

Let us pay our obeisance to Ganesha in the New Year!

Ganesha: – The first amongst Gods

Ganesha, popularly known and easily recognized as the Elephant-God, is one of the most important deities of the Hindu pantheon (all the gods of a religion). Before every undertaking, however minor it be, Lord Ganesha is worshipped so as to invoke his blessings. Hence he is also known as **Vigneshwara** – “controller of obstacles”.

Some other names are **Ganapati** (lord of the tribe or attendants), **Vinayaka** (the prominent leader), **Gajanana** (elephant-faced), **Gajadhipati** (Lord of elephants), **Lambakarna** (long-eared), **Lambodara** (pot-bellied) and **Ekadanta** (having one tusk).

He is the son of Shiva and Parvathi. There are many episodes in the Hindu mythology connected with his birth and having an elephant’s head.

Ganesha is depicted as having four arms which symbolize him as the universal leader, establishing his power over the four categories of beings, that is,
those who can only live in water,
those who can live in water and earth,
those who can live only on earth
and lastly those who can fly in the air.

Another explanation is, the four arms represent the inner equipments of the subtle body – mind, intellect, ego and consciousness.

The vehicle of Ganesha is a mouse. A rat generally succeeds in gnawing its way through every obstruction and an elephant passes through the thickest growth and fells out whatever comes his way. Ganesha is preferred for his sharpness of intellect.

He has two wives, Siddhi (success) and Ridhi (prosperity). One who pleases the Lord automatically comes in the good books of his wives.

In modern age, Ganesha is regarded as the personification of those qualities which surmount all difficulties. He is the typical Lord of success in life and its accompaniments like good living, prosperity and peace. His image or symbol, anywhere, is deemed to be auspicious and a guarantee for progress and prosperity. His numerous images and shrines can be seen throughout India. In all ceremonies, except funeral rites, Ganesha is first invoked.

The story of his circumambulating his parents instead of traversing the whole universe is very famous. Once there was a competition between Vinayaka and Subrahmanya as to

who will circumambulate the world first. Subrahmanya took off on his peacock vahana, while Vinayaka went around his parents Shiva and Parvati and claimed the fruit, saying that parents are as valuable as the universe. People who are always devoted and conscious of their duty to parents are the most beloved of Vinayaka.

Ganesha represents the unity of the small being, the man, with the great being, the elephant. It is the blending of the microcosm with the macrocosm, of a drop with the ocean and of an individual soul with the divinity.