

ACVA Newsletter 2025-08 – Holy Days



By Professor Juliana Swanson
ACVA Provost and Dean of Academics

Ganesh Chaturthi

Ganesh Chaturthi is a Vedic holy day that commemorates the birth of Lord Ganesh, who is also known as Ganesha, Ganapati, or Vinayaka. His sacred birthday celebration always occurs on the fourth day that follows the New Moon in the Vedic lunar month of *Bhadrapada* (which takes place from August 23 to September 21 this year). Cultural festivities as well as pious observances like pujas make up a big part of this important celebration which can go on for up to ten days. Ganesh brings forth a multitude of divine blessings for his devotees during this time.



Ganesh is invoked first in Vedic rituals because he is the lord of new beginnings. He has been depicted in a variety of forms that always include his enormous elephant head, big ears, and four arms. He is widely esteemed as the remover of obstacles, the giver of boons, the deva of wisdom and intelligence, a benefactor of writers and teachers, and the patron of arts and sciences.

Ganesh is the patron of Vedic astrology, and Vedic astrologers pray to him to invoke his wisdom and guidance. According to legend, Lord Shiva taught astrology to his consort Parvati, and she taught it to her second-born son, Ganesh, who therefore became in charge of astrology. He is also known as "*Graha Pati*," lord of all the *grahas* (planets). Any of his mantras may be repeated to remove afflictions from any planet. His mantras are helpful to remove anxiety and fear, and to enhance prosperity and peace of mind. His name Ganapati (Gana Pati) is translated as the "Lord of the Ganas (Categories)" because he oversees all the classifications between the microcosm and macrocosm.

Ganesh is an aspect of the Divine Power and the inner guardian to our spiritual being. He resides in our root center, the *muladhara* chakra, and therefore He also resides in the roots of the trees and within the forces of gravity on the Earth. When we walk in nature, we can feel our connection to Ganesh in our own energy roots and their connection deep in the Earth. He is closer to us and perhaps more accessible on Earth than any other aspect of God. We literally walk on him while he is holding us up! Reciting his mantras during a walk can be highly beneficial for centering and grounding.



Swami Sivananda gave us important guidance for celebrating Ganesh Chaturthi in *Hindu Fasts and Festivals* (hyperlink: <https://www.dlshq.org/download/hindu-fasts-festivals/>):

On Ganesh Chaturthi, meditate on the stories connected with Lord Ganesh early in the morning, during the Brahmamuhurta period. Then, after taking a bath, go to the temple and do the prayers of Lord Ganesh. Offer Him some coconut and sweet pudding. Pray with faith and

devotion that he may remove all the obstacles that you experience on the spiritual path. You can worship him at home, too. Have an image of Ganesh in your house. Feel his presence in it. Take fresh spiritual resolve and pray to Lord Ganesh for inner spiritual strength to attain success in all your undertakings. May the blessings of Sri Ganesh be upon you all! May he remove all the obstacles that stand in your spiritual path! May he bestow on you all material prosperity as well as liberation.

Happy Birthday, Sri Ganesh! Jai Ganesh! *Om Gam Ganapataye Namah!* Blessings to all!