


Ganesh Festival through Philately

Ganeshotsav is celebrated every year from Chaturdashi of Shukla Paksha of Bhadrapada month to Anant Chaudas. While Maharashtra is known to host some of the largest Ganesh pujas, the festival is celebrated with pomp and show across the country. The spirit of celebration of Lord Ganesha's birthday as a community festival was promoted by freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak in in the 1890s to unite the common people against British rule. So in 1893, the foundation of this great festival was laid. Since then, the Ganesh festival has evolved in last 130 years to become a major festival of India, primarily in western states of Maharashtra and Goa. Former chief scientist at National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa and noted philatelist **M R RAMESH KUMAR** charts the journey of Ganeshotsav through postage stamps issued by the India Post since 1970s.

DESIGN BY SUNIL DICHLAKAR

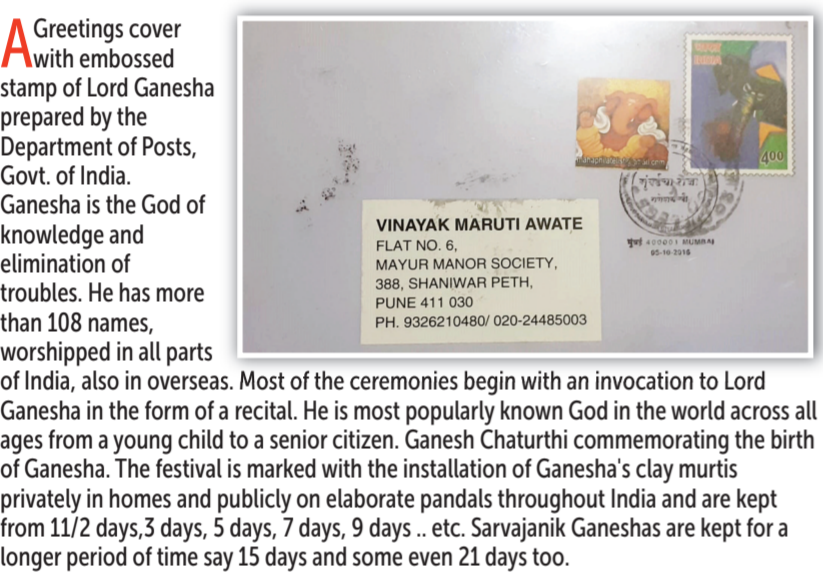


A Private Picture Post card with the Lord Ganesha, Place Pictorial cancellation of Tiruchirappally. Ucchi Pillayar Temple is a 7th-century Hindu temple, one dedicated to Lord Ganesha located a top of Rockfort, Trichy, Tamil Nadu, India. Tiruchirappalli Rock Fort is also fondly called as Malaikottai in Tamil. A beautiful place cancellation of the Ganesha Temple cancellation of the Picture Post card is also shown. This cancellation was way back in December, 1974.

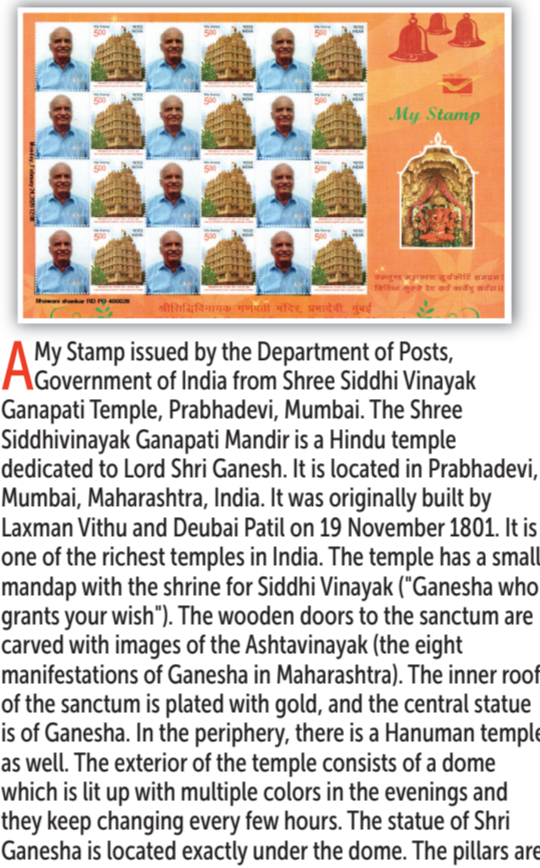
Dr M R Ramesh Kumar started his collection on the theme of Lord Ganesha only a few years back. He got most of his philatelic materials from friends, fellow philatelists, internet sources such as Ebay, Amazon, etc, and also from philatelic dealers. Here he presents his collection of stamps on Lord Ganesha.



