

## **Some Icons of the Elephant God-Ganesa in Ancient Vidarbha**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Vidarbha comprising eleven districts is situated in the north-eastern part of the present Maharashtra State is an ancient janpada. It has a hoary past as proved through ancient literature and archaeological evidence. Its religious tradition is also found reflected in these sources. Besides Shaiva, Vaishnava, Bouddha, Jaina, Shakta religious practices, the cult of Ganesa was also existing in this region, which was known as Ganapatya. In Ganesapurana, one of the popular texts of the sectarian literature two places of Vidarbha viz. Adasa(Adosha) and Kalamba are described as abodes of Ganesa named there as “Shamivighnesa” and ‘Chintamani” respectively. Adasa is in Nagpur and Kalamba is in Yawatmal districts. Besides these two Ganesa icons, there are many more idols of Ganesa in different places of Vidarbha. Some of them are enlisted below:-

- Ashtadasa-bhuja Ganesa at Ramtek in Nagpur district
- Panchanana Ganesa at Pauni in Bhandara district
- Bhirusundi Ganesa at Mendha in Bhandara district
- Varada Vinayaka at Gaurala, Bhadravati in Chandrapur district
- Ekachakra Ganesa at Kelzar in Wardha district
- Siddhivinayaka tekadi Ganesa at Sitabardi in Nagpur district

The earliest icons are from Hamalapuri and Mandhal in Nagpur district and Paunar in Wardha district which belongs to the age of the Vakataka i.e. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> CE. Practically all the idols in worship are hidden behind a thick coat of wormillion so that most of their details are not visible. These idols in geo-anthropological form show mainly two types viz, Siddhivinayaka and Varadavinayaka form, based on the position of the proboscis which is bent towards his proper right and left side respectively.

Ganapatya sect has a good number of texts pertaining his worship. Ancient idols, iconography, art history etc., will be discussed in this paper.

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