

2. Ganesh - the second son of Shiva and Parvati - as the one with the elephant head and a round bulging stomach. He is the god who is to be worshipped before any other deity, even before the worship of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu. 3. He is the god of progress and enlightenment. **He removes all obstacles** and, therefore, any and all auspicious occasions like a marriage, childbirth, buying a house or building or even starting on a journey; the name of Ganesh is invoked first, only then the other rituals or work are started. 4. He is a very benevolent god, but **if not respected can put a lot of obstacles** in the way. He is very wise and the love of people has given him many different names.

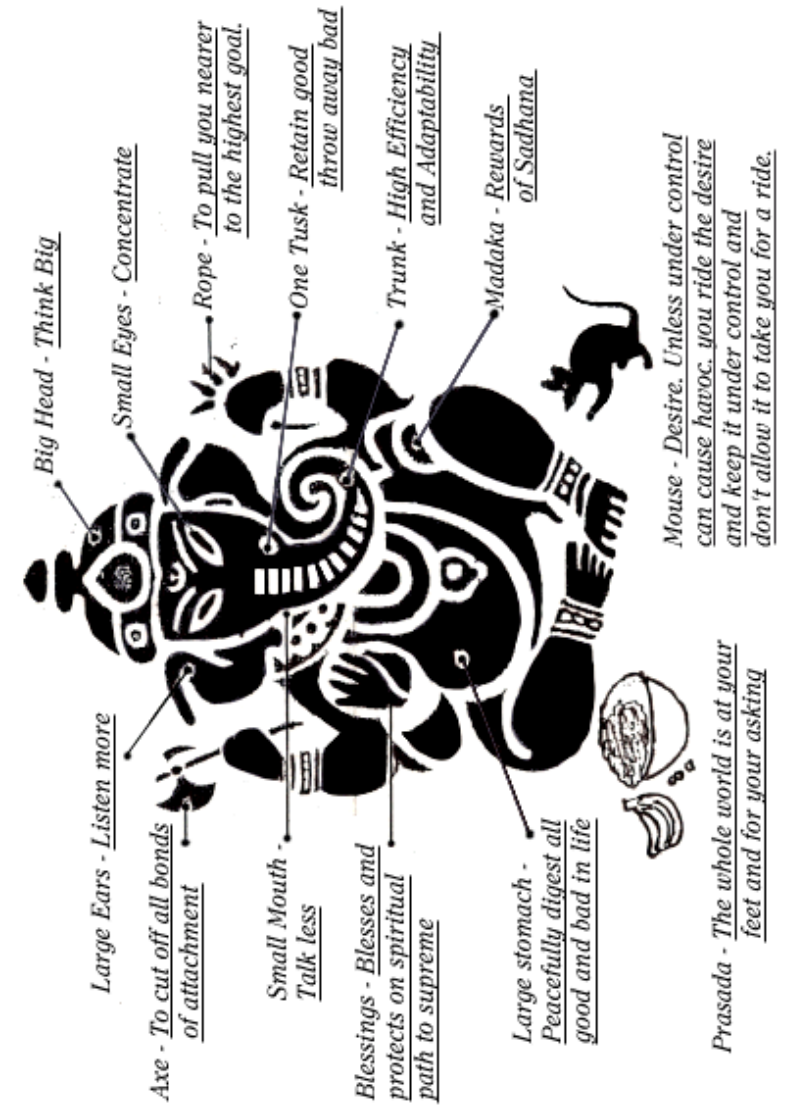
6. The birth of Ganesh has many legends connected to it, different **puranas** carry different tales of his birth, as different rishis wrote them and perhaps at different places and different times not really knowing where Ganesh came from, but his birth is celebrated on **Ganesh Chaturthi** on the **4th day of the moonlit night in the month of Bhadi (September)**.

7. Shiva and Parvati really could not conceive although they had tried to do so for a thousand years - hence both **Kartikeya - the elder son** is attributed **to Shiva** alone, and **Ganesh to Parvati** only. 8. The Hindu accepts the imagination with the actual with equal ease since it does not interfere with the true essence of the Hindu philosophy -- they do not argue about the frills that the ancient thought necessary for protection and interest of the masses.

