Ganesha

By

Tamarapu Sampath Kumaran
Introduction:

**Ganesha** is a popular figure in Indian Art. Unlike other deities, representations of Ganesha show wide variations and distinct patterns changing over time. He may be portrayed standing, dancing, heroically taking action against demons, playing with his family as a boy, sitting down or on an elevated seat, or engaging in a range of contemporary situations.

**Ganesha** — the elephant-deity riding a mouse — has been popularly associated with Hinduism. This not only suggests the importance of Ganesha, but also shows how popular and pervasive this deity is in the minds of the masses.

**Ganesha** images were prevalent in many parts of India, by the 6th century. In the standard configuration, Ganesha typically holds an axe or a goad in one upper arm and a noose in the other upper arm. The influence of this old constellation of iconographic elements can still be seen in contemporary representations of Ganesha. In one modern form, the only variation from these old elements is that the lower-right hand does not hold the broken tusk but rather is turned toward the viewer in a gesture of protection or fearlessness (abhaya mudra). The same combination of four arms and attributes occurs in statues of Ganesha dancing, which is a very popular theme.”Vinayaka”

This e-book is being presented on the occasion of Ganesh Chaturthi. I express my grateful thanks to Google and to all the authors from whose works I borrowed authentic information in compiling this book, and dedicate it to Sri Varasiddhi Vallabha Maha Ganapathi of Besant Nagar, Chennai.

**Tamarapu Sampath Kumaran**
Ganesha

Ganesha, also known as Ganapati, Vinayaka, and Pillaiyar, is one of the deities best-known and most widely worshipped in the Hindu pantheon. His image is found throughout India and Nepal, and Devotion to Ganesha is widely diffused and extends too many forms.

Ganesha is a word compounded from the Sanskrit word gana, meaning "the hosts," "multitudes" or "troops" of demigods, especially the retinue of Lord Siva under the rule of Ganesha, and Isha, "ruler," "lord" or "sovereign." This is virtually synonymous with the name Ganapati, "master of the hosts." As Ganapati, Lord Ganesha is the leader of the ganas, ruling over the celestial hosts, over the benign as well as the malevolent inner-plane beings. He controls them by strategy and intelligence. We follow the path of Lord Ganesha when we resort to discrimination and sagacity to resolve our difficulties, when we proceed past obstacles in a slow, prudent and well-planned manner. Lord Ganesha is not in a hurry. He is cautious. He is patient, willing to wait the right time for events to take place.

As Vighneshvara, Lord Ganesha is Lord of Obstacles, creating difficulties and obstructions if the time is wrong for us to proceed and removing those same obstacles when our success is assured. It is to Vighneshvara that we supplicate before we undertake a task, plan a change in our life or begin the worship any of the other Gods.

As Ekadanta, Lord Ganesha is the Single-Tusked One, the Patron of Literature who, when all others failed, Himself undertook to scribe the great epic, Mahabharata, dictated to Him by sage
Vyasa, with his broken tusk. He offers us here the lesson in life that knowledge and dharma are of utmost importance, worth sacrificing even pride and beauty to attain.

As Siddhidata, Lord Ganesha is the Giver of Success associated with bountiful harvests and general abundance in life. It is said that Lord Ganesha is the material manifestation of the manas, or mind, of Lord Siva, and that He embodies the five elements -- earth, air, fire, water and ether - - and guides the elemental forces that produce and maintain order in the universe.

The Mudgala Purana, an ancient text on Lord Ganesha, cites eight forms of Ganesha, prevailing over eight human weaknesses. Ekadanta is the Conqueror of Moda- arrogance. Dhumravarna (smoke colored) overcomes Abhimana, - pride; Vakratunda (curved trunk) is the Vanquisher of Matsarya, - jealousy; Mahodara (big belly) is Lord of Moha, - infatuation; Gajanan (elephant face) conquers Lobha, - greed; Lambodara (corpulent belly) overcomes Krodha, - anger; Vikata (deformed) conquers Kama, - lust; Vighnaraja (King of Obstacles) prevails over Mamata - egotism. So now we can see that our Loving Ganesha is "there" for even the lowest of the low, that there is hope for everyone, and that there really is "no intrinsic evil," only a seeming variation of the past containing all that has to be learned to live and grow from a young soul to an older one and then mature. He is "there for us." Yes, there is hope for all, and none are damned forever. It is our loving Ganesha who eventually introduces us to His brother, our Loving Murugan; the God Who sits upon the manipura chakra, center of willpower.

Vinayaka is a common name for Ganesha that appears in the Purāṇas and in Buddhist Tantras. This name is reflected in the naming of the eight famous Ganesha temples in Maharashtra known as the Asthavinayak. The names Vighnesha (Lord of Obstacles) refers to his primary function in Hindu mythology as the master and remover of obstacles. Although he is known by many other attributes, Ganesha's elephant head makes him easy to identify. Ganesha is widely revered as the Remover of Obstacles and more generally as Lord of Beginnings and Lord of Obstacles Vighnesha and Vighneshvara

Ganesha emerged a distinct deity in clearly recognizable form in the 4th and 5th centuries CE, during the Gupta period, although he inherited traits from Vedic and pre-Vedic precursors. His popularity rose quickly, and he was formally included among the five primary deities in the 9th century. A sect of devotees called the Ganapathya, who identified Ganesha as the supreme deity, arose during this period. The principal scriptures dedicated to Ganesha are the Ganesha purana, Mudgala purana and Ganapathi Atharvashira.

A prominent name for Ganesha in Tamil is Pille or Pillaiyar (Little Child). It is referred pille means a "child" while pillaiyar means a "noble child". It is also referred that the words pullu, pella, and pell in the Dravidian language signify "tooth or tusk of an elephant", but more generally "elephant", and root word pille in the name Pillaiyar might have originally meant "the young of the elephant", because the pali word pillaka means "a young elephant"
**Buddhi:**

Ganesha is considered to be the Lord of letters and learning. The concept of *buddhi* is closely associated with the personality of Ganesha, especially in the Puranic period, when many stories stress his cleverness and love of intelligence. In Sanskrit, the word Buddhi is a feminine noun that is variously translated as intelligence, wisdom, or intellect. One of Ganesha's names in the *Ganesha purana* and *Ganesha Sahasranama* is *Buddhipriya*. The word *priya* can mean "fond of", and in a marital context it can mean "lover" or "husband", so the name may mean either "Fond of Intelligence" or "Buddhi's Husband".

**Aum:**

Ganesha is identified with the Hindu mantra Aum or Om. The term *omkārasvarūpa* (Aum is his form), when identified with Ganesha, refers to the notion that he personifies the primal sound. The *Ganapathi Atharvashirsa* attests to this association, which refers to as under

(O Lord Ganapati!) You are (the Trinity) Brahma Vishnu and Maheswara. You are Indra and You are Agni and You are the sun and the moon You are (the three worlds) Bhuloka [earth], Antariksha-loka [space], and Swargaloka [heaven]. You are Om. (That is to say, You are all this).

Some devotees see similarities between the shape of Ganesha's body in iconography and the shape of Aum in the Devanagari and Tamil scripts.

