

Ganesh

## Śrī Brahma-Saṁhitā 5.50

yat-**pāda**-pallava-yugaṁ vinidhāya kumbha-  
dvandve **praṇāma**-samaye sa **gaṇādhirājaḥ**  
**vighnān** vihanantam alam asya jagat-trayasya  
**govindam ādi-puruṣam tam aham bhajāmi**

Translation

I adore the primeval Lord Govinda, whose lotus feet are always held by **Gaṇeśa** upon the pair of tumuli protruding from his elephant head in order to obtain power for his function of destroying all the obstacles on the path of progress of the three worlds.

# Ganesh

- The multitude of deities in Vedic tradition seems to create an idea of pantheism (many supremes) in the immature minds of the uninformed. Ganesh is the most universally worshipped of the so called Hindu pantheon. However, he is rarely the exclusive or ultimate object of devotion, though this is relatively common in South India. More often he is supplicated before the worship other deities. He is frequently placed as the keeper of the threshold, standing near the doorway of a shrine or temple.
- Ganesh is considered the 'destroyer of all obstacles' and venerated at the beginning of any ritual, special event or important endeavour. He is therefore referred to as the 'Lord of Beginnings' and the 'Giver of Success'.
- He is the first of the two sons of Shiva and Parvati.
- He is shown with an elephant's head and a rotund body. He is dressed gorgeously and in three hands holds an axe, an elephant noose and a round cake (called a modaka). With his fourth hand he awards benedictions.
- One of Ganesh's tusks is broken. Some say this was broken in a fight with Parashuram, others that he snapped it off himself to hurl it at the Moon as it was mocking him. Another account tells of how he used his broken tusk to write down the Mahabharata as sage Vyasa narrated it.

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- He is therefore considered the Patron of Letters, and associated with learning and wisdom. He also oversees all human experience that can be identified and categorised and is thus called 'the Lord of Categories'
- Ganesh is depicted in seated, standing and dancing poses.
- He is particularly fond of sweets, and shows a tendency to overeat.
- Ganesh's carrier is the bandicoot (a large species of rat).
- Ganesh has other names such as Ganapati (the leader of Shiva's personal troops), Vinayak (one who is knowledgeable), and Vigneshwara (one who removes obstacles).
- Some consider Ganesh to be a brahmachari (celibate). Others claim he has two wives, usually identified as two daughters of Brahma, Siddhi (perfection) and Buddhi. There are many different opinions in these matters!
- The symbol most often associated with Ganesh is the swastika, an ancient symbol of good fortune.
- Ganesh Chaturthi, the birthday celebration, occurs in August/September. Festivities begin on the fourth day of the waxing moon in the month of Bhadrapada and can last up to ten days. The festival is particularly popular in Maharashtra.

# Ganesh

- **Auspicious 8 names:**
  1. **Vignesha** – He is the one who is the pariharaka / remover of obstacles.
  2. **Ganesha** – He is the head of all the Ganas including Nandi and Bhrungi.
  3. **Heramba** – He fought with Lord Shiva.
  4. **Gajanana** – He has the head of an elephant (also known as Gajamukha).
  5. **Lambodara** – He has big fat udara / stomach
  6. **Shoorpakarana** – He has broad ears.
  7. **Vinayaka** – He is always immersed in the dhyana / meditation of Bhagavan Sri Maha Vishnu.
  8. **Ekadanta** – He has one tusk.
- **Five principle deities**
- **Adi Shankara popularised the "worship of the five forms" (Panchayatana puja) system among orthodox Brahmins of the Smarta tradition. This worship practice invokes the five deities Ganesha, Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, and Surya. Adi Shankara instituted the tradition primarily to unite the principal deities of these five major sects on an equal status. This formalised the role of Ganesha as a complementary deity.**

