

Ganapataye Namaha

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Ganapati, also known as Ganesha, Gajanana, Gananatha, Vinayaka and Pillaiyar, is one of the *best-known and most worshipped* deities in the Hindu pantheon. His image is found throughout India. All Hindu sects, be it Shaivas, Vaishnavas or Shaktas, worship him regardless of other affiliations. Devotion to Ganapati is widely diffused and extends to Jains, Buddhists, and beyond India. Ganapati is widely revered as the *Remover of Obstacles* (Vighnesha, Vighneshvara, Vighnaraja) and more generally as *Lord of Beginnings and as the patron of arts and sciences*. The principal scriptures dedicated to Ganesha are the Ganesha Purana, the Mudgala Purana and the Ganapati Atharvashirsa.

We find references to Ganapati twice in the Rigveda.

“Gananam twa ganapatim havamahe...”(2-23-1)

“ni shu seeda ganapate...”(10-112-9)

But, these references do not tell us about the Ganapati we know. He is neither the son of Lord Shiva, nor the Ganesha born out of the grime of Goddess Parvati’s body, nor the Ganesha with an elephant-head. Vedas describe him as the *Lord of all the Jeeva Ganas(the living entities) and of the Indriya Ganas(the sense organs)*.

While Shaivas consider Shiva as the sole almighty and Shaktas worship Goddess Parvati as the ultimate deity, a sect of devotees called the *Ganapatyas identify Ganapati as the supreme godhead*. In reality, these are three different facets of the same divine principle. Shiva is the supreme lord, who is the abode of absolute knowledge (Gnana), bliss (Ananda) and holiness (Mangala Swaroopa). His consort, Parvati or Shakti is nothing but the expansion of his own infinite power. The same divine power creates this universe and, as the master (Niyamaka) of jeevaganas and indriyaganas, manifests as Ganapati.

Why is Ganapati considered as the Lord of obstacles? Why is he both vighnakarta (the creator of obstacles) and vighnaharta (the remover of obstacles)? We all know that this creation is made up of the panchabhootas or five elements namely prithvi, ap, tejo, vayu and akasha. Ganapati is regarded as *the devata of the fifth element 'akashatattva'*. Akasha represents space or the absence of any form of barrier or obstruction. Where there is 'akasha', there is 'avakasha'. Hence, Vighneshvara, being the Lord of this element, is the one who can *remove obstacles* and create 'avakasha' for noble deeds and actions, as well as *create obstacles* for sinful activities. He is the *main source of this creation*, for which he is honored with the name 'Vishwambhara'. He is also the adhipathi of 'Mooladhara', the first among the 7 spiritual centers in the human body and guides a sadhaka in his spiritual journey through the other centers ultimately leading to the 'Sahasrarha'.

The form of Ganapati also has immense symbolic significance and conveys messages for the mental and spiritual well-being and upliftment of an individual. While his long penetrating nose represents in-depth and exhaustive study and assessment of any matter; his small eyes stand for microscopic vision (sookshma drushti) and his wide ears are a symbol of an open and broad outlook. His big tummy represents accumulation of knowledge and having 'mooshika'(mouse) as his vahana symbolises the control of the whimsical human mind. His 'pasha' and 'ankusha' are indicative of seisure and control of human desires.

Since Ganesha is worshipped as the benefactor of arts, at no time in India were music, dance and literature devoid of Him. All the greatest music composers inclusive of Purandaradasa, Oothukkadu Venkata Kavi, Thyagaraja, Dikshitar, Muthaiah Bhagavathar, etc. have composed *numerous compositions on Lord Ganapati*. It has been a tradition to start any music concert or a dance recital with a song attributed to Ganapati praying him for the success of the programme. Since the ragas like Nattai, Hamsadhwani, etc.. are sung at the beginning of the concert, there are plenty of songs in these ragas on

Lord Ganapati. The credit of composing numerous kritis in Ghana ragas(Nattai, Gowlai, Arabhi, Varali & Sree Ragam) on Lord Ganesha goes to Sri Dikshitar. Undoubtedly his songs again depict the Lord as in the Vedas, Puranas & Upanishads. In addition to these composers, the poets of the Sangam time in Tamil, have composed hymns on Ganapati. We also find several pieces composed on Ganesha in Hindustani Music as well.

Carnatic music compositions on Lord Ganesha have normally described him with these attributes.

- **Sumuka** - one with a pleasant face
- **Ekadantha** - one with a single tusk/teeth
- **Kapila** - one who is smoky white-colored
- **Gajakarnaka** - one with an elephant's ears
- **Lamodhara** - one with a pot belly
- **Vikata** - one who is ferocious or dreadful
- **Vignaraja** - one, who removes all the hurdles
- **Ganadhipa** - one who is the commander of the forces (Bhootha Ganas) of Lord Shiva
- **Pashankushadhara** –one who bears pasha and ankusha as his weapons
- **Ganadhyaksha** - one who is as cool as a young moon
- **PhalaChandra** - one who bears a child moon on his head
- **Gajanana** - one with an elephant's face
- **Vakrathunda** - one with a cut teeth
- **Soorpakarna** - one with very big ears
- **Heramba** - five-faced one
- **Skandapoorvaja** - one who is elder to Sri Shanmuka or Skanda
- **Siddhibuddhivara** – one who bestows siddhi and buddhi

Let's all offer our obeisance to Lord Ganesha and pray that he continues to shower his sacred blessings on all artists. Let's meditate on his lotus feet & get the hurdles removed from the path of attaining self-knowledge, wisdom & salvation.