

[Daddy, Why Don't We Have Christmas?](#)

Category : [January 1995](#)

Published by Anonymous on Jan. 02, 1995

Publisher's Desk

Daddy, Why Don't We Have Christmas?

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That question was heard in so many Hindu homes we visited that some years ago in cooperation with scholars and elders an alternative for Christmas was conceived. It's interesting that in 1966 the Afro-American community created Kwanzaa, a social, Black identity, earth-based festival celebrated each year from December 26 to January 1. Our own Pancha Ganapati is a festival to the five-faced elephant God. It is five days of gift-giving and festivities within the home, especially for the children. There is no need for a tree (eco advocates appreciate this), nor wreaths, nor a Santa. Lord Ganesha does it all in five days of merriment and mirth. Those who have taken up this home festival from December 21st through the 25th have enjoyed it year after year. It can include outings, picnics, feasts, exchange of cards and gifts with relatives, friends and business associates. Each day a tray of sweets, fruits and incense is offered to Pancha Ganapati, often prepared and presented by the children. Chants, songs and bhajanas are sung in His praise. After puja, sweets are shared as prasada. Each day gifts are given to the children, who place them before Pancha Ganapati to open only on the fifth day. Greeting cards are exchanged, always offering Hindu wisdom or verse from scripture.

During each of the five days a different sadhana is focused upon by the entire family. Because of the importance of this festival as a new beginning and mending of all mistakes of the past, a festive shrine is created in the main living room of the home. At the center is placed a large wooden or bronze five-faced statue of Lord Pancha Ganapati. If this is not available, a large picture of Lord Ganesha will do. Each morning the children dress or decorate Ganesha anew in a different color: golden yellow on December 21, then ruby red, royal blue, emerald green and finally brilliant orange. These are the colors of His five powers or shaktis, adored by all.

Day One: The sadhana for the first day is to create a vibration of love and harmony among the immediate family. The day begins early as all work to design and decorate the shrine with traditional symbols, rangoli, lamps and more. After a grand puja invoking the spirit of Pancha Ganapati, the family sits together to share their love. If strained relationships have arisen during the year, they make amends for misdeeds performed, insults misspoken, mental pain and injuries caused and suffered. Gifts are then exchanged and placed unopened before Pancha Ganapati.

Day Two: The second day is devoted to creating a vibration of love and harmony among neighbors, relatives and close friends, giving gifts and offering apologies to clear up any misunderstandings. Those living far off are written to or called, forgiveness is sought and tensions released.

Day Three: On the third day the family works to create a vibration of love and harmony among business associates, casual merchants and even the public. This is the day for presenting gifts and showing appreciation to merchants, customers, employers and employees. The sadhana today is to settle debts and disputes.

Day Four: The sadhana for day four is to draw forth the vibration of joy and harmony that comes from music, art, drama and the dance. Family, relatives and friends gather for satsanga to share and enjoy everyone's artistic gifts. Then all sit together before Ganesha, Patron of Arts and Guardian of Culture, discussing Hindu Dharma and making plans to bring more of cultural refinements into the home.

Day Five: The sadhana for the final day is to bring forth love and harmony within all three worlds. Because of sadhanas well performed during the first four days, everyone is now intensely aware of Ganesha's grace and their love for Him is overflowing. On this day the entire family experiences an outpouring of fondness and tranquility from the God Himself. His blessings fill the home and 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. These pujas to Pancha Ganapati solicit help from His devas in the home and establish the patterns for improvement in family life.

The overflowing love felt today will inspire generosity in the year to come, bringing abundance and good fortune. The first puja is at 6am, after which each one present gives verbal testimony about prayers answered during the past year. Hearing testimony strengthens the faith of everyone. Then vows of sacrifice can be verbally made to improve the quality of life, such as giving up smoking or other harmful habits. The second puja is at 9am, the third at noon, and the fourth at 3pm. The last puja, held at 6pm, 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, Panchamukha Ganapati gives His final darshana and prasada to one and all. Gifts are distributed and joyously opened. Happy children. Happy parents. Happy God.