# Ganesh

- **How Ganesh received his head**
- **Ganesh is the first son of Parvati, Shiva's consort. During one of Shiva's long bouts of austerity on Mount Kailash, Parvati became lonely and one day, while taking her bath, she shaped a child out of the flakes of her own skin. She instructed him to stand as a guard at the entrance of the house and prevent anyone from entering.**
- **Little did Parvati know that Lord Shiva was planning to return that very same day. Shiva sent his faithful Nandi to inform Parvati of his arrival. However, the boy sent Nandi away as per his mother's instructions. When Nandi informed Lord Shiva, the ascetic-god was enraged and marched angrily homewards to see who this 'insolent' creature was who had actually confronted his trusted Nandi and turned him away.**
- **On seeing the young boy at his doorstep, Shiva announced that he was the proprietor of the house and demanded that he be let inside. The boy arrogantly replied that he did not recognise anyone other than his mother and would obey her orders till death.**



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- On seeing the young boy at his doorstep, Shiva announced that he was the proprietor of the house and demanded that he be let inside. The boy arrogantly replied that he did not recognise anyone other than his mother and would obey her orders till death.
- At this, Shiva lost his temper and chopped the boy's head off. Hearing the commotion, Parvati came out and saw with great anguish and anger her decapitated child. She informed her husband that he had just killed his own son.
- Shiva, repentant at what he had done, promised Parvati that he himself would go and replace his son's head with that of the first living being that he encountered.



# Ganesh

- As fate would have it, the first being to cross his way was an elephant. So Shiva chopped its head off and carried it to where his son lay and placed it on his shoulders
- Even then Parvati was not consoled, for her son would be the butt of jokes for his somewhat unusual appearance. To allay his wife's fears Shiva granted their son a boon that no work, project or religious ceremony could be begun without invoking his blessings.
- Why did Ganesh get the head of an elephant
- Once the great Rushi Durvasa (expansion of Lord Shiva) gave the 'Nirmalya' (garland of Lord Vishnu) of Bhagavan Sri Maha Vishnu to Sri Indra Deva.
- Sri Indra Deva in turn put it on the head of an elephant, but this elephant threw it and touched with its legs.
- As a result of this offence Durvasa cursed that demigod will lose their power. In course of time, the demons conquered heaven. Later the demigods and demons made a truce and churned the Samudra ocean. After getting 'Amruta' (ambrosia), Sri Indra Deva got back his power
- Due to the offence the elephant's head was removed, however, it was fortunate to have touched the prasad of the Lord and thus the head was attached to Lord Ganesh. (Brahma Vaivarta Purana)

# Ganesh

- How Ganesh's tusk became broken
- One night, Ganesh had enjoyed a really special feast and was returning home on his carrier, the bandicoot (a type of rat). It was a pleasant evening and the full Moon was shining with a silvery light. Ganesh felt very relaxed.
- Suddenly, a large cobra slithered out in front of them. The bandicoot put on his brakes, and stopped so suddenly that Ganesh fell off. As he bounced off the ground, his belly popped open, spilling out cakes and jellies.
- Ganesh was unperturbed. He pulled his tummy together, and grabbing the snake, tied it around himself so that his stomach would not come undone again..
- Then he heard someone chuckling. Looking up, he saw the moon laughing at him. He was furious. Breaking off one of his tusks, he hurled it at the offending planet, slicing off part of it. (this is one story showing how the moon came to have its phases). After this story, Ganesh was called Ekadant (one-toothed).
- There are alternative stories:
  1. Ganesh broke of his tusk in order to etch the Mahabharata onto palm leaves when Sage Vyasa recited it.
  2. It was broken by Parashurama axe when Ganesh fought with him (Parashurama is the sixth incarnation of Vishnu)
  3. Ganesh used it as the first ever plough.

