Origin of Ganesha Visarjana
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Deodhar, S.K. Lokmanya Tilak from Maharashtra, who first raised the banner for Indian independence and freedom from British rule, gave the call around 1910 to celebrate the Ganesh festival as a public puja, so as to mobilize people to come together to build up a strong, united India, based on her holy traditions and scriptural teachings.

Since then, people observe the festival, both at home and in public, with options of 1[?] days to 5, 7 or 10 days. The tenth day is Ananta Chaturdasi, which coincides with the puja to Ananta, the Holy Serpent.

The tenth-day immersion procession is truly spectacular in many cities, when thousands of idols are taken to the sea or river with a lot of music, dance, rejoicing, street-chariots and decorations. These continue often throughout the tenth night, up to the eleventh day morning.

Ganeshotsava is the popular name for the festival, but Gajanana and Ganapathi are also used. The festival is observed on the fourth day of the moon (chaturthi) in the month of Bhadrapada (September), or in the month of Magha (January). The former - which is most popular in Maharashtra - is known as Ganesh Chaturthi, while the latter is known as Ganesh Jayanthi.

The story goes that once when Lord Siva was out and far away, his wife. Goddess Parvati, wanted to sit in meditation at home for a long period, undisturbed by anyone; so she built a beautiful idol out of mud, and created life in it by invoking the Sanjeevani Mantram. She then placed this living idol at the entrance of her home and sat for prolonged meditation. In between, Lord Siva returned home. When prevented to go inside by the living mud-guard. Lord Siva was angry and beheaded the guard with his Trisula.

Parvati was grief-stricken; She loved the idol, as if it was Her son, and She entreated Lord Siva to fit back the head again, so that Her dead son would become alive. Lord Siva then roamed through the Himalayan forests. He came across a head of an elephant, which was alive; He picked it up, came home and pressed it on the dead body, which came to life with the elephant head as Lord Ganesha.

The day on which Parvati created the guard, and started Her meditation, was the fourth day of Bhadrapada, while the day on which Lord Siva fitted the elephant head was the fourth day in the month of Magha. Both days are celebrated.

The celebration consists of bringing an earthen idol from the market and doing puja in the traditional style as you would do for a respected guest who comes to your home. When it is time for a guest to depart, we offer him gifts and food for his travel. Then we accompany him up to the border of the village, which is often a small stream or rivulet; as the guest enters the water of the stream, we bid him goodbye and return home.

This old tradition is observed in the Ganesha festival, by immersing the earthen idol in the river, sea or tank and people returning home when the idol is immersed. The observance was originally for one and one-half days; bringing the idol on the first day, doing the puja, rejoicing and immersing it on the second day. But later, many people increased the period to celebrate the festival with more joy, devotion, music, religious talks, etc.

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