9. The most accepted theory of Ganesh's birth is that once Shiva went off to the mountain for meditation leaving Parvati at **Kailash** (or some say at **her mother's house at Kashi**). Parvati used to have her bath in a place where there was no door, so she decided to make a child from the **scruff of her body** and **stationed him at the entrance to stop anyone from entering**, while she was bathing. The beautiful child she made stood obediently at the door. **He was about 10 or 12 years of age**.

10. One day when Shiva returned from **Kailash** he went looking for his wife and on being told that she was having a bath, made straight for her chamber. He found a young boy guarding the entrance and not knowing him at all, Shiva brushed him aside and tried to enter. 11. The boy stood firm in his way. He also held a staff in his hand and with its help stopped Shiva from going in. This greatly annoyed Shiva and in anger told the boy to step aside.

Ganesh Symbolism



38. He always has a tiara or a crown on his head and a belt round his stomach to keep the garments from slipping off his bulging stomach. The belt is in the form of a snake which he inherited from his father, Shiva.

39. Any image with the **trunk** of Ganesh **pointing to the right is always for worship** and the one **pointing to the left can be decorated in the house**. The practice is to do **namaskar** everyday to any image which has been put as a decoration piece but has its trunk pointing to the right. One should burn an incense near it now and then.

40. The sign of the **swastika** is an age-old sign of the **Aryan** race. In India it is now **symbolized with Ganesh**. All auspicious drawings for **pooja** or any other auspicious occasions have the swastika or a small image of the Ganesh on top of the page.

Review Questions:

Answer the following questions in your notebook.

1. How and who created Ganesh? Why was he created, what was his function?
2. How did Ganesh lose his head? Compare the two stories; from this handout and the video you watched.
3. How is Ganesh related to Brahma? Give two ways.
4. Why is Ganesh not an immortal god today? Why do people still worship him?
5. Why in India the Swastika sign is symbolized with Ganesh today?
6. What are the two stories (incidents) that tells why people should worship Ganesh first?



12. The boy said, “*No one can enter while my mother bathes.*” Shiva angrily told him: “*Do you know who I am? I am Shiva, the owner of this house and in fact the whole world and you dare to stop me - the husband of Parvati!*” The boy replied: “*I’ve never seen you before and I don’t recognize you, I have been instructed by my mother - Parvati - to stop anyone from entering her chamber, I am her son Ganesh.*” 13. Shiva looked shocked and told him that he had no son by the name of Ganesh and tried to push him aside several times, but the child was very strong and would not budge. This enraged Shiva all the more and he **with his trident cut off the boy’s head**.

14. In some **puranas** it is also said that Shiva called all his **ganas**, his servants, and **fought a battle with Ganesh** but they along with Shiva were injured badly. **Narad** who roams around freely in the three worlds saw this great struggle and rushed to Brahma, who came to the venue. After announcing as to who he was he told the boy that Shiva was really his father and the husband of Parvati but Ganesh pulled Brahma’s beard and even injured him. Brahma had to leave in great bewilderment at the strength of this boy. 15. In a way **Brahma was Ganesh’s grandfather**, as Sati, the first wife of Shiva, was Daksh’s daughter and Daksh was Brahma’s son and Parvati was the incarnation of Sati. Vishnu then came and tried to placate the boy, but got hurt in the bargain. At last Shiva’s trident did the trick, although **his famous bow known as Pinaate was broken**.

16. All this while, Parvati was still having her bath. She heard the noise as she came into her chamber to dress and on seeing Ganesh’s head severed from his body and that too by Shiva’s trident, **she got mighty angry with her husband** and told him in no uncertain terms that first having left her alone, and made her suffer.

17. His absence and then to return without notice and kills his own son was unforgivable. She started such a lament, that her husband could not bear her anger and sorrow. In the meantime, **one of the Ganas had run off with Ganesh’s head and it could not be found**, but Parvati would not rest in peace. 18. So Shiva declared that the **first living thing that came that way will give his head to Ganesh** body and he himself will do the needful. The first living thing that came that way was an elephant; so it was that Ganesh got the head of an elephant. 19. Seeing her son looking like an elephant made Parvati all the more upset. She started to wail all the more and told Shiva: “*No one will worship my son as a god, you have made him look like an elephant.*”

20. Shiva being god almighty, declared there and then that from that day onwards ***no one can worship any other god before Ganesh*** was worshipped first. That decree holds for all times and for all shades of Hindus. 21. Shiva is also the protector of the animals which is amply testified as one finds that Shiva is worshipped in an animal form of ***Pashupati***. Therefore a son of his with an animal face is quite in keeping with the Hindu philosophy that all are part of the same supreme spirit.