# Ganesh

- Ganesh wrote the scriptures as Vyasadev dictates
- Srila Vyasadeva, impelled by compassion for the masses of the future in Kali-yuga, thought of putting down in writing all knowledge that was available at that time in sound form. The advanced people of his time, described as srutidhara, remembered for posterity all that was heard even once during their lifetimes. Foreseeing the world of Kali-yuga, Vyasadeva envisaged the next age as an age of diminishing competence. Human capabilities would dwindle and frailties would rise. Intelligence and memory would decline. Many other limitations would become prominent. To help the needy, Vyasadeva compiled the Veda and then divided it into four, viz. Sama, Yajur, Rg and Atharva. After this, he further explained the text in histories called Puranas. At this point he felt that these texts would be difficult for the common man of Kali-yuga to comprehend. He wished to compile for them something that would explain the same subject matter of the Vedas in a simple, attractive and lucid form, easily understandable by ordinary man. At this point he thought of compiling the Mahabharata, the epic narration of the activities of the greatest dynasty of Bharat.
- Wanting to express his approval, Lord Brahma gave his blessings to Srila Vyasadeva by mentioning, *asya kavyasya kavayo na samartha visesane* (Mahabharata, Adi, 1.73): the greatest poets of this world will not be able to compose a better composition than this one. He then advised Vyasa to take help from Lord Ganesha for the purpose of writing the composition.

# Ganesh

- Even though Vyasadeva had a son of the caliber of Srila Sukadeva Goswami and disciples like Vaisampayana, Lord Brahma's selection for this valuable task was Ganesha. It is also interesting to note that Vyasa himself is an incarnation of Narayana and whenever anyone chants the Vedic literature, one offers obeisances to him. Before reaching this point, Srila Vyasadeva had already compiled the Vedas and had even summarized it in the form of the Vedanta-sutras. Clearly, there is no doubt about the capabilities of the compiler himself or his followers in the form of his son or his disciples. Yet, Lord Brahma ordered Vyasa to commission Lord Ganesha for this important service. Clearly Lord Ganesha is a personality specially chosen for this important service.
- Following the great authority Lord Brahma, when Srila Vyasadeva called upon Ganesha, the text was ready in the mind of Vyasadeva, but as advised by Lord Brahma, he requested Ganesha to help him write it down. It is mentioned in the Mahabharata(Adi Parva, 1.78-79)
  - srutvaitat praha vighneso
  - yadi me lekhani ksanam
  - likhato navatistheta tada
  - syam lekhako hyham
- “Hearing this Lord Ganesha said, ‘O Vyasa! I shall agree on one condition while writing, my pen shouldn't stop even for a moment.’”



# Ganesh

- **Vyasa replied, vyaso 'pyuvaca tam devama-buddhva ma likha kvacit omityuktva ganeso 'py babhuva kila lekhakaù: "You too may not write a single alphabet without properly understanding its meaning." Lord Ganesha gave his assent by replying with the 'Om' sound and thus agreed to write.**
- **The counter-condition put forward by Vyasa is another striking feature of this whole episode. The Mahabharata primarily follows the lives of the Pandavas, who as staunch and unshakeable devotees of Lord Krishna faced many difficulties in their lives. Yet in the face of reversals, their devotion to Lord Krishna never wavered. The culmination of this poetry is in the great war.**
- **The best of all instructions, the Bhagavad-gita, was spoken by Lord Krishna just before the start of this war to guide His dear devotee Arjuna. The Bhagavad-gita is glorified as a succinct spiritual textbook taking its hearer(or reader) from the basics to the advanced levels of spirituality. For this, it is highly respected throughout the world.**
- **The text clearly explains how the pantheism that is alleged by modern man against the Vedic conception of authority is not true, and establishes clearly Lord Krishna's position and His relationship with other deities (Bg. 7.20-23 and 9.20-24). It is clear and transparent for the student to understand that there is no such thing as rivalry even in a subtle form between the different Vedic deities. The Vedic texts certainly do not promote pantheism of any sort.**