A First Day cover on Lord Shri Ganesha which was released by the Department of Posts, Thailand with a Bangkok cancellation of the year 2014. My Stamp is the brand name for personalized sheets of Postage Stamps of India Post. The personalization is achieved by printing a thumb nail image of the customer's photograph and logos of institutions, or images of artwork, heritage buildings, famous tourist places, historical cities, wildlife, other animals and birds etc., on a selected template sheet having Postage Stamps. 'My Stamp' was first introduced in India during the World Philatelic Exhibition, 'INDIPEX-2011'. This scheme is available in selected Philatelic Bureaux and counters/ Important Post offices/Post Offices situated at tourist places. A My Stamp with the most famous temples of Lord Ganesha, from the Shri Varasiddhi Vinayak Temple, Prabhadevi, Mumbai is given below.



A Greetings cover with embossed stamp of Lord Ganesha prepared by the Department of Posts, Govt. of India. Ganesha is the God of knowledge and elimination of troubles. He has more than 108 names, worshipped in all parts of India, also in overseas. Most of the ceremonies begin with an invocation to Lord Ganesha in the form of a recital. He is most popularly known God in the world across all ages from a young child to a senior citizen. Ganesh Chaturthi commemorating the birth of Ganesha. The festival is marked with the installation of Ganesha's clay murtis privately in homes and publicly on elaborate pandals throughout India and are kept from 11/2 days, 3 days, 5 days, 7 days, 9 days .. etc. Sarvajanic Ganeshas are kept for a longer period of time say 15 days and some even 21 days too.



A My Stamp issued by the Department of Posts, Government of India from Shree Siddhi Vinayak Ganapati Temple, Prabhadevi, Mumbai. The Shree Siddhivinayak Ganapati Mandir is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shri Ganesha. It is located in Prabhadevi, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. It was originally built by Laxman Vithu and Deubai Patil on 19 November 1801. It is one of the richest temples in India. The temple has a small mandap with the shrine for Siddhi Vinayak ('Ganesha who grants your wish'). The wooden doors to the sanctum are carved with images of the Ashtavinayak (the eight manifestations of Ganesha in Maharashtra). The inner roof of the sanctum is plated with gold, and the central statue is of Ganesha. In the periphery, there is a Hanuman temple as well. The exterior of the temple consists of a dome which is lit up with multiple colors in the evenings and they keep changing every few hours. The statue of Shri Ganesha is located exactly under the dome. The pillars are carved out with the images of ashtavinayak.



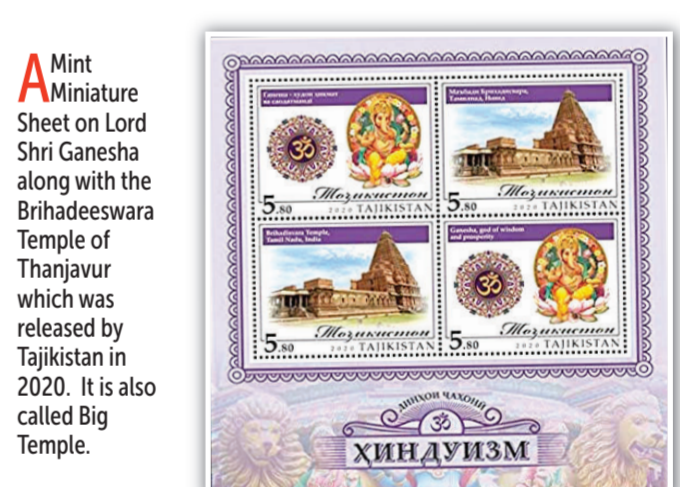
Ganesh Pol in Amer Fort, constructed 1611 and 1667 by King Jai Singh II is located in the main palace of the Amber Fort. There is a total of seven main gates like Ganesh Pol in the Amber Fort but Ganesh Pol has most important among all due to its unmatched architecture and strategic location. As the name suggests, Ganesh Pol has a magnificent idol of the Hindu Lord Ganesha which is splendidly colored in different colors. A stamp on Ganesh Pol was released by the Department of Posts, Govt. of India, way back in 1 January, 2017.



A stamp on Lord Ganesha which was released by the Department of Posts, Government of Nepal.



Festival Cuisine : Gujhiya : Gujhiyas are prepared in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujrat and Bihar regions of India during Holi and Diwali festivities. In Goa, Goans prepare a similar sweet on the occasion of their festivals: Hindus for Ganesh Chaturthi and Christians for Christmas, and call it nevri or neuri (plural neureo).



