A Children’s Guide to Perform Lord Ganesha Pooja

Prepared by Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and Samskrita Bharati, USA

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PREFACE

The booklet is especially prepared for the Hindu children of America. It was first printed in year 2006, on the occasion of Shri Guruji’s birth centenary. After getting a tremendous response from saamuhik ganesha pooja utsav participants, swayamsevaks, and sevikas, we are happy to provide you with a 2nd edition of this booklet. Some changes are made based on the feedback received.

Dear Parents

We are happy to publish this booklet on the pooja-vidhi of Lord Ganesha. Our only intentions are to provide Hindu children of America with the primary information of Lord Ganesha and let them know the simple way of performing pooja. Although the contents of this booklet are verified from the scholars, there may be inadequacies or differences from the regional pooja-vidhi. In this regards, your feedback will surely be helpful to improve the contents when it is printed next time. In case you want to participate and contribute to this and other such several activities taken up by HSS, please feel free to contact us at info@hssus.org.

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Lord Ganesha

Hindus accept the existence of several gods, goddesses, and dities in the forms of animals and planets. Hindus also believe that all these gods/goddesses are not separate entities but different forms (modes) of the same supreme reality (Supreme-God or Paramaatman). Supreme God manifests himself in different forms or aspects for specific purposes. Hindus have free will to choose any form of the supreme God (Ishta Devata) to worship and pray. Whichever form they may choose to pray or worship, ultimately it leads to the supreme God.

Lord Ganesha is also one of the many forms of the God. He is also the first child of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. He is known by various names such as Vinayaka (knowledgeable), Vighneshwara (remover of obstacles), Gajanana (elephant faced) or Ganapati (a leader). Lord Ganesha has all leadership qualities. HE is a very unique form of the Supreme God. HIS unique form also carries symbolic meaning. Scholars interpret it in various ways. Following is the most commonly believed symbolic meaning.

**Symbolic Meaning:**

Ganesha has elephant’s head, which is big. It symbolizes sharp intelligence and big thinking. An elephant’s life is full of radiance, which comes from dignity and self-esteem. Also the elephant shares his food by scattering some around himself. It indicates the sense of generosity.

Ganesha has large ears, but small mouth. It indicates that one should talk less and listen more, but retain only the positive and constructive things. Large ears are also a symbol of acute and superior hearing. Ganesha’s small eyes indicate sharp vision and concentration. Small eyes are also a symbol of foresight.

Trunk is the symbol of high strength, efficiency and adaptability. It can move the biggest obstacles and yet infinitely gentle in handling delicate objects.

Ganesha has one full and other half tusk. The partial tusk symbolizes intelligence and the full tusk symbolizes faith. Both are needed to progress in life. However, the intelligence often falls short in providing answers to life’s burning questions. When it falls short, faith in God and ourselves can lead us in life successfully. Full tusk also symbolizes that one should retain good and throw away bad things.

Ganesha’s four hands have four things - Ankush (Elephant driver’s iron rod or axe) It indicates us to cut off all bonds of attachment and restrain desires and passions. Paash (cord or rope) symbol of restrain and punishment. Modak is dry and hard from outside and sweet from inside and nourishing. This represents that hard work (saadhana) brings joy, satisfaction and nourishment to our souls. Aashirwaad means that
Ganaesha blesses and protects us on our spiritual path to the Supreme.

Ganesha has large stomach. HE peacefully digests all good and bad things without losing control. Ganesha's small legs indicate that one should not move hastily. One must not rush into anything. Each step must be slow, deliberate and well thought of.

Mouse-vehicle of Ganesha symbolizes desire. Desire, if not in control, can cause havoc. Ganesha rides on the mouse. One should ride the desire and keep it under control and do not allow it to take you for a ride.

Durva, meaning grass, is placed on the head of Ganesh. The grass is something that we constantly walk on or trample on, paying little heed to it, while in fact it contributes so much to our survival by giving us oxygen. But we give importance to durva by placing them on his head. This tells us no matter how much you are looked upon or insignificant to others or not given the importance you deserve, you are important to Him. Red flower indicates red color. Red color stands for total change or revolution.

Lord Ganesha possesses all leadership qualities. The best pooja offered to Lord Ganesha is to inculcate those qualities in us.

