

Ganesh

- Ganesh is the most universally worshipped of the 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.
- 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.
- Stories: "How Ganesh received his head". STO-318
"How Ganesh broke his tusk" STO-318
- Further references: Teachers' Book: pages 49, 50, 67, 55, 137, 137
CD Rom: PIC-051(f), TGD-04
<http://www.hindunet.org/god/Gods/ganesh/>