve in directing social actions and values. myths are part of intellectualist tradition and witnessed as an explanation of the physical world (Michael).

Ganesh Chaturthi is seen as an annual ritual celebrated for enjoying the birthday of Lord Ganesh. The idol of Ganesh is invited into the homes of people. Hindus create large setups for enjoying the festival and the idol is worshipped that is wearing an elephant head. The idol is placed on pandal and the god is created with sandalwood. Kailash is filled with holy water and the Lord is invoked for bringing life to the idol. The festival is linked to the Puranic myths of Hinduism. The myths have been transformed into the beliefs of Hindus and they follow them for celebrating the event. Myth reflects that it is secondary to rituals that are immersed in the socio-cultural backgrounds of a specific region (Fuller).

Many Ganesh Chathurthi myths are associated with the event such as anyone watching the moon at the night of the festival will be accused of something wrong. It further states that a person who views moon unintentionally can find a solution for getting rid of the curse. The common strategy identified in Hinduism is by reciting the story of syamantaka jewel that was explored in Puranas. The myth claims that the solution will work for the people who unintentionally watched the mood so recitation will be useful for warding off the evil. The other interpretation of the mythology claims that the people who see the moon intentionally cannot get rid of the curse and they will suffer the consequences. This is one of the popular myth that Hindu relate with Ganesh and suggest their people follow it. This myth is adopted by the people of India and they have a firm belief in the story of the moon. They follow the myth for proving their faith on Lord Ganesh and instruct their younger generations to do the same. This is also used by Hindus for drawing the line between good and bad. They follow the teachings of Ganesh and stay loyal to him by clinging to his sayings (Caughran).

The Ganesh Chaturthi festival is celebrated by sharing sweets with the fellow Hindus. This tradition is also linked to the old mythology of Ganesh that provides the reasoning for its prevalence. Hindus believe that Ganesh liked sweets and once he was offering sweets to the houses on his birthday. He had eaten the good number of sweets on that day and set out at the night on his mouse. The mouse was frightened by the snake on the way and stumbled this caused Ganesh to fell down. When he fell his stomach burst open and all the sweets came out. Lord Ganesh then picked the sweets and stuffed them back in his stomach. He then holds the snake and tied it around his belly. Hindus follow the tradition of sharing sweets on this day due to their belief in this mythology. They offer sweets to the neighbours, poor, with family, relatives and everyone for proving their faith on Lord Ganesh. This also reflects their intentions of pleasing Lord Ganesh because he was fond of eating sweets (Fuller).

The myth reveals that when Ganesh was doing all this during his encounter with the snake the moon laughed at him and annoyed him. The behaviour of the moon displeased Lord Ganesh so he pulled one of his tusks and hurled it against the moon. At this very moment, Ganesh cursed that no one will look at the moon. Because the event occurred on the very day of Ganesh Chathurthi so it became a common tradition for the people. This curse has a significant impact on Hindus and controls their actions. They believe in the myth and avoid looking at it because the one who views the moon on that day will earn a bad name. the people refrain from seeing the moon on the day of the festival. This myth has controlled the actions of the Hindus for centuries and is still existent. They also transmit such beliefs to their children that convince the later generations also to follow the same rituals. Followers of Hinduism also stop themselves from looking at the moon because they care about Lord Ganes's myth and don't intend to displease him (Michael).

The people on this day bring the idol of Lord Ganesh and worship him. This is one of the oldest ritual followed by the people of India and Hindus. Another mythology associated with Lord Ganesh is that he fulfils dreams and wishes. People on this auspicious event pray from lord what they desire. It is believed that what people desire on this day will become true. The devotees also build a mouse that sits on the feet of Ganesh and is worshipped by the followers. The Hindus believe that the mouse was known as Mooshak and Lord Ganesh's Vahaan. The mouse had played the role of the vehicle because Ganesh travelled on him during the night of his birthday.

There is also the mythology of the mouse that is connected to the demon named Mooshikasura. The demon has spread evil and wreaked havoc in the world. The gods had assigned the duty of defeating the demon to Lord Ganesha. He found the demons and encountered him. When Lord Ganesha attacked him the demon surrendered and came on his knees for forgiveness. Lord Ganesh decided to forgive him only on one condition that he will remain his servant forever. The demon accepted the condition and he was then transformed into a mouse by Ganesh. Since that time the demon continued to serve Lord Ganesh. The Mooshak then served the duty of carrying Lord Ganesh and performed the role of a vehicle or vahaan. Hindus during the festival create the mouse and put him at the feet of Lord Ganesh for recalling the event of Rahman's defeat. This is also used for enjoying the valour qualities and victory of their Lord (Caughran).

One of the most significant mythologies associated with the Ganesha Chathruthi is the creation of elephant headed idol. The myth is linked to Lord Ganesh's ability to change avatar. Ganesh's birth is linked to the incident when Goddess Shiva killed Aditya who was the son of Kashyapa, a sage. To restore life in the dead boy Shiva replaced Aditya's head to the elephant. However, he failed to pacify the outrageous Kashyapa. This caused Kashyapa to curse that Shiva’s son would lose his head and will witness the same fate as Aditya. Ganesh was created from sandalwood and posted the guard duty at the door. He was ordered by his mother to stop anyone from entering the door. After that Shiva came and told Ganesh that he was Parvati’s husband but was not allowed to enter the house. This outraged Siva and he ordered the army to destroy Ganesh. Shiva cut off the head of Ganesh and threw it away (Michael).

Later Parvati came to know the incident and she decided to destroy the entire creation but was asked by Lord Brahma to reconsider her decision. She said that she will drop her idea only if Ganesh is restored to life and will be worshipped forever. Shiva sent Brahma to bring the head of the first creature he encounters whose head is facing the north. Brahma then returns and bring the head of a powerful elephant. Shiva then fixed that head on Ganesh's body and he was brought back to life. Shiva then declared that Ganesh is his elder son and he appointed him as the chief of the army. Ganesh also received the status of god and was worshipped. This is how the elephant head got fixed to the body of Lord Ganesh. The Indians today recall the event by creating Ganesh's idol with an elephant head. The Hindus believe that elephant head is linked to the event of Ganesh's birth when Kashyapa cursed Shiva. Ganesh was born in the form of a pure human but the curse of Kashyapa caused him to lose his human head. He regained life with his elephant-headed face (Caughran).

The elephant-human form of Lord Ganesh is the iconological illustration of great Vedantic dictum ‘tat-team-as' that refers to a limited individual with respect to the cosmic truth and absolute. The elephant refers to the cosmic and the human portray individualism. This reflects that Lord Ganesh is a human possessing great quality of Gods. During the celebration of Ganesh Chathruthi, the Hindus attempt to recreate the image of their Lord that connects them to the mythology of elephant avatar. This also exhibits the role of mythology in forming beliefs of the followers.

Hindus follows the myth that Ganesh represents water and is therefore linked to the creation. He is known as the ‘Lord of Obstacles’ who has a mission of preventing people from entering heaven so they wouldn’t be overcrowded. He was appointed by the Gods and later takes a transformative role. The mythology reflects that he had taken a dual role first by creating obstacles and later by removing those obstacles. This presents his transformative nature of deities. Myths are transmitted from old traditions and works to illustrate the natural and social occurrences. The myths have been transformed into the beliefs of Hindus and they follow them for celebrating the event.

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