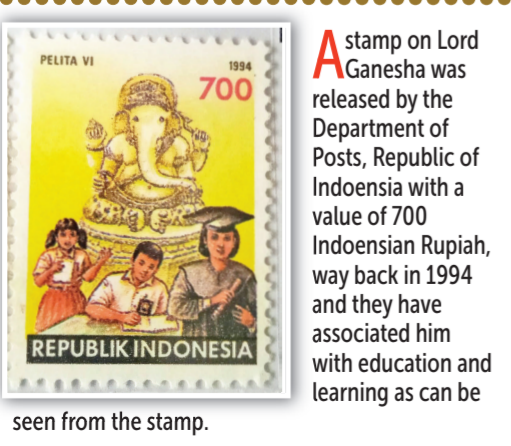
A Mint Miniature Sheet on Lord Shri Ganesha along with the Brihadeeswara Temple of Thanjavur which was released by Tajikistan in 2020. It is also called Big Temple.



A 5 Nepalese Rupee stamp on Lord Ganesha was released by the Department of Posts, Govt of Nepal, way back in 2003. There are four Binayaktemples in Kathmandu or 4 Ganesh Mandirs in Kathmandu, they are Ashok Vinayak, Chandra Binayak, Surya Binayak and Jal Binayak. Lord Ganesha is believed to be the son of Lord Shiva & Parvati. Ganesh has numerous shrines throughout the Valley but four are particularly sacred.



BhogPrasad : Prasad is typically a vegetarian dish that is given as offering to God in temples. Prasad is usually offered to God during the beginning of puja and once the puja is over it is distributed among the devotees. According to religious texts, it is believed that the prasad which is offered to god is first tasted by him. Following this, it is given to devotees as a sign of goodwill to share the blessings of God. Whenever, I think of Bhog Prasad, there are a few which comes readily to my mind, they are the Modak which are made during the Ganesh festivals in Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka. Modak is an Indian sweet dumpling dish popular in many Indian states and cultures. According to Hindu belief, it is considered one of the favourite dishes of Lord Ganesha and is therefore used in prayers. The sweet filling on the inside of a Modak consists of freshly grated coconut and jaggery, while the outer soft shell is made from rice flour or wheat flour mixed with khava or maida flour. Modak is Lord Ganesha's favorite sweet and made in many Hindu homes during the first day of Ganesh Chaturthi Festival. The most popular variety of Modak that is made is 'Ukadiche modak' (steamed modak) which is from the Maharashtra Cuisine. The South Indian variation of Modak is Kozhukattai or Kolukattai which is made during Vinayaka Chaturthi in the Southern Indian states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. There is another variant of modak recipe where the outer crust is made from whole wheat flour and fried - called Fried Modak.



A stamp on Lord Ganesha was released by the Department of Posts, Republic of Indonesia with a value of 700 Indoensian Rupiah, way back in 1994 and they have associated him with education and learning as can be seen from the stamp.



A 20,000 Indonesia Rupiah Currency Note with the image of Shri Lord Ganesha.



A Registered Commemorative Cover with the special cancellation on the Ganesh Festival which was available only in Maharashtra Circle (Including the state of Goa) during the Ganesh Festival 2022 period, with an excellent cancellation of Lord Ganesha and his carrier the Mooshika with a Stamp with Lord Ganesha from Pune of 1st September, 2022. The credit of celebrating Ganeshotsav in public, in a large-scale way, is given to Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak thought, that instead of home, why not celebrate Ganeshotsav in a public place. It instilled a sense of unity amidst the freedom struggle. Lord Ganesha's vehicle (vahana) is the large Indian bandicoot rat, which symbolizes Ganesha's ability to overcome anything to get what he wants. Like a rat and like an elephant, Ganesha is a remover of all the obstacles in life. Also an important philatelic accessory, namely a Magnifying Glass is also a part of the special cancellation, which plays an important role in the life of a Philatelist. 'More stamps, Special covers on Lord Ganesha needs to be prepared by the Department of Posts, Government of India as several foreign countries such as Tajikistan, Nepal, Thailand, Indoensia, Sri Lanka, Czech Republic, Singapore and USA have released stamps on him. Only one country has Lord Ganesha's picture on their currency notes and it is not India. A picture of Lord Ganesha is inscribed on the 20,000 Rupiah note of Indonesia.' Dr Kumar, who is also the former M R Ramesh Kumar, former President of Goa Philately and Numismatics Society, said.