

The Glory of Ganesha

By Mas Vidal (Maheshananda)



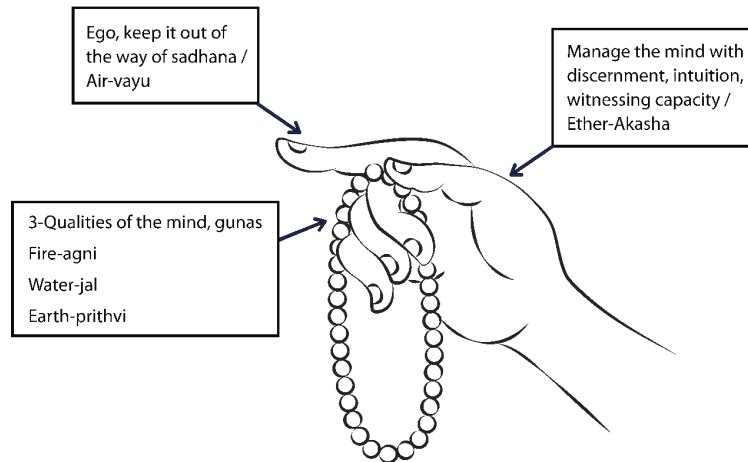
Ganesh is the first son of Shiva and Parvati and is considered one of the most powerful gods in the Vedic-Hindu traditions. In many ways, Ganesha symbolizes the soft power of India's mystical teachings. His image is worshipped as the ruler of the Muladhara (root) chakra and symbolizes the element of earth. Ganesha is also referred to as Ganapati and symbolizes the natural world and the power of divinity in all living creatures. Ganesha is also connected to primordial sound as the eternal Aum consciousness. As a large creature, he represents the connection between the human body and the earth. Ganesha has a childlike and approachable quality that is very appealing in prayer as he provides us the strength to not only remove our obstacles but to help us learn from them and why they have appeared in the first place.

One can focus on the image of Ganesha as a yantra (mystical image), and Aum, the cosmic sound is revealed through his face, trunk, and large ears. The ears represent an important teaching with one ear representing *shravana* or spiritual listening and the capacity to listen to the Divine through the world. The other ear represents *manana* or practice of applying reflection-introspection for personal growth and understanding. Vedanta is founded on these two principles both of which help to develop one's intellect as a discriminating faculty. One aspect of our intellect is gross, meaning that we need it to deal with the mundane world, however, the other side of our intellect is subtle and connects us to the finer energies hidden behind the material world of time and space. Ganesha's trunk has this dual capacity of drinking heavy water (gross) or having the most delicate touch (subtle), in fact, the elephant itself exudes what it means to use our soft powers. He is commonly depicted having one leg on the ground, demonstrating the importance of being grounded, rooted, and connected to the world while the other leg is folded indicating the importance of not becoming of the world and so attached to it.

The main mantra for Ganesha which contains the essential bijakshara (root letters) is *Om Gum Ganapatayei Namah*. His power is effective in removing the gross impurities (malas) that manifest in the emotional or moon mind by aiding the aspirant (sadhaka) to be grounded and connected to what is Real and what is essential in our lives to evolve

and transcend the realm of time and space. One must attain an expansive consciousness to overcome the pettiness of the world's dramatic events. If your intimate relationship is the way of your spiritual life, pray to Ganesha.

Use your sacred garland (mala) to repeat his sacred name and with your thumb (ether-element finger) count each bead. The thumb symbolizes higher intuitive consciousness (buddhi), as the largest finger it represents the capacity we have to expand, overcome, and recognize our essential nature as pure unconditioned consciousness.



