

STATETIMES

SUNDAY

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Ananth Chaturdashi: Importance and Story Behind Ganesh Visarjan

On the fourteenth day of the lunar fortnight, 10 days after Ganesh Chaturthi, comes Anant Chaturdashi. It is also called Ganesh Visarjan and it is an important day not just for Hindus, but Jains as well. There is a significant reason behind celebrating Anant Chaturdashi 10 days after Ganesh Chaturthi. Lord Ganesha is invited by their devotees to their homes on Ganesh Chaturthi. For 10 days, the Lord is worshipped with utmost piety by the devotees. Thereby, after 10 days, on Anant Chaturdashi, his visit comes to an end. For his departure ceremony, he must be immersed in water, which in the Hindu is called Ganesh Visarjan.

It is also a day to worship God Anant. Those who believe take part in special prayers and then tie a holy thread on their wrist, taking an oath to the God Anant. In return, the god blesses them with prosperity and fortune.

Story Behind Ananth Chaturdashi

Once there was a girl named Sushila. Her father was a Brahmin named Sumant who remarried Karkash after Sushila's mother passed away. Karkash was not as nice Sushila and so when Sushila got married she decided to move away with her husband. Her husband was called Kaundinya and on their journey from her home they came upon a river. Kaundinya went for a bath and while he was bathing Sushila saw some women praying. She joined them and asked them about their worship. They explained that they were worshipping a god called "Anant", and when Sushila questioned them some more, they explained the significance on Anant's vow.

As she was starting a fresh life with her husband Sushila thought it best to pray with them and take the vow as Anant's blessings would surely help her husband and her in their new life. The women taught her the rituals and she took the vow, tying the ceremonial thread on her left hand (As is traditional for women. Men tie it on their right).

It seemed that Anant had truly blessed them for Sushila and Kaundinya prospered in life. One day Kaundinya questioned her on the thread she wore and she told him of her vow and Anant's blessing. He was not happy to hear she believed that and argued that all they had gained was due to his own hard work and intelligence. They both argued on this and took the Anant string from her hand and threw it in a fire.

After that several misfortune fell upon them and they were reduced to poverty. Finally, Kaundinya understood that their fortune was due to Anant and he underwent severe penance to find Anant and ask for forgiveness. When Anant revealed himself Kaundinya realised that Anant was just another name for God Vishnu, the Eternal one.

Significance:

Following the Cosmic Law

Hindus worship the supreme soul present in animate and inanimate. However, for many people it is not possible to worship this formlessness. They need a form to pray, seek help and take blessings. Since Ganesh is 'OM', the primordial sound, it is given a shape with the help of clay and water. People bring this idol at home and worship for ten days assuming that the lord is with them. After the celebrations are over, everyone has to follow the cosmic law which means that one that has been formed has to become formless again.

The Supreme Truth

Each year celebration of Ganesh Utsav shows us that even though forms change, the supreme truth remains the same. Body becomes energy for another, but the source of energy remains the same. Thus we create Ganesh out of clay, worship him and then later immerse him in water.

Eco-Friendly Ganesh Chaturthi and Ganesh Visarjan

People, who are environmental friendly make idol of Lord Ganesh out of clay and water and after worshipping for ten days, immerse the idol in artificial ponds created by environmentalists and different social organizations or a bucket of water and use the water for watering the plants. However, the process of Visarjan teaches us detachment and helps us realize that our body, for which we do a lot of things, will get reduced to base elements one day.

Ganesh festival is not just a ritual of Hindus, but also reminds us of protecting our environment. Therefore, according to the scriptures and traditions we should insist on making only clay idols of Lord Ganesh to be worshiped and then immersed in water. This will bless millions of people better health and better environment as well.

How to perform Ganpati Visarjan

These are some of the common doubts that many devotees have; The concept of Ganesh Chaturthi is that Ganesha comes to the home of his devotees on Ganesh Chaturthi day. He brings auspiciousness, hope, success and happiness to all homes. During His brief stay, He removes all obstacles. While returning He takes with him all problems and unhappiness.

Ganesh Visarjan Mantras:

There are no specific Ganesh Visarjan mantras. The only chant that is done is Ganpati Bappa Moriya...

You can also chant this prayer

Mushikavaahana modaka hastha,
Chaamara karna vilambitha sutra,
Vaamana rupa maheshwara putra,
Vighna vinaayaka paada namaste

O Vinayaka! The remover of all obstacles, the son of Lord Shiva, with a form which is very short, with mouse as Thy vehicle, with sweet pudding in hand, with wide ears and long hanging trunk, I prostrate at Thy lotus-like Feet!

Ganesh Visarjan Procedure:

Before taking Ganesh for Visarjan, You should perform Aarti. All the family members should be present. Usual Ganesh Mantras and Aarti prayers should be chanted.

On day of Visarjan, the day should start with the Pooja (Morning Aarti). We sing the Jai Ganesh Deva and Sukhkarta Dukkharta Aartis. After the Aarti, it is preferred to put 'Bhog' the Holy Prasad! which should be distributed among all the family members.

The visarjan ritual begins with the Uttarang puja which involves offering five items, namely deep (oil lamps), pushp (flowers), dhoop (incense), gandh (fragrance) and naivedya (food) to Ganpati.