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- **And if this was written by Ganesha, then as per Vyasa's condition, he must have understood these concepts clearly before writing them down. If these words would have explained anything contradictory to the real understanding, Lord Ganesha wouldn't have put it down in writing. Thus, this simple incident proves that the Vedic deities are in harmony with each other and Lord Ganesha is happy to render service of glorifying Lord Krishna, by glorifying His words that form a part of the Mahabharata.**
- **Features**
- **Removal of obstacles**
- **Ganesh is Vighneshvara, the Lord of obstacles, both of a material and spiritual order. He is popularly worshipped as a remover of obstacles, though traditionally he also places obstacles in the path of those who need to be checked. Hence, he is often worshipped by the people before they begin anything new.**
- **Buddhi (Intelligence)**
- **Ganesh is considered to be the Lord of letters and learning. In Sanskrit, the word buddhi is an active noun that is variously translated as intelligence, wisdom, or intellect. The concept of buddhi is closely associated with the personality of Ganesh, especially in the Puranic period, when many stories stress his cleverness and love of intelligence.**

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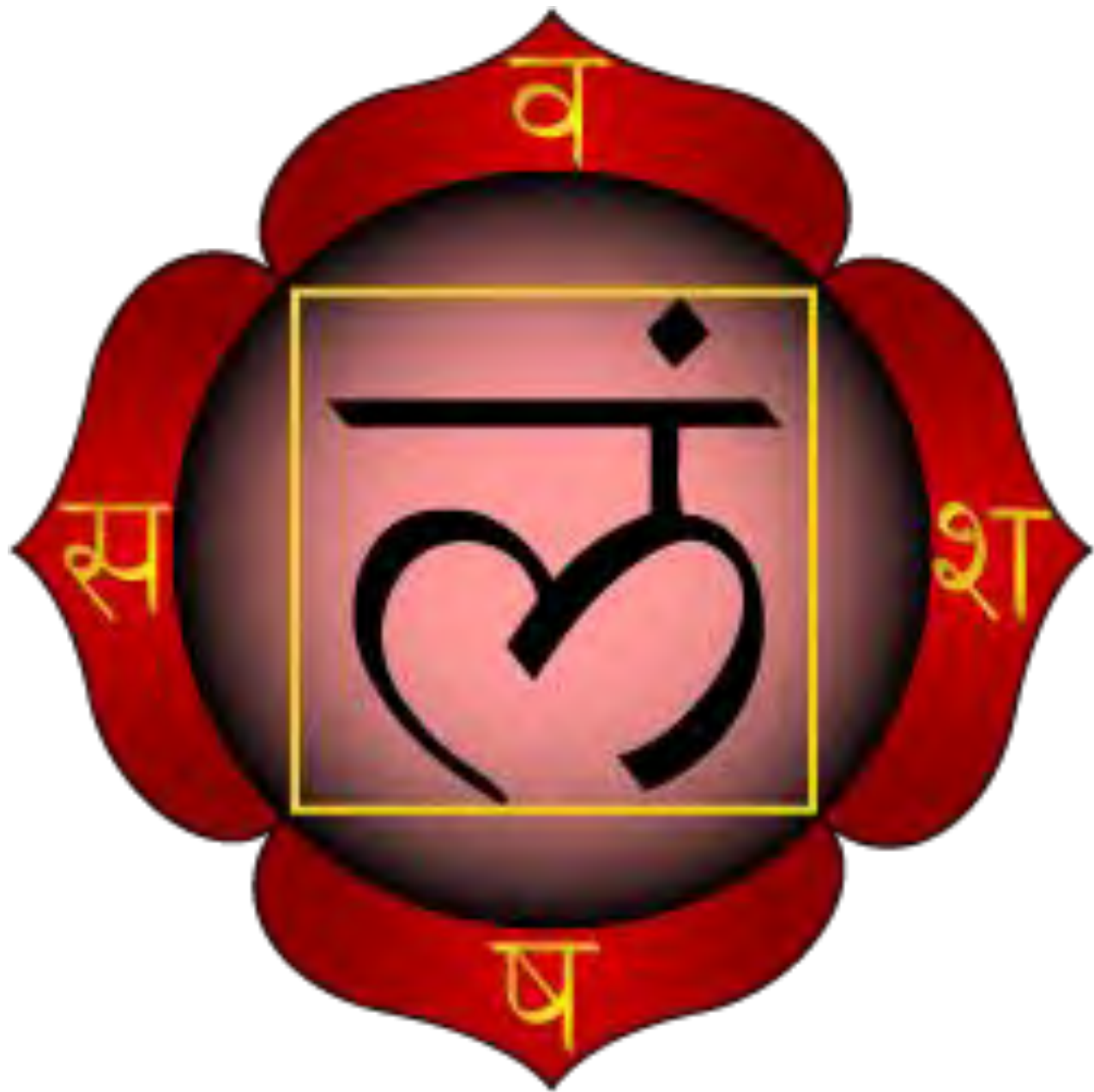
- Om
- Ganesha is identified with the Vedic mantra Om. The term oṃkārasvarūpa (Om is his form), when identified with Ganesh, refers to the notion that he personifies the primal sound. Some devotees see similarities between the shape of Ganesha's body in iconography and the shape of Om in the Devanāgarī and Tamil scripts.





