



INDONESIA GANESHA

Ganesha is the son of Shiva, one of the three main Hindu deities. This sculpture comes from the Indonesian island of Java where, although today the majority of people are of the Muslim faith, there have been periods in history when Buddhist and Hindu kingdoms prevailed. It is believed that the Hindu religion, which originated in India, was established in Java by the eighth century.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Ganesha is his elephant head set atop a chubby human body. Ganesha has many arms which hold his attributes, or things which identify his powers. In this sculpture the arms have been damaged so that the only attribute we can see is a tusk. His many arms together with his crown and necklace identify him as a god. This Ganesha sits on a throne of lotus petals with the soles of his feet together, a pose that is found only in Java and Cambodia. His big belly is large enough to contain all wisdom and life, and his long curving trunk removes obstacles. Consequently he is often

worshipped at the beginning of new ventures or exams.

Here is the story of Ganesha: Shiva and Parvati lived way up high in the Himalaya Mountains. Shiva was often away and Parvati would get bored and lonely so she fashioned a roly-poly baby boy from clay and water to keep her company. Parvati loved the child and took him everywhere with her. One day while Parvati was bathing in a pool she asked the child to stand guard to make sure no-one disturbed her. Shiva arrived home at that moment and while looking for Parvati encountered the boy who, not realising who Shiva was, stopped him from going near the pool. Shiva, furious at being opposed, immediately cut off the boy's head with his sword. When Parvati realised what had happened her grief knew no bounds. She threw herself sobbing to the ground demanding that Shiva return life to the boy. Shiva hurriedly went into the forest looking for a living creature. The first one he discovered was an elephant and he

immediately cut off its head. As he fitted the elephant's head onto the child's body he breathed life into it and waited for Parvati's reaction. She was delighted. From that day onward the elephant-headed boy was called Ganesha.

This sculpture of Ganesha is carved out of volcanic stone. The sculptor most likely used metal chisels and wooden mallets. On completion it would have been placed in a temple or a shrine where people would make offerings of food, drink, flowers and coloured powder. Additional acts of worship include bathing the sculpture, dressing it with beautiful fabrics and jewellery. In Java, images of Ganesha were often located near rivers and ravines to protect travellers.

Central JAVA
10th century
Ganesha
volcanic stone, height 67cm
Anonymous gift 1985
178.1985

K-6 ACTIVITIES

LOOKING IDEAS

Look at this Hindu god (called GANESHA) from Indonesia.

Find and count the following: eyes, arms, pieces of jewellery, lotus petals.

Name all the parts you can see which are human. Identify which of his features come from an animal.

Suggest what tells us this creature is a god.

Describe the feature of Ganesha which reveals his love of eating.

List some sweet foods which he might enjoy today.

Imagine visiting Ganesha and taking a gift to him. What would it be?

Imagine Ganesha could talk.

What would his voice be like? What would he say about himself?

Describe his personality.

Examine the surface of this sculpture.

Imagine how it would feel to touch and describe its texture.

What material is Ganesha made from? How would the artist have created this sculpture?

What sort of tools would the artist have used?

MAKING IDEAS

MIX AND MATCH ANIMAL PORTRAITS

Ask each child to draw a self-portrait. Set aside.

Organise each class member to select a different animal which they identify with: fish, tiger, elephant, horse, kangaroo etc.

Make a drawing of this animal, approximately the same size as the self-portrait drawing.

Assemble all the drawings together from the class to create a book, alternating the self-portraits with the animals.

Ring bind or staple along one side.

Make four vertical and evenly spaced cuts through the book of drawings.

Turn the pages and enjoy exploring the variety of animal/people hybrid portraits which have been created.

FANTASTIC COLLAGE/SCULPTURE CREATURES

Make collages of creatures which are half human, half animal.

Name these creatures and write tales about their adventures.

Create your creature in 3D.

Try carving with soap and lino-cutting tools (use allergy-free soap and carve slowly and with care). Hold an exhibition of your works.

MAKE GIFTS FOR GANESHA

Make some special offerings for the Hindu god Ganesha.

Research some Indonesian recipes for making sweets and gift wrap using bright coloured paper (cellophane, tissue, aluminium foil).

Create a new crown for him with cardboard, paint, coloured paper and glitter.

String a garland of paper flowers together on some string to make a colourful necklace.

RELATED STUDIES IDEAS

• **Creative And Performing Arts:**

THE LOTUS THRONE

Sit like Ganesha.

Pretend he is about to move from his lotus throne.

Act-out his movements. Where is he going?

Invent a story about the day Ganesha left his lotus seat.

• **Human Society and Its Environment:**

GANESHA'S BIRTHDAY

Ganesha is especially honoured on his birthday in a festival known as *Ganesha Chaturthi*. At one celebration in Bombay, India, a giant statue of Ganesha is made and then carried into the sea.

Find out about Hindu festivals including *Ganesha Chaturthi*, *Holi* and *Diwali*.

Make a calendar of the Hindu year marked by its festivals.

• **Science and Technology:**

ELEPHANTS IN ASIA

In India, many temples have one or more elephants. They are covered with ornate fabrics and decorations for temple parades.

Research the importance of elephants in Asia.

Discuss how people depend on elephants in the different countries in Asia.

Describe the characteristics of elephants and the different environments in which they live in Asia.