

= Consorts of Ganesha =

The marital status of Ganesha varies widely in mythological stories and the issue has been the subject of considerable scholarly review . Several patterns of associations with different consorts are identifiable . One pattern of myths identifies Ganesha as an unmarried brahmacarin with no consorts . Another pattern associates him with the concepts of Buddhi ( intellect ) , Siddhi ( spiritual power ) , and Riddhi ( prosperity ) ; these qualities are sometimes personified as goddesses who are considered to be Ganesha 's wives . Another pattern connects Ganesha with the goddess of culture and the arts , Sarasvati , and the goddess of luck and prosperity , Lakshmi . In the Bengal region he is linked with the banana tree , Kala Bo ( or Kola Bou ) . He also may be shown with a single consort or a nameless servant ( Sanskrit : da?i ) .

Some of the differences between these patterns can be understood by looking at regional variations across India , the time periods in which the patterns are found , and the traditions in which the beliefs are held . Some differences pertain to the preferred meditation form used by the devotee , with many different traditional forms ranging from Ganesha as a young boy ( Sanskrit : ??? ????? ; b?lag??apati ) to Ganesha as a Tantric deity .

= = Unmarried = =

According to one tradition , Ganesha was a brahmacarin , that is , unmarried . This pattern is primarily popular in southern India . This tradition was linked to Hindu concepts of the relationship between celibacy and the development of spiritual power . Bhaskaraya alludes to the tradition in which Ganesha was considered to be a lifelong bachelor in his commentary on the Ganesha Purana version of the Ganesha Sahasranama , which includes the name Abh?ru ( verse 9a ) . In his commentary on this verse Bhaskaraya says the name Abh?ru means " without a woman , " but the term can also mean " not fearful . "

= = Sidhi , Ridhi , and Budhi = =

The Ganesha Purana and the Mudgala Purana contain descriptions of Ganesha flanked by Siddhi and Buddhi . In these two Puranas they appear as an intrinsic part of Ganapati and according to Thapan do not require any special rituals associated with shakti worship . In Chapter I.18.24 ? 39 of the Ganesha Purana , Brahm? performs worship in honor of Ganesha , and during it Ganesha himself causes Buddhi and Siddhi to appear so that Brahm? can offer them back to Ganesha . Ganesha accepts them as offerings . In Ganesha Purana I.65.10 ? 12 there is a variant of this incident , in which various gods are giving presents to Ganesha , but in this case Siddhi and Buddhi are born from Brahm? 's mind and are given by Brahm? to Ganesha .

The Ganesha Temple at Morgaon is the central shrine for the regional a??avin?yaka complex . The most sacred area within the Moragaon temple is the sanctum ( garbhag?ha ) , a small enclosure containing an image of Ganesha . To the right and left sides of the image stand Siddhi and Buddhi . In northern India the two female figures are said to be Siddhi and Riddhi . There is no Pur??ic evidence for the pair , but the pairing parallels those of Buddhi and Siddhi in Shiva Purana and Riddhi and Buddhi from Matsya Purana .

= = = Interpretation of relationships = = =

The ?iva Pur??a has a story in which Ganesha and his brother Skanda compete for the right to marry the two desirable daughters of Praj?pati , Siddhi and Buddhi , and Ganesha wins through a clever approach . This story adds that after some time Ganesha begat two sons : Kshema ( K?ema ) ( Prosperity ) , born to Siddhi , and L?bha ( Acquisition , Profit ) born to Buddhi . In Northern Indian variants of this story the sons are often said to be ?ubha ( Hindi Shubh ) ( auspiciousness ) and L?bha . In discussing the Shiva Purana version , Courtright comments that while Ganesha is sometimes depicted as sitting between these two feminine deities , " these women are more like

feminine emanations of his androgynous nature , Shaktis rather than spouses having their own characters and spouses . "

Ludo Rocher says that " descriptions of Gaṇeśa as siddhi @-@ buddhi @-@ samanvita ' accompanied by , followed by siddhi and buddhi . ' often seem to mean no more than that , when Gaṇeśa is present , siddhi ' success ' and buddhi ' wisdom ' are not far behind . Such may well have been the original conception , of which the marriage was a later development . " In verse 49a of the Ganesha Purana version of the Ganesha Sahasranama , one of Ganesha 's names is ?ddhisiddhipravardhana ( " Enhancer of material and spiritual success " ) . The Matsya Purana identifies Gaṇeśa as the " owner " of Riddhi ( prosperity ) and Buddhi ( wisdom ) . In discussing the northern Indian sources , Cohen remarks :

