

Unusual Forms of Ganesha the Elephant Headed God in India

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ABSTRACT

The iconography of Ganesha the Elephant headed God has developed in different parts of India over a period of time. Especially in western and southern part of India we have a rich imagery of Ganesha. The Hindu, Jain and Buddhist pantheon have accepted and popularised him, and certain images seem to be unique. Following paper will cover three unique forms of this elephant headed God.

1. Ganeshayani or Vinayaki the female Shakti or energy of Ganesha found in villages and in late chalukyan temples in Maharashtra.
2. Ucchista Ganesha or Ganesha with his consort Siddhi. Since Ganesha is the Lord of Education this form of Ganesha is given to a newly wedded bride as a form of sex education.
3. Parshva Yaksha or the elephant headed Yaksha who replaces Dharnendra as a Yaksha for Parshvanatha in Shvetambara sect in Jainism.



a. Ganeshayani



b. Ucchista Ganesha



c. Parshva Yaksha

A sculptural form of Ganeshayani or Vighneshwari is observed on a pillar in the late Chalukyan temple at Bhuleshwara near Yavat in Pune. The next temple is dedicated to Shiva. However the Ucchista Ganesha image is mainly a metallic icon, a granite statue of it is seen in the mukha mandapa of the Shaktivaneshwara temple, Tanjore, Tamilnadu. Following temple belongs to the medieval period. The Parshva yaksha has a turtle as its vehicle unlike the Mushaka or a mouse. He is a Shasana yaksha and a protector and bestower of Vidyas and hence sometimes the Jain followers worship him as Ganesha. Many a time he is considered as a Mantric deity. This sculpture is seen in a few temples in Gujarat. It is also painted on the Yantra patas. This research paper will study the evolution of the concepts of the three forms of Ganesha.