**First Chakra:**

According to Kundalini yoga Ganesha resides in the first Chakra called Muladhara. *Mula* means "original, main"; *adhara* means "base, foundation". The muladhara chakra is the principle on which the manifestation or outward expansion of primordial Divine Force rests. This association is also attested to in the *Ganapati Atharvashirsa*. Ganesha holds, supports and guides all other chakras, thereby "governing the forces that propel the wheel of life.

A legend explains why Ganesha is worshipped before any other deity or prior to any important event. It happened that Shiva asked Kartikeya and Ganesha to circle the world and return. Kartikeya hurried off on his peacock, but Ganesha walked around Shiva and Parvati.
He explained that for him, his parents constituted the world. Pleased, Shiva granted him a boon, saying that before undertaking any important task, people would pray to Ganesha.

According to the *Narasimha Purana*, if he is not worshipped at the beginning of a ceremony, he creates obstacles for the performers. Therefore, no matter what the occasion or ceremony be, Ganesha is worshipped before all other deities. For this reason, he is called Vighneshwara, the remover of all obstacles. Ganesha's mouse, by gnawing its way through everything, is said to symbolise the god's ability to destroy all obstacles.

**Mythology:**

**Birth of Ganesha:**

There are many stories of Lord Ganesha regarding his origin and various others which tell about the nature and traits of his character.

The most well-known story is probably the one taken from the *Siva purana*. Once, his mother Parvati wanted to take a bath, and since there were no attendants around to guard and stop anyone from accidentally entering the house, she created an image of a boy out of turmeric paste
and infused life into it, and thus Ganesha was born. Parvati ordered Ganesha not to allow anyone to enter the house, and Ganesha obediently followed his mother's orders. After a while Shiva returned from outside, and as he tried to enter the house, Ganesha stopped him. Shiva was infuriated at this strange little boy who dared to challenge him. He told Ganesha that he was Parvati's husband, and demanded that Ganesha let him go in. But Ganesha would not hear any person's word other than his dear mother's. Shiva lost his patience and had a fierce battle with Ganesha. At last he severed Ganesha's head with his trishula. When Parvati came out and saw her son's lifeless body, she was very angry and sad. She demanded that Shiva restore Ganesha's life at once.

Unfortunately, Shiva's trishula was so powerful that it had hurled Ganesha's head very far off. All attempts to find the head were in vain. As a last resort, Shiva approached Brahma who suggested that he replace Ganesha's head with the first living being that came his way which lay with its head facing north. Shiva then sent his celestial armies Gana to find and take the head of whatever creature they happened to find asleep with its head facing north. They found an elephant which slept in this manner, and took its head. Shiva attaching the elephant's head to Ganesha's body brought him back to life. From then on, he was called Ganapathi, head of the celestial armies, and was to be worshipped by everyone before beginning any activity.

**Shiva and Gajasura**

Another story regarding the origins of Ganesha and his elephant head narrates that, once, there existed an Asura (demon) with all the characteristics of an elephant, called Gajasura, who was undergoing a penitence or tapas. Shiva, satisfied by this austerity, decided to grant him, as a reward, whatever gift he desired. The demon wished that he could emanate fire continually from his own body so that no one could ever dare to approach him. The Lord granted him his request. Gajasura continued his penitence and Shiva, who appeared in front of him from time to time, asked him once again what he desired. The demon responded: "I desire that You inhabit my stomach." Shiva is also known as Bhola Shankara because he is a deity easily propitiated; and when he is satisfied with a devotee, he grants him whatever he desires, and this, from time to time, generates particularly intricate situations.

Shiva granted even this request and he took up residence in the demon's stomach. In fact, Parvati not able to trace her husband, sought the assistance of Vishnu. Then Vishnu, the omniscient director of the cosmic game, staged a small comedy. He transformed Nandi, the bull of Shiva, into a dancing bull and conducted him in front of Gajasura, assuming, at the same time, the appearance of a flutist. The enchanting performance of the bull sent the demon into ecstasies, and he asked the flutist to tell him what he desired. The musical Vishnu responded: "Can you give me that which I ask?" Gajasura replied: "Who do you take me for? I can immediately give you whatever you ask." The flutist then said: "If that's so, liberate Shiva from your stomach." Gajasura understood then that this must have been no other than Vishnu himself, the only one who could have known that secret and he threw himself at his feet. Having liberated Shiva, he asked him for one last gift: "I have been blessed by you with many gifts; my last request is that everyone remembers me adoring my head when I am dead." Shiva then brought his own son there and substituted his head with that of Gajasura.
Gaze of Shani

A lesser known story from the Brahma Vaivarta Purana narrates a different version of Ganesha's birth. On the insistence of Shiva, Parvati fasted for a year (punyaka vrata) to propitiate Vishnu so that he would grant her a son. Lord Vishnu, after the completion of the sacrifice, announced that he would incarnate himself as her son in every Kalpa (eon). Accordingly, Krishna was born to Parvati as a charming infant. This event was celebrated with great enthusiasm and all the gods were invited to take a look at the baby. However Shani (Saturn), the son of Surya, hesitated to look at the baby since Shani was cursed with the gaze of destruction. However Parvati insisted that he look at the baby, which Shani did, and immediately the infant's head fell off and flew off. Seeing Shiva and Parvati grief-stricken, Vishnu rushed to the banks of the Pushpa-Bhadra River, from where he brought back the head of a young elephant. The head of the elephant was joined with the headless body of Parvati's son, thus reviving him. The infant was named Ganesha and all the Gods blessed Ganesha and wished Him power and prosperity.

Other versions

Another tale of Ganesha's birth relates to an incident in which Shiva slew Aditya, the son of a sage. Shiva restored life to the dead boy, but this could not pacify the outraged sage Kashyapa, who was one of the seven great Rishis. Kashyap cursed Shiva and declared that Shiva's son would lose his head. When this happened, the head of Indra’s elephant – Iravatham - was used to replace it.

Still another tale states that on one occasion, while Parvati was bathing the used water was thrown into the river Ganges. This water was drunk by the elephant-headed Goddess Malini, who gave birth to a baby with four arms and five elephant heads. The river goddess Ganga claimed him as her son, but Shiva declared him to be Parvati's son, reduced his five heads to one and enthroned him as the controller of obstacles (Vignesha).

Significance of the Ganesha Form

Ganesha's head symbolizes the Atman or the soul, which is the ultimate supreme reality of human existence, and his human body signifies Maya or the earthly existence of human beings. The elephant head denotes wisdom and its trunk represents Om, the sound symbol of cosmic reality. In his upper right hand Ganesha holds a goad, which helps him propel mankind forward on the eternal path and remove obstacles from the way. The noose in Ganesha's left hand is a gentle implement to capture all difficulties.
As explained below, the portrayal of Lord Ganesha as the blend of human and animal parts symbolizes the ideals of perfection as conceived by Hindu sages and illustrates some philosophical concepts of profound spiritual significance.

**Elephant head, wide mouth, and large ears:** the large head of an elephant symbolizes wisdom, understanding, and a discriminating intellect that one must possess to attain perfection in life. The wide mouth represents the natural human desire to enjoy life in the world. The large ears signify that a perfect person is the one who possesses a great capacity to listen to others and assimilate ideas.

**The trunk and two tusks with the left tusk broken:** there is no known human instrument that has an operating range as wide as that of an elephant's trunk. It can uproot a tree and yet lift a needle off the ground. Likewise, the human mind must be strong enough to face the ups and downs of the external world and yet delicate enough to explore the subtle realms of the inner world. The two tusks denote the two aspects of the human personality, wisdom and emotion. The right tusk represents wisdom and the left tusk represents emotion. The broken left tusk conveys the idea that one must conquer emotions with wisdom to attain perfection.

