

[Pancha Ganapati](#)

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Pancha Ganapati

December's Five-Day Family Home Festival

Pancha Ganapati is a modern Hindu festival of the Five-Faced Maha Ganapati--Lord of Categories. This festival falls during the thirty days of the Markali Pillaiyar home festival and lasts for five days--from December 21st through 25th.

The winter solstice has always been a festive time of year in all countries, religions and among Hindus especially, for it is a traditional season for the worship of Lord Ganesha. Hindus living in largely Christian countries often find it difficult to relate in a meaningful way to those who celebrate Christmas. Pancha Ganapati is a Hindu expression of this natural season of worship, gift-giving and celebration.

The Pancha Ganapati Shrine

Pancha Ganapati is a contemporary home observance. A festive shrine is created in the main living room of the home especially for the five-day event. At the center is placed a large wooden or bronze five-faced of Lord Pancha Ganapati. If this is not available, then any large murti or picture of Lord Ganesha will do. The home shrine is decorated in the spirit of this festive season. Lord Ganesha is often depicted as coming from the forest; therefore, pine boughs or banana leaves may be used. Durva grass, sugar cane, garlands of sweet modaka

balls are used to decorate the home shrine. Flashing lights, tinsel and colorful hanging ornaments may also be added.

Pancha Ganapati is dressed anew each morning, preferably by the children, in a special color for that particular day. He appears in golden yellow on December 21st. A regal gown of royal blue is presented to Him on December 22nd and one of ruby red on the 23rd. On December 24th He appears in emerald green, and on the final day Lord Pancha Ganapati comes forth in brilliant orange to bless all who visit Him.

Pancha Ganapati is celebrated in a distinctly Hindu way, without Christmas trees, Santa Claus or symbols of other religions. Season's greeting cards should be Hindu in design and content. Season's greetings to friends in other religions can continue with thoughts of Hindu wisdom or quotes from Hindu scripture. If properly chosen they will be appreciated and cherished.

Pancha Ganapati Activities

Pancha Ganapati is a joyous time for the family and should include outings, picnics, holiday feasts, exchange of cards and gifts with relatives, friends and business associates. Each day a traditional offering tray of sweets, fruits and incense is offered to Pancha Ganapati. It may be prepared and presented by the children of the home. Gifts should be given to the children each of these five days. They place them unopened before Pancha Ganapati. After each puja, the sweets are given to them from the offering tray as prasada.

During the five days of Pancha Ganapati, chants, songs, hymns and bhajanas are sung in His praise. A different family sadhana each day is focused upon. Sadhanas to be performed can include the following.

DECEMBER 21

The family sadhana for the first day of Pancha Ganapati is to create a vibration of love and harmony among the immediate family members. The day begins early and the entire family works together to design and decorate the shrine with traditional symbols, rangoli, lamps and more. When it is finished, a grand puja is performed invoking the spirit of Pancha Ganapati. The sadhana of the day now begins. The family sits together for the purpose of easing strained relationships that have arisen during the year. They make amends one with another for misdeeds performed, insults given, mental pain and injuries caused and suffered. When forgiveness is offered to all by one and all, they speak of each other's good qualities. Gifts are then exchanged and placed unopened before Pancha Ganapati. Family harmony is important to all Hindus.

DECEMBER 22

The family sadhana for the second day of Pancha Ganapati is to create a vibration of love and harmony among neighbors, relatives and close friends. This is the day for presenting gifts to next-door neighbors, relatives that live in the area and close friends. The sadhana of the day is to offer apologies and clear up misunderstandings. Relatives and friends living in far-off places are written to or called, forgiveness is sought, apologies made and tensions released. As on the other four days, all gifts received today are placed unopened before Pancha Ganapati.

DECEMBER 23

The family sadhana for the third day of Pancha Ganapati is to create a vibration of love and harmony among business associates, the casual merchant and the public at large. This is the day for presenting gifts to merchants, customers and to honor employers and employees with gifts and appreciation. The sadhana today is the settling of all debts and disputes.

DECEMBER 24

The family sadhana for the fourth day of Pancha Ganapati is to create a vibration of love and harmony, bringing forth the vibration of joy that comes from music, art, drama and the dance. The family, relatives and friends gather for satsanga to share and enjoy their individual artistic gifts. When the program is over, all sit together discussing the traditional values of Hindu dharma. Then, before Pancha Ganapati, Patron of the Arts and Guardian of Culture, plans are made for the year ahead to bring more of these refinements of living into the home.

DECEMBER 25

The family sadhana for the fifth and final day of Pancha Ganapati is to bring forth love and harmony within all three worlds. Because of sadhanas well performed during the first four days, the family members are now more open and aware of His Grace. Their love for Him is now overflowing. On this day the entire family experiences a climax of an outpouring of love and tranquility from the God Himself. His blessings fill the home and the hearts of everyone within it, inspiring them anew for the coming year. This exchange of affection between all members of the family and the Lord is invoked and

perpetuated through the day by performing five special pujas. The first puja is at 6am. Before the puja, personal offering trays are prepared and placed before His shrine. After the puja, each one gives verbal testimony about prayers that were answered during the past year. Then vows of sacrifice can be verbally made. Vows should improve the quality of the life of the individual, such as giving up smoking or correcting other harmful habits.

The second puja is at 9am, and the third at 12 noon. The fourth puja is held at 3pm. At 6pm the fifth and final puja of the day is held. These five pujas to Pancha Ganapati solicit help from His devas in the home and establish the patterns for improvement in family life.

The evening puja is the long awaited time. The five sadhanas have been completed. Peace, love and harmony among everyone has been restored. After the puja and before the great feast that follows, Lord Panchamukha Ganapati Himself gives His final darshana and prasada to one and all. Gifts are distributed and joyously opened. Happy children. Happy parents. Happy God.

May we worship Ganapati, the Protector of Noble People, the Best Poet, the Most Honorable, the Greatest Ruler and the Treasure of all Knowledge. O Ganapati! Please listen to us and take Your seat in our heart. -- Rig Veda, 2.23.

There is nothing higher than dharma. Verily, that which is dharma is Truth--Shukla Yajur Veda, Brihadaranayaka Upanishad 1.4.14