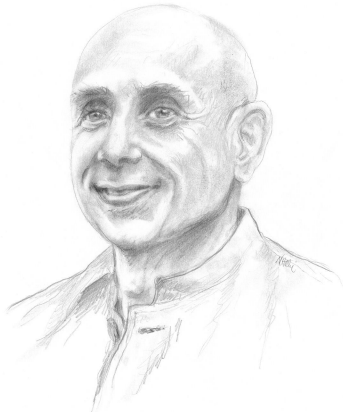
The image of Ganesha is filled with insights into various potentials that lie dormant in the human mind-body complex. The practice of yoga helps us to awaken the power of the elephant that each of us has inside of us through awakened prana-shakti (positive energy). Positive energy begins with a positive attitude created through good associations or satsang.

Ganesha's seed sound is *gum* and can be correlated to those things that connect us or bind us together, like the food that we chew. Ganesha is like chewing gum which can stick to anything and deepen our connections within all aspects of life, however that gum can also expand like a bubble beyond the world of relativity. Ganesha provides us with that mystical contrast. Another example is the food that we eat, it can nourish us or limit us depending on how much we eat. The yoga and Ayurveda wisdom traditions give explicit warnings on the perils of overeating. Ganesha is often depicted with food in one of his hands, which symbolizes the power to control the senses, and below him is a small rat¹ as his vehicle (vahana) craving for the food or the crumbs of desire. In the Puranic story, the moons saw Ganesha riding on the rat - a hilarious image - although its metaphor highlights the importance of overcoming the greed of a rat for food and the gross aspects of life. Yoga sadhana (practice) uplifts us from the petty desires of the senses that pull us away from the higher consciousness of the Divine found in the upper centers (chakras) in the spine. Heavy foods pull our energies down, the food of breath control (pranayama) pulls our energy up, and thus, we realize the one light behind all living beings. For some, this light appears in the forehead and is known as the spiritual eye or the full moon.

¹ The mention of the mouse as Ganesh's mount appears first in the Matsya Purana and later in the Brahmananda Purana and Ganesha Purana.

Lord Ganesha is also the God of literature and the epic scripture, the Mahabharata, is connected to him and to Veda Vyasa the great sage and author. Vyasa asked Ganesha to join him in writing this great scripture. The agreement was that as Vyasa dictated, Ganesha was not to write anything down unless he understood the deeper meaning behind the words. Well, Ganesha with his grand consciousness was understanding everything he was hearing (the big ears) and thus, in having to write everything down so fast, the pen broke. But since Ganesha was not allowed to pause as per their agreement, he had to find a way to keep writing these sacred slokas (verses of Divine wisdom) and so he broke one of his tusks and used it to continue writing, because of this Ganesha is known as *Ekadanta*, The lord with the single tusk. This became one of the great stories in the Mahabharata text.

As the lord of beginnings, Ganesha is always invoked before starting a journey or any project. We all need protection from unexpected circumstances so that we can learn from all of life's events, thus recognizing the Divine hand or Guru behind life's motion-picture show. Ganesha is the Guru of the natural world, connecting us to it as our teacher and helping us to learn and grow from the journey of life. All people, places, and things contain the guiding hand of Ganesha. Behind his elephant head is your mystical home, the spiritual heart. His mother Parvati asked him to protect their home and to not allow anyone to enter inside and this included his own father Shiva who was rejected from entering their home, as a result, Shiva chopped his head off. This enraged Parvati and Shiva along with the help of Vishnu were forced to go find a new head for his headless child. The elephant head represents the power of consciousness, and the capacity all have to transcend the little world of human life, our elementary school. Transcendence to the higher domains is granted by Ganesha, he opens the door for us to walk through to grow in our love and compassion for all living things. Jai Ganesha! (Victory to Ganesha).



Teacher, author, mystic and practitioner of Ayurveda, Mas has become one of the most influential teachers of integral yoga and ayurveda in the world. He offers unique certification and educational programs internationally and maintains an active counseling practice that embraces Vedanta, Ayurveda, and Vedic astrology. As the founder of Dancing Shiva, an American educational and consulting organization, he promotes health, wellness, and societal reform by means of embracing universal spirituality and a natural approach to lifestyle. www.dancingshiva.com