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- First chakra
- According to Kundalini yoga, Ganesha resides in the first chakra, called Muladhara (mūlādhāra). 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. Thus, Ganesha has a permanent abode in every being at the Muladhara. Ganesha holds, supports and guides all other chakras, thereby "governing the forces that propel the wheel of life".



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- Worship and festivals
- Ganesha is worshipped on many occasions, especially at the beginning of ventures such as buying a vehicle or starting a business. The deity of Ganapati is one of the most popular deity in Bharat, worshipped by almost all castes and in all parts of the country". Devotees believe that if Ganesha is worshipped, he grants success, prosperity and protection against adversity.

# Ganesh

- Ganesh is a non-sectarian deity as Hindus of all denominations invoke him at the beginning of prayers, important undertakings, and religious ceremonies. Dancers and musicians, particularly in southern Bharat, begin art performances such as the Bharatnatyam dance with a prayer to Ganesh. Mantras such as Om Shri Gaṇeshāya Namah (Om, salutation to the Illustrious Ganesh) are often used. One of the most famous mantras associated with Ganesh is Om Gaṃ Ganapataye Namah.
- Devotees offer Ganesha sweets such as modaka and small sweet balls called laddus. He is often shown carrying a bowl of sweets, called a modakapātra. Because of his identification with the colour red, he is often worshipped with red sandalwood paste (raktachandana) or red flowers. Dūrvā grass (Cynodon dactylon) and other materials are also used in his worship.
- Festivals associated with Ganesh are Ganesha Chaturthi or Vināyaka chaturthī in the śuklapakṣa (the fourth day of the waxing moon) in the month of Bhadrapada (August/September) and the Ganesh Jayanti (Ganesha's birthday) celebrated on the chaturthī of the śuklapakṣa (fourth day of the waxing moon) in the month of magha (January/February).

# Ganesh

- **Ganesh Chaturthi**
- **An annual festival honours Ganesh for ten days, starting on Ganesha Chaturthi, which typically falls in late August or early September. The festival begins with people bringing in clay deity of Ganesha, symbolising his visit. The festival culminates on the day of Ananta Chaturdashi, when the murtis are immersed in the most convenient body of water.**
- **Hindus across India celebrate the Ganapati festival with great fervour, though it is most popular in the state of Maharashtra.[146][147] The festival also assumes huge proportions in Mumbai, Pune, and in the surrounding belt of Ashtavinayaka temples.**
- **Temples**
- **In Hindu temples, Ganesh is depicted in various ways: as a subordinate deity (pāśva-devatā); as a deity related to the principal deity (parivāra-devatā); or as the principal deity of the temple (pradhāna). As the god of transitions, he is placed at the doorway of many Hindu temples to keep out the unworthy, which is analogous to his role as Parvati's doorkeeper. There are eight Ganesha (shrines)" in Maharashtra located within a 100-kilometer radius of the city of Pune, each of the eight shrines celebrates a particular form of Ganapati. The eight shrines are: Morgaon, Siddhatek, Pali, Mahad, Theur, Lenyadri, Ozar and Ranjangaon. There are many temple dedicated to Ganesh throughout Bharat.**