**Elephant eyes:** the elephant eyes are said to possess natural deceptiveness that allows them to perceive objects to be bigger than what they really are. Thus the elephant eyes symbolize the idea that even if an individual gets "bigger and bigger" in wealth and wisdom, he should perceive others to be bigger than him; that is, surrender one's pride and attain humility.

**The four arms and various objects in the four hands:** the four arms indicate that the Lord is omnipresent and omnipotent. The left side of the body symbolizes emotion and the right side symbolizes reason. An axe in the upper left hand and a lotus in the upper right hand signify that in order to attain spiritual perfection, one should cut worldly attachments and conquer emotions. This enables one to live in the world without being affected by earthly temptations, just as a lotus remains in water but is not affected by it. A tray of Laddus (a popular snack) near the Lord denotes that He bestows wealth and prosperity upon His devotees. The lower right hand is shown in a blessing pose, which signifies that Ganesha always blesses His devotees.

**A human body with a big belly:** the human body possesses a human heart, which is a symbol of kindness and compassion toward all. Ganesha's body is usually portrayed
wearing red and yellow clothes. Yellow symbolizes purity, peace and truthfulness. Red symbolizes the activity in the world. These are the qualities of a perfect person who performs all duties in the world, with purity, peace, and truthfulness. The big belly signifies that a perfect individual must have a large capacity to face all pleasant and unpleasant experiences of the world.

**A mouse sitting near the feet of Ganesha and gazing at the tray of Laddus:** a mouse symbolizes the ego that can nibble all that is good and noble in a person. A mouse sitting near the feet of Ganesha indicates that a perfect person is one who has conquered his (or her) ego. A mouse gazing at the Laddus, but not consuming them, denotes that a purified or controlled ego can live in the world without being affected by the worldly temptations. The mouse is also the vehicle of Ganesha, signifying that one must control ego in order for wisdom to shine forth.

**Right foot dangling over the left foot:** as stated above, the left side of the body symbolizes emotion and the right side symbolizes reason and knowledge. The right foot dangling over the left foot illustrates that in order to live a successful life one should utilize knowledge and reason to overcome emotions.

**The broken tusk that Ganesha holds** like a pen in his lower right hand is a symbol of sacrifice, which he broke for writing the Mahabharata. The rosary in his other hand suggests that the pursuit of knowledge should be continuous. The *laddoo* (sweet) he holds in his trunk indicates that one must discover the sweetness of the *Atman*. His fan-like ears convey that he is all ears to our petition. The snake that runs round his waist represents energy in all forms. And he is humble enough to ride the lowest of creatures, a mouse.

**Stories of Ganesha:**

**Ganesh and Kubera**

Kubera, the god of wealth, was very proud of his boundless fortune. One day, he organized a gorgeous dinner. Among the guests, the divine couple, Shiva and Pārvatī, with their son Ganesh, were present.

The later, still a child, started to eat and he appeared quickly to be insatiable. Soon, the other guests found plates and dishes empty. Not satisfied with all the available food, Ganesh started to devour plates and dishes, the furniture and all the content of Alakapuri, the main city of Kubera. When he achieved to gulp down the whole, the child Ganesh threatened to swallow Kubera himself. Frightened, the god of wealth rushed forward to Shiva to implore his help, since Ganesha’s voracious appetite seemed to be unlimited.

The remedy was simple but spectacular. Shiva gave his son a handful of roasted cereal grains. Ganesh ate it and, wonderfully, his hunger stopped immediately.
This legend teaches us that a handful of common food, given with love, and eaten with devotion, is more important and more sustaining than the banquet, with ego

**Ganesha defeats Gana**

Gananayaka is the lord of Ganas or one who defeats Gana. A beautiful son named Gana was born to the King Abhijit and queen Gunavati. He was very bright and strong. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva, pleased with his devotion granted him some boons. However, this increased Gana's ego. He soon fell into bad company.

One day he visited sage Kapila's ashram. Kapila had a gem called Chintamani that was wish fulfilling and could provide food for thousands. When Gana saw this, he wanted to possess the gem. Kapila did not want to give it to him. But Gana forcibly took it away from him. Kapila prayed to Lord Ganesha. Ganesha appeared in Gana's dream and cut off his head. Gana, on waking up, did not repent but became angry and took his army to kill Kapila. Gana's father, Abhijit, pleaded with Gana to give back Kapila is gem but Gana did not heed the advice. However, on reaching Kapila's ashram he found that Ganesha had assembled an army. In a fierce fight, Gana was killed by Ganesha and Ganesha restored the “Chintamani " to Kapila.

Kapila, however, gave it back to Ganesha saying that even a small gem like this could cause trouble, as wealth is the root of many problems in this world. Kapila requested Ganesha to stay back. From then on, this place (Theur near Pune) was called 'Chintamani Vinayaka'.

**What does a snake around Ganesha’s stomach represent?**

Ganesh Chaturthi or Ganesha’s Birthday comes on the 4th day of Bhadarva Shukla-Paksh of Hindu calendar in (August/September). Milk is offered to idols of Lord Ganesh at home and at temples, and worshippers visit Ganesh temples for Ganesh Puja. Ganesha’s vehicle is the Mooshak. Lord Ganesh is very fond of modak. On one of His birthdays Mata Parvati, cooked for him twenty-one types of delicious food and a lot of modak. Ganesha ate so much that even his big belly could not contain it. Then he set out moving on his mouse at night. Suddenly the mouse stumbled as it had seen a snake and became frightened with the result Ganesha fell down. His stomach burst open and all the sweet puddings came out. But Ganesha stuffed them back into his stomach and, caught hold of the snake and tied it around his belly.
The symbology behind the mouse and snake and Ganesha’s big belly and its relationship to his birthday is highly philosophic. The whole cosmos is known to be the belly of Ganesha (hence, his other name is Mahodara). Parvati or Shakti is the primordial energy. The seven realms above, seven realms below and seven oceans, are inside the cosmic belly of Ganesha, held together by the cosmic energy (kundalini) symbolized as a huge snake which Ganesha ties around Him. The mouse is nothing but our ego. Ganesha, using the mouse as a vehicle, exemplifies the need to control our ego. One who has controlled the ego has Ganesha consciousness or God-consciousness.

**Ganesha and the River Kaveri**

![Image of Ganesha](image)

In order to supply water to the arid southern regions, the Sage Agastya, with the blessings of Brahma, got from Shiva sacred water which filled his kamandalam. He journeyed to southern regions of the country, hoping to find a suitable place to create a high flow river. Thus he reached the Kodagu (Coorg) mountains. On the way, he hailed a young boy who was passing by. In fact, the boy was Ganesh disguised. The Sage requested the boy to carry carefully his water pot, because he wanted to perform the evening prayers. Ganesh was aware that Agastya expected to create a river; the place where they were seemed to be favorable. So, he put the kamandalam on the ground. A crow, passing by, landed on the pot edge. When he came back, Agastya expelled the bird which while taking off, spilled the kamandalam. When it poured, this small quantity of water turned into river Kaveri. The place, known as Talakaveri is the origin of the river and considered as a sacred place.
Ganesh and Ravana

One day, Ravana undertook penance and pleased at his sincere Shiva appeared to him. Ravana requested a favor. He wanted that his kingdom and himself could never be damaged or destroyed. As a present, Shiva gave him a Shiva Lingam, the symbol of Shiva; and ordered him to take it to his kingdom and to place it in a temple after adequate rituals. From then on he would become unconquerable. But there was a prerequisite, that whatever happened, Ravana ought not to lay down the Lingam on the floor anywhere on his way since he will not be able to displace it later.