When it is time for Visarjan, the family members should gather once again and perform the Visarjan Aarti before leaving the house. (the same aartis as mentioned above). After the Visarjan Aarti and distributing the prasad, one of the family member should very slowly and slightly move the Ganpati Murti, about 1 inch forward. This should be done just before leaving the house abt 5-10 mins before. This is an indication / significance to Him that the family is going to

take Him for Visarjan.

You should thank Ganesha for visiting your home. Thank him for bringing prosperity and auspiciousness. Thank him for taking away all difficulties with him. Ask for his pardon for any mistakes committed.

If you plan to bring Ganesh murti next year, then ask him to return. After this, all members of the household gather to sprinkle akshat or raw rice upon the lord.

Now a spoonful of curd is poured into Ganesh's outstretched palm because Hindus especially Maharashtrians believe that any guest who receives curd and rice is sure to visit again.

Take a red cloth, put sukha nariyal (half), stuff it with jaggery and 5 different grains, tie it in a knot and tie this around Ganesh ji's hand. This is the food prepared for His journey.

Ask for His blessings. The family then circumambulates Ganesh murti after which it is led for immersion.

Take some water and sprinkle it on the person performing the Visarjan.

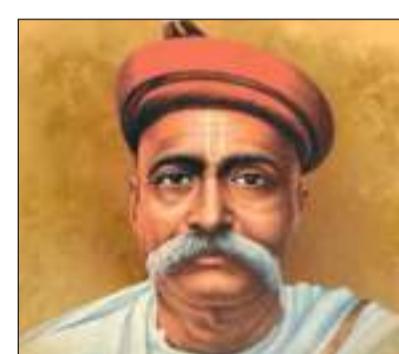
When the family is ready to take Ganeshji for Visarjan, the family members must pick up the Ganesh Murti and take Him around the House, mainly the master bedrooms and the kitchen so that His Holy Feet and Blessings are taken around the full house. Other people around can chant Ganapati Bappa Moriya... and other Ganeshia chants.

Once the murti is lifted up do not place it at home. Walk out of home and move towards the immersion point.

Upon exiting the house, or the building, one family member must take a Coconut and circle on the head of the Murti three times and break the coconut on the ground and leave it aside. (this one is not to be distributed as prasad) and cane be immersed in the waters the same day.

At home, place the sandli at the spot where Ganeshji was sitting, and you can remove the decoration the next day. The supari and rice which was kept under Ganpati ji, should also be immersed the next day. The money which was kept under the sandli can be used for any Holy purpose like poor feeding etc. The Akhand Jyot, Diya which was lit continuous, can be kept in your temple from the next day onwards. Some people choose to let it be on for 10 days of Ganesh Chaturthi.

The Lesser-Known Political Past of 'Ganpati Visarjan'



Deafening beats of cymbals that you can't help but tap your feet to, pandals on every corner and men in Nehru caps navigating traffic, cardboard boxes filled with modaks and celebration all around — Ganesh Chaturthi is one of the few occasions that successfully slow down the usually hurried Mumbaiaks and their fast-paced lifestyles.

The month of September (and on occasions, August) is when the whole of India, especially Maharashtra is abuzz with the preparations and festivities that come with celebrating Lord Ganesh's birth. However, off late a lot is being said about the inconvenience that comes along with the chaotic processions and boisterous celebrations that are characteristic to this festival. These debates have caused a divide of sorts between those who believe that Ganpati celebrations are probably the 'common-man's' only chance to let his hair down and those who feel that the nuisance accompanying the festivities just isn't worth the trouble. What most don't know is that this fragmentation goes entirely against the reasons that led to Ganesh Chaturthi turning into the decorated affair it has come to be.

Many say that the origins of celebrating Lord Ganesh's birth can be traced to as far back as 271 BC when the Satavahana, Rashtrakuta and Chalukya dynasties were still in power, while others suggest that the festivities were Chatrapati Shivaji's way of promoting culture and instilling feelings of nationalism among Indian citizens. However, what isn't spoken about enough is how this occasion, which at the time of inception was nothing more than a quiet family affair has transformed into a celebration where all strata of society come together to rejoice.

The man responsible for this radical transformation is one of the more prominent Indian freedom fighters — Bal Gangadhar Tilak. It was in 1857, post the Sepoy Mutiny that Tilak realised the dire need for uniting the citizens of India, who were divided thanks to the rigid caste system. Ganesh Chaturthi was one occasion when no one gave hierarchy a second thought, all that mattered was the faith, fervour and joy with which the proceedings of this auspicious occasion were carried out. Tilak recognised this sentiment and its potential power to bring together a country that stood divided at a time when unity was all that was needed.

In 1893, Tilak introduced India to what is now referred to as Ganpati Visarjan, as a way to unite Indians from all walks of life. He went around the city of Pune, plastering the town with posters and hoardings of the deity. He spread the message and brought people together to celebrate, and this phenomenon was more than infectious and spread to other parts of the country like wild fire.

That's how Ganesh Utsav, as it was referred to then, became a meeting ground for people. It also facilitated social and political gatherings at a time when the British government had banned public meetings of any sort. Tilak's move of identifying this loophole in order to promote Indian nationalism and congregate without raising suspicion was nothing less than a stroke of genius.

Today, more than a century later, it is difficult to believe that this festival that brings hordes of people out on the streets was at one point just another festival that was marked by a mere puja at home. Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations in the present-day are marked by the unparalleled turnout and by strangers rejoicing together like long-lost friends. It is this time of year when everyone gorges on delicacies from the same pandal without a second's worth of thought wasted on gauging differences.