" They are depersonalized figures , interchangeable , and given their frequent depiction fanning Gaṇeśa are often referred to as das?s ? servants . Their names represent the benefits accrued by the worshipper of Gaṇeśa , and thus Gaṇeśa is said to be the owner of ?ddhi and Siddhi ; he similarly functions as the father of ?ubha ( auspiciousness ) and L?bha ( profit ) , a pair similar to the ?iva Pur??a 's K?ema ( prosperity ) and L?bha . Though in Varanasi the paired figures were usually called ?ddhi and Siddhi , Gaṇeśa 's relationship to them was often vague . He was their m?lik , their owner ; they were more often das?s than patn?s ( wives ) . "

In the Ajit?gama , a Tantric form of Ganesha called Haridra Ganapati is described as turmeric @-@ colored and flanked by two unnamed wives . The word " wives " ( Sanskrit : ??? ; d?r? ) is specifically used ( Sanskrit : ????????? ? ; d?r?yugalam ) . These wives are distinct from shaktis .

= = = Ashta Siddhi = = =

Ganesha 's relationship with the Ashtasiddhi ? the eight spiritual attainments obtained by the practice of yoga ? is also of this depersonalized type . In later iconography , these eight marvellous powers are represented by a group of young women who surround Ganesha . Raja Ravi Varma 's painting ( shown in this section ) illustrates a recent example of this iconographic form . The painting includes fans and Fly @-@ whisks , which establish the feminine figures as attendants . In cosmopolitan ??kta worship of Ganesha , the A??a Siddhi are addressed as eight goddesses . In Ganesha Purana , these personified A??a Siddhi are used by Ganesha to attack demon Devantaka . These eight consorts are fused in a single devi , Ganesha ? s ?akti , according to Getty . She speculates as to whether the A??a Siddhi are a transformation of the saptam?t?ikas with whom Ganesha is often sculpturally represented .

= = = Santoshi Ma = = =

Ganesha was depicted as a householder married to Riddhi and Siddhi and the father of Santoshi Ma ( Devanagari : ?????? ??? ) , a new goddess of satisfaction , in the 1975 Hindi film Jai Santoshi Maa . The movie script is not based on scriptural sources . The fact that a cult has developed around the figure of Santoshi Ma has been cited by Anita Raina Thapan and Lawrence Cohen as evidence of Ganesha 's continuing evolution as a popular deity .

= = Buddhi ( Wisdom ) = =

Ganesha is considered to be the Lord of Intelligence . In Sanskrit the word buddhi is a feminine noun that is variously translated as intelligence , wisdom , or intellect . The concept of buddhi is closely associated with the personality of Ganesha as of the Puranic period , where many stories develop that showcase his cleverness and love of intelligence . One of Ganesha 's names in the Ganesha Purana and in the Ganesha Sahasranama is Buddhipriya . The name Buddhipriya also appears in a special list of twenty @-@ one names that Gaṇeśa says are of special importance at the end of the Ganesha Sahasranama . The word priya can mean " fond of " or in a marital context it can mean " a lover , husband " , so Buddhipriya means " fond of intelligence " or " Buddhi 's husband " .

This association with wisdom also appears in the name Buddha , which appears as a name of Ganesha in the second verse of the Ganesha Purana version of the Ganesha Sahasranama . The positioning of this name at the beginning of the Ganesha Sahasranama indicates that the name was of importance . Bhaskararaya 's commentary on the Ganesha Sahasranama says that this name for Ganesha means that the Buddha was an avatar of Ganesha . This interpretation is not widely known even among Ganapatya , and the Buddha is not mentioned in the lists of Ganesha 's incarnations given in the main sections of the Ganesha Purana and Mudgala Purana . Bhaskararaya also provides a more general interpretation of this name as simply meaning that Ganesha 's very form is " eternal enlightenment " ( nityabuddha? ) , so he is named Buddha .