Ganesha Chaturthi:

Chaturthi means a 4th day of the month according to the Hindu calendar. It is the day of Lord Ganesha. Especially, 4th day of the month Bhadrapad (August-September) is celebrated as a Ganesha Festival. It is the most popular festival of Hindus. They install clay figures (moorti) of Lord Ganesha in their houses and perform pooja everyday in the morning and evening. The festival is so popular among the masses that its preparations start happening months in advance. His statues are also installed in the street corners and extravagant arrangements are made for decoration. Prayers are performed on the daily basis. The artists who make Ganesha statues compete with each other to make bigger and more elegant statues. These statues are then carried on decorated floats to be immersed in the sea. This immersion is accompanied by drumbeats, devotional songs and dancing.

Pooja

Pooja is the Hindu ritual of worshiping God in a systematic manner as described in the Vedic scriptures. An image or symbol of the deity is kept and worshiped by chanting the mantras and verses. The various names of the deity and the mantras are recited. Various offerings like fruits, flowers, sweets, milk are offered. It is a way of expressing one's faith in God, a way of seeking salvation and a way of seeking His blessings. It also gives you discipline, satisfaction and peace of mind.

Worship of God in any form and in any way one likes is good as it reduces the negative side of one's Karma and improves the positive effects. Before doing any auspicious work, Lord Ganesha is to be worshiped. Before doing any pooja, Lord Ganesha's pooja is to be performed first. Gather following items to do pooja.

- Lord Ganesha's moorti (or a big framed photo)
- Plantain leaf (if available or a plate) and rice for installing Lord's prateema.
- One plate (preferably a metallic one) and some rice (2-3 cups)
- Ghantaa (bell)
- two coconuts or bananas
- Betel leaves, supaari (betel nuts)
- haldi, kumkum, akshata, flowers, garlands
- panchaamrita (honey, milk, ghee, curds, sugar - all in one cup)
- 2 small lamps with ghee and a cotton wick
- Agarbatti (and no camphor) and a match-box
- 2 small cups and a spoon, preferably metallic
- Some money for dakshina (Offering) to Lord Ganesha
- Sweets and other items for naivedya
Before doing pooja, keep the surroundings clean and nice. Be yourself clean, neat and tidy and follow the instructions.

1) Sit comfortably, fold your hands in namaste. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and chant OM (ॐ) slowly three times. Sound the bell for five seconds.

2) **Chant the following prayers:**

**Pray Lord Ganesha**

vakratuNDa mahaakaaya soorya koTi samaprabha |

nirvighnam kuru me deva sarva kaaryeShu sarvadaa ||

चक्रतुण्ड महाकाय सूर्यकोटि समप्रभ ||

निर्विग्न कुरु मे देव सर्वकार्य पुर्व ||

O, God Ganesha, you are as bright as ten million Suns. I pray to you please remove all obstacles from my path.

**Pray Goddess Saraswati**

saraswati namastubhyam varade kaamaroopNi |
poojaarambham karishyaami siddhir bhavatu me sadaa ||

सरस्वती नमस्तुभ्यां वरादे कामरूपिनि ||

पूजारम्भ करिष्यामि सिद्धिर भवतु मे सदा ||

Goddess Saraswati, my salutations to you. I am starting the pooja, please bless me with success.

**Pray Guru (our teacher)**

gurur brahmaa gurur viShNuH gurur devo maheshwaraH |
guruH saakshaat parabrahma tasmai shri gurave namaH ||

गुरुब्रह्मा गुरूविनिः गुरुदेवो महेश्वरः ||

गुरुसाक्षात्परब्रह्मात्मेमेश्वरे नमः ||

3) **Make a resolve to perform the pooja.**

mama upatta durita kshaya dwaaraa shree-parameshwara preeti artham sarva abhiishTa aavidya aavahana aadi ShoDashaa upacharaaiH shree-mahaagaNapati poojaam kariShye |

मम उपात्त दुरात्मक द्वारा श्रीपरमेश्वर प्रेती आर्थम सर्वाविश्वम ध्यायते | श्रीमहागानपति पूजा करिष्ये |

OM. May we protect each other. May we eat together, may we study together, and may we achieve together. May there not be any animosity amongst us. May there be peace, peace and peace.