Overjoyed, Ravana welcomed the Lingam. However, the Devas (Gods) were afraid of the powers that Ravana could obtain and sought the help of Ganesha. As a young Brahmin boy Ganesha followed Ravana. As it was nearing evening Ravana wanted to perform the evening prayers. Not to lay down the Lingam on the ground, as expressly instructed by Shiva, Rāvana called the young Brahmin coming that way, and asked him to keep the stone Lingam just for a moment. As soon as Rāvana entrusted him the Lingam, the boy cried out for help three times. Getting no reply, he put the Lingam on the ground.

When Ravan came back, he was very angry and he dismissed the boy and tried to pull the Lingam. He could not lift it but was able to pull it a further when the Lingam attained the shape of a Cow’s ear

The place where the Lingam was deposited is called Gokarna, - the ear of a cow - and is located on the Karnataka western coast; it is a one of the important saivite shrine.

Ganesh and Lord Shiva

When Ganesh appeared, as the son born from Shiva's mind, the later decided that Ganesha should be worshipped by anybody wishing to get success. Even worshipping other gods would be inefficient if prior worship to Ganesha had not been achieved.

Thus, when Shiva left to fight the demons of the Tripura city, he forgot his own rule and rushed to the battle. However, when he embarked on his carriage, the wheel peg broke and the car was stopped.

Abashed that such an accident could happen to him, Shiva realized that he had forgotten to pray Ganesha before his departure, and this was the cause of the obstacle. Thus, he worshipped his
son's name and could proceed to the Tripurântaka battle which he won successfully.

**The Broken Ganesha Tusk**

Several legends explain how Ganesha broke his right tusk, which gives him the name of Ekadanta "The Lord who has only one tusk".

The first legend (in the *Brahmanda-Purana*) is related to a battle between Ganesha and Parashurâma. Parashurâma was one of Vishnu’s incarnations (avataras), born on earth to teach wisdom to the governing class, the Kshatriya, who had become arrogant and oppressed people. Parashurâma meditated on Shiva and got the divine axe, Parasu. This axe helped him to fight against all the corrupted princes.

Deeply grateful to Shiva, he went to Mount Kailash to bow to his guru. But Ganesha, who was guarding the entrance of the palace, did not allow him to proceed. Ganesha told him to wait for the Shiva permission. Parashurâma thought: "I am a Shiva devotee; such a rule cannot be applied to me". With Ganesha persisting to bar the way, Parashurama, stroke violently with his axe and broke Ganesha tusk.

Then Shiva and Parvati arrived and blamed Parashurâma who bowed down before Ganesha and supplicated to obtain his forgiveness and blessing. Then on Ganesha was named Ekadanta "The Lord with one tusk".

According to another legend, Ganesha broke himself his tusk during the battle against Gajamukhâsura (the elephant-headed Asura). Taking the advice of Shukracharya, the Asura guru, this demon followed severe penances. Thus, he got unconquerable powers from Shiva. But he misused those powers to harass the gods who went to Ganesha and requested his help. Ganesha did not hesitate to give battle to this demon. During the fight, he understood that the demon could not be defeated, because of his particular powers. Then, Ganesha broke his right tusk and threw it to Gajamukhâsura. He pursued him and converted him in a mouse. Then he rode this mouse, which he used as a mount, keeping it under control.
Ganesha, the scribe for Mahabharata

The most interesting story concerning Ganesha is the belief that he was the scribe who wrote the Mahabharata. Sage Vyasa, the author of this epic, was advised by Brahma, on whom he meditated, to ask Ganesha to be the scribe to whom he could dictate the epic in verse form.

Ganapati appeared before Brahma and agreed to write, but on one condition, that Vyasa would dictate continuously without pause. Vyasa agreed but he had his own condition, and that Ganesha should understand every word and thought and its implications before writing it down.

Whenever Vyasa found Ganesha had completed writing a verse, he would dictate a verse with very complex meanings so that Ganesha had to stop and think it over.

This gave Vyasa time to compose a few stanzas mentally and dictate them when Ganesha was ready. Ganesha used his broken tusk to write the Mahabharata, the longest epic the world has ever known. Is it surprising then that with Vyasa as the poet, Ganesha as the scribe and Krishna as the main hero, this epic has few equals in the world.

This story also has a lesson for mankind, that the Mahabharata should not be hurriedly read. It should be understood and digested, heard patiently and ruminated upon. In fact there is a superstition that the Mahabharata should never be read, only listened to, one small part at a time. Only then can one understand the depth of the meanings underlying the events in the epic.

Ganesha and Lord Vishnu

One day, Vishnu found out that his Valamburi Shankha had disappeared. He felt himself very annoyed. After some time, he heard the typical sound of a conch far away and recognized immediately that it was his own instrument. The sound came from the Mount Kailash. He meditated on Lord Shiva who came in front of him and declared that if he wanted to get his conch back, he had first to address a invocation to god Valamburi Ganesha (a Ganesha form with
a right-turned trunk). Thus, Vishnu performed the puja and Ganesha sent back the conch to his owner who was very happy to recover it.

According to another story Vishnu to get back his conch, swallowed by Ganesha made several acrobats before Ganesha to make Ganesha to laugh and cough out the conch. This practice is still followed by some devotees who perform sit ups before Ganesha.

**Ganesha and the Moon**

It is said that one day Ganesha, after having received from many of his devotees an enormous amount of sweets (*Modak*), in order to better digest this incredible mass of food, decided to go for a ride. He got on the mouse which he used as his vehicle and took off. It was a magnificent night and the moon was resplendent. Suddenly a snake appeared out of nowhere and nearly frightened the mouse to death, causing it to jump and Ganesha was thrown off his mount. Ganesha's huge stomach smashed against the ground so forcefully that it burst open and all of the sweets that he had eaten were scattered around him. Nonetheless, he was too intelligent to get angry about this accident and, without wasting any time in useless lamentations, he tried to remedy the situation as best he could. He took the serpent which had caused the accident and used it as a belt to keep his stomach closed and bandage the injury. Satisfied by this solution, he remounted his mouse and continued his excursion. Chandra (Moon God) saw the whole scene and laughed. Ganesha, being the short-tempered one, cursed Chandra for his arrogance and breaking off one of his tusks, hurled it against the Moon, slashing its luminous face in two. He then cursed it, decreeing that anyone who happens to see the moon will incur bad luck. Hearing this, Chandra realised his folly and asked for forgiveness from Ganesha. Ganesha relented and since a curse cannot be revoked, only softened it. Ganesha softened his curse such that the moon would wax and wane in intensity every fifteen days and anyone who looks at the moon during Ganesh Chaturthi would incur bad-luck.