22. There is another story which says that once all the gods had an argument as to who amongst them was to be the first ***demi-god***. It was decided to have a race to solve this problem and whoever went round the world first should be declared as the first god to be worshipped. 23. So it was that everyone got their vehicles and Ganesh's elder brother ***Kartikeya also took off on his peacock***. Ganesh was on his mouse, very slow vehicle indeed. 24. So what Ganesh did was to make his parents sit down together and after doing ***namaskar*** to them, ***went round them on his mouse***, and finished before any of the others had returned. 25. He then declared that as it is so written in the ***shastras (scriptures)*** that Parents are to be considered the whole world to a person, he had circled them and, therefore, he had won the race. This impressed everyone and ***Ganesh became the first god of the Hindu pantheon***.

26. ***Since Ganesh was not beautiful he had difficulty in getting married***, while all the other gods were being sought after. He got very angry and told the rats to dig up holes on any path that the ***baraat*** (wedding party) of any god would go to the brides' house thus creating a lot of potholes and obstacles in their way. The poor gods as grooms got very rattled and could not go elegantly for their marriage. They all went to Brahma and complained bitterly about Ganesh and his tricks. 27. Brahma confronted Ganesh and asked him as to why he was creating obstacles in the marriage of the demi-gods. Ganesh told Brahma his own problem as he also wanted a wife. 28. Brahma then created two beautiful girls - one ***Riddi*** (prosperity) and the other ***Siddi*** (success) and told Ganesh he can have two wives instead of one and Brahma along with Saraswati gave away these girls in marriage to Ganesh, ***thus also becoming his father-in-law*** in the process. 29. Ganesh then told the rats to stop their digging and became known as the vanquisher of all obstacles and ***made the rat his vahan*** (vehicle) in appreciation.

30. Ganesh is very fond of eating ***laddos*** and other sweetmeats and can never resist them. Once at night he found a lot of them and just could not stop eating, sure enough his stomach burst and the laddos came out. 31. The moon which used to be then always full and beautiful could not help laughing. This annoyed Ganesh very much and he in his temper cursed the moon that he will from then on never be able to hold his beautiful face since he was so proud of it and ever since then the moon is waxing and waning all the time.

32. One finds Ganesh very much loved, and in different regions he is worshipped in his different stages. In the ***North*** it is ***mainly as a child*** but in the ***Maharashtra*** where he is the principal god he is worshipped ***as a mature and very wise person***. ***Ganesh Chaturthi*** is the biggest festival of that region. It is celebrated at home as well as publicly.

33. Ganesh was appointed by Narad as the scribe to Ved Vyas to pen down the ***Mahabharat*** and the ***Baghawat Gita*** because of his deep understanding of the meaning of the slokas. Ved Vyas could dictate without pausing or correcting him. Ganesh wrote these both with his broken tooth.

34. Now to tell you how Ganesh lost his one tooth. Once Ganesh approached Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to make him immortal, but ***Parashuram*** who was himself immortal, took exception to this and wanted to test him as he thought Ganesh did not fulfill the conditions necessary for immortality. Both got very angry with each other and this caused a big battle in which Ganesh lost as Parashuram was very strong. ***Parashuram also broke one of Ganesh's two teeth*** with his axe, so now Ganesh carries it around in his hand.

35. He, of course, gave up the idea of becoming immortal. Still all Hindus love him and without fail worship him first and always have an image or picture of him in the house.

36. Even at the entrance one finds the image of Ganesh welcoming one to the house where he resides in love and glory to bring prosperity and success.

37. Ganesh is usually shown with four hands, each having a different symbolic object in it. In one hand he has an ***Ambush*** (a goad), the second has a ***trishul*** or an ***axe*** made from his broken tooth, the third has a ***lotus*** and the fourth has a ***rosary***.