4) **Meditate upon Lord Ganesha.**

shukla-ambara-dharaM viShNuM shashi-varNaM chatur-bhujam| 

prasanna-vadanaM dhyaayet sarva-vighnopa-shaantaye ||

शुक्लांम्बरां धरा मिश्नुम शशी-वर्णम चतुर-भूजम | 

प्रसन्नां वदन मह्यते सर्वां विग्नोप-शांत्ये ||
I meditate upon Lord Ganesha who is wearing white clothes, bright colored and has four arms. Pleasant faced Lord Ganesha removes all obstacles.

gajaananam bhoootaNaadaii sevitam
kapittha jamboo phalasaara bhakshitam |
umaasutam shoka vinaasha kaaraNam
namaami vighneshwara paada pankajam ||

I pray to the lotus feet of elephant headed Lord Ganapati, who is served by one and all, who likes fruits, who is son of Goddess Paarvati and who removes root cause of all miseries.

shrii-mahaa-gaNa-adhipataye namaH| dhyaayaami||

5) Invite the Lord to come to you to receive your worship.
atra aagachcha jagadwandya suraraaja architeshwara |
anaathanaatha sarvajna gourii garbha samuddhava |
Shrii-mahaa-gaNa-adhipataye namaH| Aavaahyaim,|

I invite you to come here, O Lord Ganesha, saluted by the world, the one worshipped by the king of Gods, lord of all, the all-knower, son of Goddess Gauri.

6) Offer seat to Lord Ganesha.
mouktikaiH puShya raagaishca naanaa ratna viraajitam |
ratna simhaasanam caaru priityartham pratiguhyataam ||
Shrii-mahaa-gaNa-adhipataye namaH| aasanam samarpayaami||

7) Offer Lord Ganesha water, milk and honey.
mahaa-gaNa-adhipataye namaH |
paadayOH paadyam samarpayaami|
MahaaGanapathyay nam: ||
paadya: paavan samarpayami |
I offer water to wash the feet of Lord Ganesha, the leader of all troops.
gowrI-putraaya namaH | hastayoH arghyam samarpayaami |
gauri-paanaah nam: ||
I offer water to wash the hands of Lord Ganesha, the son of Goddess Gowri.

anaatha-naathaaya namaH | aacamaniiyam samarpayaami |

I offer drinking water to Lord Ganesha, who is the Lord of all.
gajavaktraaya namaH | mahuparkam samarpayaami |
gajakaryav nam: ||
I offer the traditional mixture of milk and honey to the elephant headed Lord Ganesha.

8) Offer panchamritam (milk, curd, ghee, honey and sugar) to Lord Ganesha. Take milk, curd, ghee, honey and sugar in small cups. Use separate cups or mix them all in a cup. Dip a flower in the cup and worship with that flower.
snaanam panchaamritaiH deva grihaaNa gaNa naayaka|  
anaatha naatha sarvajna giirvaaNa paripoojita ||  
Shrii-mahaa-gaNa-adhipataye namaH|  
panchaamrita snaanam samarpayaami||  

Oh gaNa naayaka, Lord, God, all-knowledgeable! please accept panchaamrita snaanam.

mahaa-gaNapataye namaH| kshiireNa snaapayaami ||  

I wash him with milk
mahaa-gaNapataye namaH, dadhnaa snaapayaami |  

I wash him with curd
mahaa-gaNapataye namaH, aajyena snaapayaami |  

I wash him with ghee
mahaa-gaNapataye namaH, madhunaa snaapayaami |  

I wash him with honey
mahaa-gaNapataye namaH, sharkarayaa snaapayaami |  

I wash him with sugar

9) Finally offer clean water to Lord Ganesha to finish his bath.
   gangaadi sarva tiirthebhyaH aahrityaiH amalaiH jalaiH |  
snaanam kurushva bhagavan uma putra namostute ||  
mahaa-gaNapataye namaH|  
shuddhdaka snaanam samarpayaami |  

Salutations to you, O God, the son of uma putra! Please take bath with this fresh, clean water from all the tiirthaas like ganga. I offer clean water bath to Lord Ganesha.

10) Now offer dress-pair to Lord Ganesha.
   mahaa-gaNapataye namaH| vastra yugmam samarpayaami|  

I offer dress pair to Lord Ganesha.