**Vahanas**
The earliest Ganesha images are without a Vahana (mount/vehicle). Of the eight incarnations of Ganesha described in the *Mudgala Purana*, Ganesha has a mouse in five of them, uses a lion in his incarnation as *Vakratunda*, a peacock in his incarnation of *Vikata*, and Sesa, the divine serpent, in his incarnation as *Vighnaraja*. Of the four incarnations of Ganesha listed in the *Ganesha Purana*, *Mohottaka* has a lion, *Mayuresvara* has a peacock, *Dhumraketu* has a horse, and *Gajanana* has a rat. Jain depictions of Ganesha show his vahana variously as a mouse, elephant, tortoise, ram, or peacock.

![Ganesha Images]

Ganesha is often shown riding on or attended by a mouse. The mouse as a mount first appears in written sources in the *Mastya Purana* and later in the *Brahmananda Purana* and *Ganesha Purana*, where Ganesha uses it as his vehicle only in his last incarnation. The Ganapathi Atharvashirsa includes a meditation verse on Ganesha that describes the mouse appearing on his flag. The names *Mūkavāhana* (mouse-mount) and *Ākhuketana* (rat-banner) appear in the Ganesha sahasranamam.

The mouse is interpreted in several ways. It is interpreted that Gaṇapati's mouse symbolizes “tamoguna” to those who wish to overcome desires and be less selfish. The Sanskrit word *mūšika* (mouse) is derived from the root *mū* (stealing, robbing). It was essential to subdue the rat as a destructive pest, a type of *vighna* (impediment) that needed to be overcome. According to this theory, showing Ganesha as master of the rat demonstrates his function as *Vigneshvara* (Lord of Obstacles).
The Two Shaktis of Lord Ganesha and Ganesha's marital status:

There is a confusion regarding the two consorts of Lord Ganesha: Buddhhi and Siddhi, with whom He is often represented. Buddhhi is wisdom, or more precisely sagacity, the intelligent and discriminating use of knowledge. Siddhi is success, or more precisely fulfillment, accomplishment or attainment. While in North India Ganesha is conceived as having two consorts, in the South He is looked upon as a *brahmachari*, or bachelor. Esoterically, it must be stressed that none of the Gods has a wife. Their consorts are not to be considered as separate from them, but as aspects of their being, as their Shakti, or power. There are no husbands and wives in the vast super conscious realms of the Third World, or Sivaloka. Thus, Buddhhi and Siddhi are properly seen as the two shaktis -- wisdom and success -- of the great Ganesha, and not as His so-called consorts. These two represent benefits or boons accrued by His worshipers. In an inner sense, Buddhhi and Siddhi are the *ida* and *pingala nadi*, the female and male currents, both of which are embodied within the being of Ganesha, corresponding to Valli and Devayani, the mythological consorts of Lord Murugan.

The subject of considerable scholarly review varies widely in mythological stories. One pattern of myths identifies Ganesha as an unmarried “Brahmacharin” This view is common in southern India and parts of northern India. Another pattern associates him with the concepts of *Buddhi* (intellect), *Siddhi* (spiritual power), and *Riddhi* (prosperity); these qualities are sometimes personified as goddesses, said to be Ganesha's wives. He also may be shown with a single consort or a nameless servant (Sanskrit: *daśi*). Another pattern connects Ganesha with the goddess of culture and the arts, Saraswati or Śrīdāsī (particularly in Maharashtra) He is also associated with the goddess of luck and prosperity, Lakṣmi. Another pattern, mainly prevalent in the Bengal region, links Ganesha with the banana tree, Kala Bo
The Shiva purana says that Ganesha had two sons: Kṣema (prosperity) and Lābha (profit). In northern Indian variants of this story, the sons are often said to be Śubha (auspiciousness) and Lābha. There is a belief Ganesha is married to Riddhi and Siddhi and having a daughter named Santhosi Ma, the goddess of satisfaction. This has no Puranic basis.

**Depiction of Ganesha in Temples:**

In temples and shrines around the planet, from Moscow to London, from Durban to Kuala Lumpur, Ganesha's worshipful image, or murti, appears in many forms. The *Mudgala Purana*, in addition to the above eight, lists thirty-two.

In every Hindu function, invocation to Lord Ganesha for His blessings takes precedence over all other Gods to ward off any mishap. This has been the practice from the Vedic times. Every part of Ganesha's body, such as ear, nose, eyes, trunk, has some significance. One has only to know it, believe in it and follow it. He is intellect par excellence. A critical examination of the various names of the Deities will enable us to know and trace the features of religious development and understand the religious tendencies of the people. Here an attempt is made to highlight how Lord Ganesha in His different bhangimas (postures and attitudes) is worshiped in Agamic temples.

1. Icons without headdress in the sitting pose and with two arms: To this class belong two variations. The first is the prevalent ukutakasana "sitting on the hams" with one or both knees raised] see illustration, page 93). Second is Ganesha seated in padmasana, lotus pose, with legs crossed, which is quite rare.

2. Ganesha icons with two arms and headdress: These images are mostly carved out of stone and normally belong to a period between the 9th and 12th centuries. These are represented in the usual ukutaka pose, and the proboscis is shown taking a left turn and eating from a bowl of pudding held in the left hand.

3. Four-armed figures without alankara [ornamentation] and prabhavali [encircling arch]: These are discernable specimens of early Ganapati sculpture with four arms, devoid of any kind of ornamentation and with little proportion.

4. Ganapati icons with four arms, ribbon-like prabhavali, jatamukuta [crown of matted hair] and udarabandha [waist band]: These figures are usually ascribed to the period between the 9th and 12th centuries. They are mostly carved out of hard granite, and they present a pleasant and elegant form.

5. Ganapati icons with four arms and with bowl-like kinita or with conical or karanda mukuta [basket-shaped crown]: This type of Ganapati image is datable to the 10th, 11th or 12th centuries. They may not have the mount or profusion of alankara. The prabhavali resembles a semicircular tape or is flame-like.

6. Ganapati icons representing the Hoysala type: These figures are known for their
profusion in ornamentation, delicacy of taste and elegance.

7. Ganapati icons with the usual nagabandha, vahana, karanda mukuta and conventionalized form of details: These figures are assigned to the period between the 14th and 18th centuries. They represent the various forms of Ganapati according to the textual prescription.

8. Ganapati icons in tribhanga: Hitherto, four bronzes have been discovered in the tribhanga pose. Three are ascribed to the 10th century. [At left is an example of tribhanga in nritya (dancing) pose, from a sthapatı’s sketch on a workshop wall in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.]

9. Nritya Ganesha, the dancing form: Only two [ancient] icons of this type have come to light so far. One is a small (20cm high) stone icon at Hariharakshetra, Subrahmanya. The other is a bronze in the Raghavendra Matha in Udipi. This bronze is of considerable iconographic interest. In features, although it presents conventional forms, its theological background is rather unique.

Forms of Ganesh

The four Ganesh incarnations during the Yuga

According to the Ganesha Purāna, four Ganesh incarnations came on earth during the different periods (yuga), in order to fight the devils. They are:

1. Mahotkata with ten arms, seated on a lion, shining like the sun, came during the Krita Yuga to kill the demons Narântak and Devântak
2. Shri Mayureshvar White-colored with six arms, riding the peacock, faced the demon Sindhu during the Treta Yuga
3. Shri Gajānana Red-colored with four arms, mounted on his rat, destroyed the demon Sindur during the Dwapara Yuga
4. Dhûmraketu is the form of Ganesh who will come in the future; we are now living in the Kali Yuga. Two-arms and smoke-colored Dhûmraketu will ride on a blue horse; he will fight all the devils to restore peace and harmony in the world.

