# Ganesha Sharanam

**Words and Music: Traditional Sanskrit Bhupali Raga**
**Movements: Malika Merrill Endres**

Key of C, Open Tuning



Ga - ne - sha sha - ra - nam, sha - ra - nam Ga - ne - sha,

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This Dance has an ABAC form, where movements 1&2 are A, 3&4 are B, and 5&6 are C. Part A alternates with parts B and C, as in the early Om Nama Shivaya Dance. The Dance ends nicely after movements 3 and 4 (and their repeats). This Dance may also be enjoyed without partners, with parts A and B only, especially for children.

1. In a circle, walk four steps in toward center. Begin with right foot on "Ga," left on "sha," right on "Shar," left on "nam." Hands are placed in front of the heart, palms facing away from the body; arms slowly extend forward (reaching a full extension by the end of the phrase) as one walks into the center. Arm movement is as if clearing one's path of "obstacles" (physical, mental, or emotional.)
2. Walk four steps back from center. Begin with right foot on "Shar," left on "nam," right on "ne," left on "sha". While walking back, arms lower and fan out a bit away from the body (palms face down and back), in a gesture on our part of sweeping the path clean.
Repeat 1 and 2.
3. With joined hands in the circle, walk four steps to the left (clockwise), beginning with the right foot crossing over (R-L-R-L); the body naturally turns slightly to the left as one joyfully walks the blessing path with the protection of the "Great Being."
4. Release hands, spin left (stepping R-L-R-L) with arms raised (at heart level or above), palms facing upward in an offering of gratitude to the "Opener of the Way."
Repeat 3 and 4.
[NOTE: The Dance may end here or continue to include the partner part.]
Repeat 1 and 2, two times.
5. Partners face one another (to begin a grand right and left). Extend right hand to first partner; walk past this partner in two steps (R-L), passing right shoulders on "Ganesha." Take left hands with second partner; walk past this partner in two steps (R-L), passing left shoulders on "sharanam," all the while enjoying the company of other open hearts on the path.
6. Spin right (stepping R-L-R-L), with arms raised at heart level or above, palms open in gratitude.
Repeat 5 and 6.

Jaya Ganesha! (Hail or Victory to Ganesha, the Remover of Obstacles, the Bestower of Blessing!)

# Commentary

Ganesha is one of the names for the Hindu deity Ganapati. He is the son of Parvati, consort to Lord Shiva. Ganesha is represented as an elephant-headed man and is known as the "Remover of Obstacles." He is a member of the great pantheon of Hindu deities. Ganesha is considered "first among the great" and presides over the vast assembly of gods and goddesses, each a personal representation of the one immanent God. He is a much-loved being who brings joy and blessings. One of the many stories of this beloved being is that if obstacles cannot be gotten rid of by other means, Ganesha will help by willingly placing them in his belly, which indeed is quite a large receptacle!

Ganesha is worshipped also as the "Opener of the Way" and the "Bestower of Blessing" (and by some accounts, the "Dispeller of Sorrow"). Before beginning any undertaking, be it a journey, a celebration, building a house, writing a book, reciting prayer slokas or chanting, one invokes the power and blessing of Ganesha to clear the way and be protected. His image adorns entrances of homes and sanctuaries throughout India.

According to Alain Danielou (in *The Gods of India*, Inner Traditions, 1964), the human part of Ganesha represents the human being or "divinity qualified," and the elephant part of him symbolizes God or "the Absolute Immensity." Danielou comments that Ganesha expresses a basic concept of the Hindu religion, namely, the unity of the manifest (the small being) and the unmanifest (the "Great Being").

"Sharanam" means to take refuge in or to ask for the protection of. "Ganesha Sharanam" translates generally as "I take refuge in Ganesha," or "I ask for the protection of Ganesha."

Jaya Ganesha! *(Hail or Victory to Ganesha!)*