11) Worship the Lord Ganesha with a bit of turmeric, kumkum, sandle paste and akshata.
   candanaagaru karpooram kastoorii kumkumaanvitam |  
vilepanam sura shreshTa pritiyartham prati grihyataam ||  

I offer sandal wood paste (chandana), incense sticks (agaru), camphor (karpooram), kumkuma for applying, to Lord Ganesha.
   mahaa-gaNapataye namaH| gandhaan samarpayaami|  

I offer sandal wood paste.
Worship the Lord with flowers.

12) sugandhaani pushpaaNi jaajiikunda mukhaanicha |
    eka vimshati patraaNi samgruhaaNam nasmottute ||

I offer fragrant flowers and 21 types of leaves. Please accept them.

Praise Lord Ganesha by famous twelve names.

13) Om sumukhaaya namaH | सुमुखाय नामः | Pleasant faced
    Om ekadantaay aH | एकदंताय नामः | One toothed
    Om kapilaaya namaH | कपिलाय नामः | Kapila
    Om gaja karNakaaya namaH | गजकर्नकाय नामः | Elephant eared
    Om lambodaraaya namaH | लंबोदराय नामः | Big stomached
    Om vikaTaay namaH | विकटाय नामः | Wise
    Om vighna raajaaya namaH | विघ्नराजाय नामः | Master of all obstacles
    Om gaNaadhipataye namaH | महानादिपातये नामः | Leader
    OM gajaananaaya namaH | गाजाणनाय नामः | Powerful

Offer the Lord agarbatti (incense sticks) Take one or two sticks,
lighten them and circle the photo/idol three to five times in
clockwise direction.

dashaamgam guggulopetam sugandham sumanoharam |
    umaa sutam namastubhyam gruhaaNam varadobhava ||

I offer grand, good akshataas (colored rice) to Lord Ganesha.

14) Offer the Lord agarbatti (incense sticks) Take one or two sticks,
lighten them and circle the photo/idol three to five times in
clockwise direction.

dashaamgam guggulopetam sugandham sumanoharam |
    umaa sutam namastubhyam gruhaaNam varadobhava ||

I offer grand, good akshataas (colored rice) to Lord Ganesha.

15) Show him deepam with a solitary lamp or a lamp with an oil
soaked cotton wick.

saadyam trivarti samyuktam vahninaa yojitam mayaa |
    gruhaaNam mangalam diipam iishaputra nasmottute ||

I offer grand, good akshataas (colored rice) to Lord Ganesha.

16) Offer Lord Ganesha all fruits that you have specially made for
Him to eat. Take a flower along with few grains of colored rice
in your right hand. Pour a spoon of water into your right hand.
Sprinkle the water on all the items and offer the flower and rice
to God. Feel as if God has actually eaten what you offered him.

Fold your hands do namaste to God.

OM lambodaraaya namaH| mahaanaivedyam samarpayaami||
17) Offer taamboolam – beetle leaves and supaari to Lord Ganesha after His Meal.

OM mahaa-gNa-adhipataye namaH. taamboolam samarpayaami.

18) Now offer aarti to the Lord. Show the lamp and circle the image/photo three times in the clockwise direction. Sound the metallic bell as well.

OM mahaa-gaNapataye namaH. mangala niiraajanam samarpayaami.

19) Stand up straight. Fold your hands and do namaste. Turn clockwise three rounds.

yaani kaani cha paapaani janmaantara krutaanicha |
taani taani praNashyanti pradakshiNam pade pade ||

Please forgive all my mistakes.

20) Do saashTaanga namaskaar to the God (with your feet, knees, chest, palms and forehead touching the ground.)

anyathaa sharaNam naasti tvameva sharaNam mama |
tasmaat vaatsalya bhaavena paahi maam gaNaadhipa ||

You are the final solace and protector. That's why protect and guide me out of love.

21) Take prasaad (anything offered to God is prasaad – water, fruits and other eatables.) Eat/drink it happily.

mahaa-gaNapataye prasaadam aanandena sviikaromi.

I happily partake Lord Ganesha's prasad.