The eight incarnations of Ganesh

The Mudgala Purāna, is an eminent scripture dated of the 16th century. It tells the story of the eight incarnations of Ganesh. Let us describe them in brief:

1. Vakratunda, "the Lord with the curved trunk". He is represented seated on a lion. He came to struggle against the devil Matsara, who is the symbol of jealousy.
2. Ekadanta, "the Lord who has only one tusk". exterminated Mada, the demon of drunkenness.
3. **Mahodara**, "the Lord who has a big belly", gives battle to Moha, the demon of illusion.

4. **Gajânana**, "the Lord with an elephant face", put Lobha, the demon of greed, to death.

5. **Lambodara**, "the Lord with a protuberant belly", masters Krodha, the demon of anger.

6. **Vikata**, "the misshapen", subdued Kâma, the demon of desire 
   Ekadanta, Mahodara, Gajânana, Lambodara and Vikata are represented mounted on a rat.

7. **Vighnarāja**, "the Lord King of obstacles", lying on Shasha, the Snake of Eternity, Ganesh destroyed Mama, the demon of ego.

8. **Dhūmravarna** The last Ganesh incarnation is, "the Lord with a tawny color", riding a mouse, who got victory over Ahamkāra, the demon of self-infatuation.

These mythic forms demonstrate that Ganesh has the capacity to reduce all the human weaknesses, such as jealousy, drunkenness, illusion, greed, anger, desire, egotism, self-infatuation (arrogance), which send the devotee away from his path to god. We must notice that the battle against these enemies of the human being are really the basis of the sadhana for the spiritual seeker.

*Ganesha* is a word compounded from the Sanskrit word *gana*, meaning "the hosts," "multitudes" or "troops" of demigods, especially the retinue of Lord Siva under the rule of Ganesha, and *Isha*, "ruler," "lord" or "sovereign." This is virtually synonymous with the name *Ganapati*, "master of the hosts." As Ganapati, Lord Ganesha is the leader of the *ganas*, ruling over the celestial hosts, over the benign as well as the malevolent inner-plane beings. He controls them not as Lord Murugan does, through bravery and forcefulness, but by strategy and intelligence. We follow the path of Lord Ganesha when we resort to discrimination and sagacity to resolve our difficulties, when we proceed past obstacles in a slow, prudent and well-planned manner. Lord Ganesha is not in a hurry. He is cautious. He is patient, willing to wait the right time for events to take place.

As **Vighneshvara**, Lord Ganesha is Lord of Obstacles, creating difficulties and obstructions if the time is wrong for us to proceed and removing those same obstacles when our success is assured. It is to Vighneshvara that we supplicate before we undertake a task, plan a change in our life or begin the worship any of the other Gods.

As **Ekadanta**, Lord Ganesha is the Single-Tusked One, the Patron of Literature who, when all others failed, Himself undertook to scribe the great epic, *Mahabharata*, dictated to Him by sage Vyasa. He offers us here the lesson in life that knowledge and dharma are of utmost importance, worth sacrificing even pride and beauty to attain.

As **Siddhidata**, Lord Ganesha is the Giver of Success associated with bountiful harvests and general abundance in life. It is said that Lord Ganesha is the material manifestation of the *manas*, or mind, of Lord Siva, and that He embodies the five elements -- earth, air, fire, water and ether -- and guides the elemental forces that
produce and maintain order in the universe.

The *Mudgala Purana*, an ancient text on Lord Ganesha, cites eight forms of Ganesha, prevailing over eight human weaknesses or demons. Ekadanta is the Conquerer of Moda, arrogance. Dhumravarna (smoke colored) overcomes Abhimana, pride; Vakratunda (curved trunk) is the Vanquisher of Matsarya, jealousy; Mahodara (big belly) is Lord of Moha, infatuation; Gajanana (elephant face) conquers Lobha, greed; Lambodara (corpulent belly) overcomes Krodha, anger; Vikata (deformed) conquers Kama, lust; Vighnaraja (King of Obstacles) prevails over Mamata (egotism). So now we can see that our Loving Ganesha is "there" for even the lowest of the low, that there is hope for everyone, and that there really is "no intrinsic evil," only a seeming variation of the past containing all that has to be learned to live and grow from a young soul to an older one and then mature into rishi consciousness. He is "there for us." Yes, there is hope for all, and none are damned forever. It is our loving Ganesha who eventually introduces us to His brother, our Loving Murugan; the God Who sits upon the *manipura* chakra, center of willpower.

The *Ganesha Purâna*, important text of the Gânapatya, gives a list of the *twelve main names* of the elephant-headed-god. These names must be used before any ritual. They are the following:

1. *Sumukha* : "The very graceful Lord"
2. *Ekadanta* : "The Lord who has only one tusk"
3. *Kapila* : "The Lord of a tawny color"
4. *Gajakarna* : "The Lord with elephant ears"
5. *Lambodara* : "The Lord with a prominent belly"
7. *Vighnanásaka* : "The Lord destroyer of obstacles"
9. *Dhûmraketu* : "The Lord of a smoky color" with two arms riding on a blue horse, Ruler of the Kali Yuga
10. *Ganâdhyaksha* : "The Minister of the Gana"
11. *Bhâlachandra* : "The Lord who wears the moon crescent on his head"
12. *Gajânana* : "The Lord with an elephant face".

**The twenty one names of Ganesh**

During a pûjâ, offerings of flowers and rice accompany the 21 Ganesha names (eka vishanti nama) as follow:

1. *Vighnarâja* : "The King of obstacles"
2. *Gajânana* : "The Lord who has an elephant face"
3. *Lambodara* : "The Lord with a prominent belly"
4. *Shivatmaja* (son of Shiva)
5. Vakratunda : "The Lord with a twisted trunk"
6. Supakarna
7. Ganesvara : "The Lord of the Gana"
8. Vighnanashin : "The Destroyer of Obstacles"
9. Vikata : "The Misshapen"
10. Yamana : "The Dwarf"
11. Sarvadeva
12. Sarvadukhavināshi
13. Vighnarhartr : "The Lord who cancels the obstacles"
14. Dhūmrāja
15. Sarvadevādhideva
16. Ekadanta : "The Lord who has only one tusk"
17. Krishnapingala : "The blue and dark Lord"
18. Bhālachandra : "The Lord who carries the crescent of moon on his head"
19. Gananātha : "The supreme Chief of the Gana"
20. Shankarasunav : "The son of Shankara"
21. Anangapujita : "The formless Lord"

The thirty two names of Ganesha

The Sṛttattvanidhi is a document written in the 19 th centuries in Karnataka, under the guidance of the Mysore Mahārāja. It compiles and describes in detail the thirty two main forms of Ganesha.

Bala Ganapati

Bala Ganapati is "the Childlike" God of golden hue. In His hands He holds a banana, mango, sugar cane and jackfruit, all representing the earth's abundance and fertility. His trunk garners His favorite sweet, the modaka.
Taruna Ganapati

Eight-armed, Taruna Ganapati, "the Youthful," holds a noose and goad, modaka, wood apple, rose apple, His broken tusk, a sprig of paddy and a sugar cane stalk. His brilliant red color reflects the blossoming of youth.