= = Motif of shaktis = =

A distinct type of iconographic image of Ganesha shows him with a single human @-@ looking shakti ( Sanskrit : ?akti ) . According to Ananda Coomaraswamy , the oldest known depiction of Ganesha with a shakti of this type dates from the sixth century . The consort lacks a distinctive personality or iconographic repertoire . According to Cohen and Getty , the appearance of this shakti motif parallels the emergence of tantric branches of the Ganapatya cult . Getty mentions a specific cult of " Shakti Ganapati " that was set up by the Ganapatyas involving five distinct forms . Of the thirty @-@ two standard meditation forms for Ganesha that appear in the Sritattvanidhi ( ?r?tattvanidhi ) , six include a shakti . A common form of this motif shows Ganesha seated with the shakti upon his left hip , holding a bowl of flat cakes or round sweets . Ganesha turns his trunk to his own left in order to touch the tasty food . In some of the tantric forms of this image , the gesture is modified to take on erotic overtones . Some tantric variants of this form are described in the ??rad?tilaka Tantram .

Prithvi Kumar Agrawala has traced at least six different lists of fifty or more aspects or forms of Ganesha each with their specific female consorts or shaktis . In these lists of paired shaktis are found such goddess names as Hr? , ?r? , Pu??? , etc . The names Buddhi , Siddhi , and Riddhi do not appear on any of these lists . The lists provide no details about the personalities or distinguishing iconographic forms for these shaktis . Agrawala concludes that all of the lists were derived from one original set of names . The earliest of the lists appears in the N?rada Pur??a ( I.66.124 @-@ 38 ) , and appears to have been used with minor variations in the Ucchi??aga?apati Up?san? . These lists are of two types . In the first type the names of various forms of Ganesha are given with a clear @-@ cut pairing of a named shakti for that form . The second type , as found in the Brahm????a Pur??a ( II.IV.44.63 ? 76 ) and the commentary of R?ghavabha??a on the ??rad?tilaka ( I.115 ) , gives fifty or more names of Ganesha collectively in one group , with the names of the shaktis provided collectively in a second group . The second type of list poses problems in separating and properly connecting the names into pairs due to ambiguities in the formation of Sanskrit compound words .

= = Sarasvati and Lakshmi = =

Throughout India , on contemporary poster art , Ganesha is portrayed with Sarasvati ( goddess of culture and art ) or Lakshmi ( goddess of luck and prosperity ) or both . Ganesha , Lakshmi and Sarswati are often grouped together as the divinities immediately responsible for material welfare . Ganesha and Saraswati share control over Buddhi ( Wisdom ) , while Ganesha and Lakshmi are both deities of ?ddhi and Siddhi ( material and spiritual success ) . Particularly in Maharashtra , Ganesha is associated with ?arda or Sarasvati . Some identify the two goddesses as the same person and thus the single consort of Ganesha while others consider them distinct and one or both of them as married to Ganesha . Lakshmi 's association with Ganesha is rarely tied with the Tantric tradition of Lakshmi as Ganesha 's ?akti . Other reasons are variously offered for their relationship : their functional equivalence and their joint worship on Diwali and in general by the " business community . " Conversely , in Calcutta , Ganesha is said to be the brother of Sarasvati and Lakshmi .

= = Kola Bo = =

In Bengal , Ganesha on Durga Puja is associated with a plantain ( banana ) tree , the " Kola Bo " ( also spelled Kalobou or Kolabau ) , ritually transformed into a goddess during the festival .

On the first day of Durga Puja the Kala Bo is draped with a red @-@ bordered white sari and vermillion is smeared on its leaves . She is then placed on a decorated pedestal and worshipped with flowers , sandalwood paste , and incense sticks . The Kala Bo is set on Ganesha 's right side , along with other deities . For most who view her , the new sari indicates her role as a new bride , and many Bengalis see it as symbolizing the wife of Ganesha .

A different view is that the Kala Bo represents Durga herself , who in Bengal is considered the mother of Ganesha . Those who know of that tradition do not consider Ganesha 's association with Kala Bo as a marital one . Haridas Mitra says that the Kala Bo is intended to serve as a symbolic summary for the nine types of leaves ( nava patrika ) that together form a sacred complex on Durga Puja . The officiating priests who carry out the ceremony tie a bunch of eight plants on the trunk of the plantain tree and it is the grouping of all nine plants that constitute the Kala Bo . The nine plants all have beneficial medicinal properties . According to Martin @-@ Dubost , the Kala Bo does not represent a bride or shakti of Ganesha , but rather is the plant form of Durga . He connects the plant symbol back to the festival enactment of Durga 's return of the blood of the buffalo demon to the earth so that the order of the world may be re @-@ established and luxuriant vegetation reappear . He links Ganesha to this vegetation myth and notes that Astadasausadhisristi ( A???da?au?adhis???i , " Creator of the eighteen medicinal plants " ) is a name of Ganesha .