22) Take akshataas and listen to the following story. At the end, do namaskaar to the God and your parents. Have your parents bless you with the mantra akshataas that you had in your hand.

Story: The great land of bhaarat (India), which is referred in all the dharma literatures, puraaNaas and itihaasaas (history), was full of greenery, beautiful landscapes, with all rivers giving fresh water, fertile land, eco-balance. In there, sage soota, who is an ancient historian, used to teach several shastraas to other sages like Sounaka.

Dharmaraaja, who is born in the chandra dynasty, lost all his kingdom, wealth and power to kauravaas by loosing the gambling game. In the forests, during exile, he, along with his brothers and wife, visited several sages. He also visits sage soota and says “O great soul! We lost all our kingdom and wealth. We are pleased by your darshan now. Please prescribe any vrata with which we can get back all that we lost.” Sage Soota replied, “There is a vrata which removes all sins and gives all wealth. Bhagavaan Shiva first described this to kumara swami.” Sage soota continues to tell the vrata story details.

Shiva tells kumara swami “Vinaayaka vrata gives health and wealth. That needs to be done on the fourth day of shukla paksha of the Bhaadrapada month. Finish all ablutions early in the morning, and with whatever one can afford (Gold, silver or clay), make an idol of Lord Ganesha. Install Him in the northern area of your home, on a dias well decorated with flowers, rice and rangoli. Do all the pooja activities like dhooopa, diipa, niiraajana, naivedya… offerings. Meet friends and family and have lunch and dinner with them. Whoever does it this way, is always happy and meets all his wishes. This is one of the great vrataas, which is performed by several great people like Shri Krishna, Shri Rama, Bhagiratha and Indra. Soota tells dharmaraja “So, dharmaraja! You also do this ganesh pooja. You can win over your enemies and get back all the wealth.
Earlier, Shri Krishna also performed this vrata and obtained jaambavati along with shamantakamani. King satraajit obtained shamantakamani, a bright shining gem, as a gift from Lord soorya. Shri Krishna liked it and asked Satraajit for it. He denied giving it. Satraajit's brother wore that shamantakamani and went for hunting. A lion killed him and was running away with the gem. Jaambavanta, a bear-king, killed that lion, and took the shamantakamani with him to his cave. Satraajit accuses Shri Krishna that he killed his brother and stole shamantakamani. Shri Krishna realizes and tells balaraama, that this is because he had to violate the ganesh chaturthi shaapa, not to see moon that night. He happened to see the reflection of moon in the cup of milk that he was having that night. Balaraama asks Krishna to tell the details of the shaapa.

Krishna tells “On this chaturhti day, vinaayaka had a heavy meal of all the sweets and dishes that he likes most. With a heavy, large stomach when he was walking, chandra looks at him and mocks. Indignified, vinayaka gives shapa to the moon, that whoever sees moon on this day, shall be falsely accused. Chandra realizes his mistake and begs pardon of Ganapti. He then tells that, as told by Shiva to kumara swami, if one does ganesh pooja on this 4th day of bhadrapada maasa, they will not face these blames. So, then onwards several people, including chandra did Ganesh pooja.”

Then, Shri Krishna and balarama do Ganesh Pooja, take prasadam, and go to jaambavanta. Jaambavanta gladly gives back shamantakamani and offers jaambavati in marriage to Shri Krishna. Upon return, Shri Krishna goes to satraajit and gives back his shamantakamani. Satraajit feels sorry, and happily offers his daughter satyabhaama in marriage to him.”

Soota continues saying the story that “indra, in order to kill vruttaasrua, shri Rama, when searching for Sita, bhagiratha, when bringing ganga to earth performed this vrata.” Dharmaraja also performs this vrata and gets back all that he lost and lives happily. By doing this vrata, since everybody is able to fulfill (siddhi) his wishes, vinayaka has become popularly known as “siddhi vinayaka.” So, all people can do this vrata and may live happily forever.

23) After reciting the following shaanti mantra, clean-up your pooja place.

sarve bhavantu sukhinaH| sarve santu niraamayaaH||
sarve bhadraaNi paSyantu| maa kashchid duHkha bhaag bhavet ||
OM shaantiH shaantiH shaantiH||

Let all live happily. Let all live without misery. Let all see, hear and perceive only good things. Let no one ever be sad.