Bhakti Ganapati

Shining like the full moon during harvest season and garlanded with flowers, Bhakti Ganapati, dear to devotees, is indeed pleasant to look upon. He holds a banana, a mango, coconut and a bowl of sweet payasa pudding.

Vira Ganapati

The "Valiant Warrior," Vira Ganapati, assumes a commanding pose. His 16 arms bristle with weapons, symbols of mind powers: a goad, discus, bow, arrow, sword, shield, spear, mace, a battleaxe, a trident and more.

Shakti Ganapati

Four-armed and seated with one of His shaktis on His knee, Shakti Ganapati, "the Powerful," of orange-red hue, guards the householder. He holds a garland, noose and goad, and bestows blessings with the abhaya mudra.

Dvija Ganapati

Four-headed Dvija Ganapati, "the Twice-born," is moon-like in color. Holding a noose, a goad, an ola leaf scripture, a staff, water vessel and a japa beads, He reminds one and all of the urgency for disciplined striving.
Siddhi Ganapati

Golden-yellow Siddhi Ganapati, "the Accomplished," is the epitome of achievement and self-mastery. He sits comfortably holding a bouquet of flowers, an axe, mango, sugar cane and, in His trunk, tasty sesame sweet.

Ucchhishta Ganapati

Ucchhishta Ganapati is "Lord of Blessed Offerings" and guardian of culture. Of blue complexion and six-armed, He sits with His Shakti, holding a vina, pomegranate, blue lotus flower, japa mala and a sprig of fresh paddy.

Vighna Ganapati

Vighna Ganapati, "Lord of Obstacles," is of brilliant gold hue and bedecked in jewels. His eight arms hold a noose and goad, tusk and modaka, conch and discus, a bouquet of flowers, sugar cane, flower arrow and an axe.

Kshipra Ganapati

Handsome, red-hued Kshipra Ganapati, "Quick-acting" giver of boons, displays His broken tusk, a noose, goad and a sprig of the kalpavriksha (wish-fulfilling) tree. In His uplifted trunk He holds a tiny pot of precious jewels.
**Heramba Ganapati**

Five-faced, white in color, Heramba Ganapati, "Protector of the Weak," rides a big lion. He extends the gestures of protection and blessing while holding a noose, japa beads, axe, hammer, tusk, garland, fruit and *modaka*.

![Heramba Ganapati](image)

**Lakshmi Ganapati**

Lakshmi Ganapati, pure white giver of success, sits flanked by Wisdom and Achievement. Gesturing *varada mudra*, He holds a green parrot, a pomegranate, sword, goad, noose, sprig of *kalpavriksha* and a water vessel.

![Lakshmi Ganapati](image)

**Maha Ganapati**

Accompanied by one of His shaktis, "the Great," Maha Ganapati, is red-complexioned and three-eyed. He holds His tusk, a pomegranate, blue lily, sugar-cane bow, discus, noose, lotus, paddy sprig, mace and a pot of gems.

![Maha Ganapati](image)

**Vijaya Ganapati**

Four-armed, of red hue and riding His resourceful *mushika*, Vijaya Ganapati is "the Victorious" bestower of success. His insignia are the broken tusk, elephant goad, a noose and a luscious golden mango, His favorite fruit.

![Vijaya Ganapati](image)

**Nritya Ganapati**

The happy "Dancer," Nritya Ganapati, is four-armed and golden, with rings on His fingers, holding a tusk, goad, noose and *modaka* sweet. He prances under the *kalpavriksha* tree, epitomizing exuberant activity and joy.

![Nritya Ganapati](image)
**Urdhva Ganapati**

Seated with one of His shaktis on His left knee, Urdhva Ganapati is "the Elevated" Lord of golden hue. In His six hands He holds a sprig of paddy, a lotus, the sugar cane bow, an arrow, His ivory tusk and a blue water lily.

**Ekakshara Ganapati**

Ekakshara, of "Single-Syllable" (gam), is three-eyed, of red complexion and attire. Crescent moon on His crown, He sits in lotus pose upon Mushika, offers the boon-giving gesture and holds a pomegranate, noose and goad.

**Varada Ganapati**

Varada Ganapati, "the Boon-Giver with prominent third eye of wisdom, holds a dish of honey, the noose and goad and encloses a pot of jewels in His trunk. His shakti is at His side, and the crescent moon adorns His crown.

**Tryakshara Ganapati**

Tryakshara Ganapati, "the Lord of Three Letters" (A-U-M), is gold in color and has fly whisks in His big floppy ears. He carries the broken tusk, goad, noose and mango and is often seen grasping a sweet modaka in His trunk.

**Kshipra Prasada Ganapati**

Kshipra Prasada Ganapati, "the Quick Rewarder," presides from a kusha-grass throne. His big belly symbolizes the manifest universe. He holds a noose, goad, tusk, lotus, pomegranate and a twig of the wish-fulfilling tree.
**Haridra Ganapati**

Haridra Ganapati, the golden one dressed in bright yellow vestments, sits calmly on a posh, regal throne. Along with His tusk and a *modaka*, He wields a noose to hold devotees close and a sharp goad to spur them onward.

**Ekadanta Ganapati**

Ekadanta, of "Single Tusk," is distinguished by His blue color and sizeable belly. The attributes of this *murti* are an axe for cutting the bonds of ignorance, prayer beads for japa, a *laddu* sweet and the broken right tusk.

**Srishti Ganapati**

Riding on His docile and friendly mouse, Srishti Ganapati is the lord of happy "Manifestation." This active God, of red complexion, holds His noose a goad, a perfect mango, and His tusk, representing selfless sacrifice.

**Uddanda Ganapati**

Uddanda Ganapati is the bold "Enforcer of Dharma," the laws of being. His ten hands hold a pot of gems, a blue lily, sugar cane, a mace, lotus flower, sprig of paddy, a pomegranate, noose, garland and His broken tusk.
Runamochana Ganapati

Runamochana Ganapati is humanity’s liberator from guilt and bondage. His figure of alabaster skin is apparelled in red silks. He bears a noose and a goad, His milk-white tusk and a favorite fruit, the rose apple.

Dhundhi Ganapati

Red-hued Dhundhi Ganapati, "the Sought After," holds a strand of rudraksha beads, His broken tusk, an axe and a small pot of precious gems thought to represent the treasury of awakenings He saves for all ardent devotees.

Dvimukha Ganapati

Dvimukha Ganapati, called Janus by the Romans, with two divergent faces, sees in all directions. His blue-green form is dressed in red silk. He wears a bejeweled crown and holds a noose, goad, His tusk and a pot of gems.

Trimukha Ganapati

Trimukha Ganapati, the contemplative "three-faced" Lord of red hue, sits on a golden lotus, telling His beads, holding a noose, goad and vessel of nectar. He gestures protection with a right hand and blessings with a left.

Sinha Ganapati

Sinha Ganapati, white in color, rides a lion and displays another lion in one hand, symbolizing strength and fearlessness. He also holds a kalpavriksha sprig, the vina, a lotus blossom, flower bouquet and a pot of jewels.
Yoga Ganapati

Yoga Ganapati is absorbed in mantra japa, His knees strapped in meditative pose, hands holding a yoga staff, sugar cane stalk, a noose and prayer beads. His color is like the morning sun. Blue garments adorn His form.

