



LORD GANAPTI AT GANPATYAR TEMPLE

Vinayak Chaturthi

Vinayak Chaturthi is also called Ganesh Chaturthi is an auspicious Hindu festival which is celebrated for 10 days every year. The festival is celebrated in the Bhadra month as per the Hindu calendar which generally falls in mid-August to September. It marks the birthday of Lord Ganesha, the Hindu God of wisdom and success. Historically, the festival has been celebrated since the time of Shivaji. It was during India's freedom struggle that Lokmanya Tilak changed Ganesh Chaturthi from a private celebration to a grand public festival where people from all castes of the society can come together, pray and be united.

Lord Ganesha

Lord Ganesha, the son of Shiva and Parvati, is a God to whom every Hindu offers worship on every auspicious occasion. In any *Yajina*, first of all Ganesha is invoked and worshipped. He is the bestower of prosperity and remover of obstacles. He is the Lord of intelligence and wisdom. He is also the Lord of power and accomplishment. He is *Vighneswara*, Lord of obstacles. He is also called *Avighna*, remover of obstacles. He is called Ganapati, the leader of Shiva's celestial servants or *Ganas* and *Vinayaka*, the supreme leader. He is master of knowledge, *Vidya* and the champion of worldly achievements, *Avidya*. Among all the deities, Ganesha is the closest to the material plane of consciousness, most able to assist people in their lives.

Lord Ganapati's two powers are the 'Kundalini' and the 'Vallabha' or power of love. He sits contentedly upon the 'Muladhara Chakra'. This Chakra controls the forces of memory within every creature. Worship of Him strengthens memory and brings knowledge from the within. Lord Ganapati, is the embodiment of 'Buddhi' and 'Jynana' or wisdom. Truth emerges out of wisdom and ultimately leads to 'Ananda' or bliss.

The worship of Lord Ganesha is common in Kashmir. Besides the temples specifically dedicated to Ganesh, the idols of Ganesha are installed in almost all other temples. Every village and every village community has an image of Lord Ganesha and one of many forms of Ganesha is found in every temple. A natural stone or Svayambhu, self-created Murti-image, is also an object of Ganesha worship.

Researcher Alice Getty wrote in 'Ganesha, a Monograph on the Elephant Faced God'; "The most celebrated *Svayambhu murtis* of Ganesha are found in Kashmir, where there are three famous and most powerful formless stones which from ancient times have drawn pilgrims to their shrines. One, which is near the village of Ganesh-bal, is in the river Lidar near its right bank and is still an important place of pilgrimageAnother rock in Kashmir which has been worshipped from most ancient times as a symbol of Ganesha under the name of Bhimasvamin is at the foot of the hill Hari-Parbat near SrinagarThe most remarkable of these *Svayambhu murtis* in Kashmir is one on a cliff along the Krishen-Ganga known as Ganesh-Gati."

According to Nilmat Purana, there are eighteen shrines of Lord Ganesha in Kashmir. Rajatarangni notes, the prominent place of worship of Ganesha is at the foot-hill of Hari Parbat in Srinagar. Ragtarangini further notes, the idol of Lord Ganesha changed its position and faced towards the city of its own for the benefit of inhabitants. All the devotees who worship at Hari Parbat shrine first worship Lord Ganesha at this temple. Another important Ganesha temple is at Hand Chowalgam in Kulgam district, about seventy-five kilo-meters from Srinagar. The temple is situated on the bank of a local river. The other famous Ganesha temple is known as Ganpatyar and is situated in the heart of Srinagar city on the banks of river Jhelum. The whole vicinity, predominantly Hindu, is known as Ganpatyar. There is an old temple dedicated to Lord Ganesha venerated by Kashmiri Hindus also a Shiva temple and a Dharamshalla adjuvant to it.

Ganpatyar Temple is situated in the heart of Srinagar; the temple of Ganpatyar is undoubtedly the most famous Ganesh temple of the valley. The temple is located in the area by the same name. The temple finds mention in many ancient's scripts including in the travel diaries of the famous Chinese traveler, Hsüan-tsang, the great Chinese Buddhist Monk who has lived in Ganpatyar's Vihar, this river bank in Kashmiri is known as Badiyar. The historical background clearly confirms that the Ganpatyar and also its neighbourhood Badiyar, (ancient name Brihat Vihar,) and the Buddhist Monastery must have remained very much popular religious centre. The Buddhist Monastery no more exists now but the Siddhi Vinaayaka is still alive.

(Source: Kashmir—Hindu Shrines by Chaman Lal Gadoo)
