Ganapati Cult and Iconography of God Ganesha and other Elephant Forms

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ABSTRACT

The inner vitality of Indian culture has resulted in the intimate connection between nature and human inspirations. That is why, Indian religion, art and literature are rooted in the natural environment. Ganesha the elephant god is the best example of the oneness of nature and humans as reflected in the realm of art and literature. Ganesha is only one of the aspects of the multidimensional personality of the elephant which embodies the various hues and colours of Indian cultural tradition. He has an elephant head and a human body. Usually his body is depicted as short and squat with an enormous belly. He is the God of masses and is worshipped throughout in India. No traditional functions begin without remembering this deity. He is the giver of success and other accomplishments; God of living prosperity and peace in life. Most interestingly, Ganesh is not only an Indian god. He appears in China by the 6th century, and perhaps as early in Southeast Asia. By the seventh and eighth centuries, Indian texts dealing with Ganesh are being translated by Buddhist monks in China.

In Indian history the elephant is also used as a symbol of majesty, power and dignity. It is interesting to know about the various historical allusions to elephants. The noble elephant was considered a friend of man in many ways. The mythic Ganesh's character and life are developed predominantly in the purnas, a group of texts that date from around 300 A.D and in which over the next one thousand years, modern theistic Hinduism took its form.

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