Durga Ganapati

Durga Ganapati, the "Invincible," waves the flag of victory over darkness. This splendid murti is of deep gold hue, dressed in red, holding a bow and arrow, noose and goad, prayer beads, broken tusk and a rose apple.

Sankatahara Ganapati

Sankatahara Ganapati, "the Dispeller of Sorrow," is of sunlike hue, dressed in blue, and seated on a red lotus flower. He holds a bowl of pudding, a goad and a noose while gesturing the boon-granting varada mudra.

Ganesha Chaturthi:

An annual festival honours Ganesha for ten days, starting on Ganesha Chaturthi, which typically falls in late August or early September. The festival begins with people
brings in terracota idols of Ganesha, symbolising Ganesha's visit. The festival culminates on the day of Ananta Chaturthi, when idols of Ganesha are immersed in the most convenient body of water. Some families have a tradition of immersion on the 3rd, 5th, or 7th day. In 1893, Lokamanya Tilak transformed this annual Ganesha festival from private family celebrations into a grand public event. He did so "to bridge the gap between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins and find an appropriate context in which to build a new grassroots unity between them" in his nationalistic strivings against the British in Maharashtra. Because of Ganesha's wide appeal as "the god for Everyman", Tilak chose him as a rallying point for Indian protest against British rule. Tilak was the first to install large public images of Ganesha in pavilions, and he established the practice of submerging all the public images on the tenth day. Today, Hindus across India celebrate the Ganapati festival with great fervour, though it is most popular in the state of Maharashtra. The festival also assumes huge proportions in Mumbai and Pune and in the surrounding belt of Ashtavinayaka temples.

**Some of the important temples of Ganesha in India:**

Most worship services in India commence with a brief invocation to Ganesha, believed to be the remover of obstacles and the source of good luck. There are several modern shrines to Ganesha across the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent, especially in the southern state of Tamilnadu. All Saivite temples bear several shrines to the elephant faced Ganesha. Templenet takes you on a tour of prominent Ganapati shrines, some of which have been held in reverence for centuries.

There are many other important Ganesha temples throughout India.

**The Asta Vinayak Shrines:** The State of Maharashtra holds Ganapati in great reverence. 8 of these shrines around Pune are collectively referred to as the Ashta Vinayak temples.

The Siddhi Vinayak temple in Bombay is a modern shrine visited by thousands throughout the year.
The hill temple dedicated to **Taayumanavar** - Shiva of the 1st millennium CE, is popularly referred to as the **Uchi Pillayar Koil** (Rock Fort - Malaikkottai temple complex) and is associated with legends from the Ramayana.

**Pillayarpatti** near Karaikkudi in Tamilnadu houses an ancient temple with a rock cut shrine to Ganesha, Karpaka Vinayakar. It is rich in festivals and traditions.

**Vatapi Ganapati** is an image of Ganapati said to have been brought back by the Pallava King during his conquest of Badami, formerly known as Vatapi.

**Moreshwar in Moregaon** is one of the most popular of the Ashta Vinayaka shrines in Maharashtra depicting Ganapati on a peacock mount.

**Ranjangaon** in Maharashtra enshrines Mahaganapati depicting the legend of Shiva invoking Ganesha during his battle with the demons.

**Mahad** in Maharashtra enshrines Varadvinayak associated with the legend of Rukmangada, Indra and the Bhadravana forest.

**Girijaatmaja Vinayaka at Lenyadri** hills in Maharashtra is a representation of Ganesha in the form of an infant.

**Ozar** in Maharashtra depicts Ganapati as Vigneshwar who quelled the arrogance of the demon Vignaasuran.

**Ballal Vinayak at Pali** in Maharashtra is associated with the legend of a young lad Ballal's devotion to Ganapati.

**Cjintamani Vinayak** in Maharashtra is associated with the legend of the Chintamani gem and Kapila Muni.

**Siddhi Vinayak in Siddhatek** in Maharashtra commemorates the legend of Vishnu invoking Ganesha, during his battle with the demons.
The Gokarna Sivasthala in Karnataka and the Vaidyanatha Jyothirlinga Temple at Deogarh in Bihar are prominent centers of Shiva worship. Ganesha is said to have been the cause of the origin of these worship centers.

Southadka Maha Ganapathy Temple, Near Mangalore, where cucumber is offered instead of coconuts

Ganesh abroad:

Ganesha was particularly worshipped by traders and merchants, who went out of India for commercial ventures. The period from approximately the 10th century onwards was marked by the development of new networks of exchange, the formation of trade guilds, and a resurgence of money circulation. During this time, Ganesha became the principal deity associated with traders. The earliest inscription invoking Ganesha before any other deity is associated with the merchant community.

Hindus migrated to the Malay Archipelago and took their culture, including Ganesha, with them. Statues of Ganesha are found throughout the Malay Archipelago in great numbers, often beside Shiva sanctuaries. The forms of Ganesha found in Hindu art of Java, Bali, and Borneo show specific regional influences. The gradual spread of Hindu culture to southeast Asia established Ganesha in modified forms in Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand. In Indochina, Hinduism and Buddhism were practiced side by side, and mutual influences can be seen in the iconography of Ganesha in the region. In Thailand, Cambodia, and among the Hindu classes of the Chams in Vietnam, Ganesha was mainly thought of as a remover of obstacles. Even today in Buddhist Thailand, Ganesha is regarded as a remover of obstacles, the god of success.
Before the arrival of Islam, Afghanistan had close cultural ties with India, and the adoration of both Hindu and Buddhist deities was practiced. A few examples of sculptures from the 5th to the 7th centuries have survived, suggesting that the worship of Ganesha was then in vogue in the region.

Ganesha appears in Mahayana Buddhism, not only in the form of the Buddhist god Vināyaka, but also as a Hindu demon form with the same name. His image appears in Buddhist sculptures during the late Gupta period. As the Buddhist god Vināyaka, he is often shown dancing. This form, called Nātta Ganapati, was popular in northern India, later adopted in Nepal, and then in Tibet. In Nepal, the Hindu form of Ganesha, known as Heramba, is very popular; he has five heads and rides a lion. Tibetan representations of Ganesha show ambivalent views of him. A Tibetan rendering of Ganapati is tshogs bdag. In one Tibetan form, he is shown being trodden under foot by Mahakala, a popular Tibetan deity. Other depictions show him as the Destroyer of Obstacles, sometimes dancing.
Ganesha appears in China and Japan in forms that show distinct regional character. In Northern China the earliest known stone statue of Ganesha carries an inscription dated to 531. In Japan, the Ganesha cult was first mentioned in 806.

The widespread name of Ganesha in Thailand is *Phra Phikanet* or *Phra Phikanesuan*, both of which are derived from *Vara Vighnesha* and *Vara Vighneshvara* respectively.

The canonical literature of Jainism does not mention the worship of Ganesha. However, Ganesha is worshipped by most Jains, for whom he appears to have taken over certain functions of Kubera.
Jain connections with the trading community support the idea that Jainism took up Ganesha worship as a result of commercial connections. The earliest known Jain Ganesha statue dates to about the 9th century. A 15th century Jain text lists procedures for the installation of Ganapati images. Images of Ganesha appear in the Jain temples of Rajasthan and Gujarat.