

**Elephants in Society: Relevance of Ganeshostav (Annual 11 day Cultural Festival dedicated to Elephant-headed God – Lord Ganesha) in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Poonam Kamble**

**ABSTRACT**

Celebrations begin to honour the elephant-headed god on the fourth day of the first fortnight of the Bhadrapad month in the Hindu calendar usually comes in August or September. Even though the 11 day festival is celebrated all over the world, it is an important annual event in the Central and Southern India (States of Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Goa etc). Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak is an Indian freedom fighter and social reformer who popularized Sarvajanic (Public) Ganeshotsav celebrations in Maharashtra in the last decade of the 19th century. He asked people to leave behind their differences and to celebrate the festival together for common good. Ganeshotsav provided a platform to come together to share and exchange ideas. Soon people connected with this idea and started celebrating this festival. Over a period of time, the festival has become an epicentre of economic and social endeavours. The paper tries to find out the relevance of the Ganeshotsav in the 21st century by examining its role especially in the state of Maharashtra in India.