

[Bye Bye Ganesha!](#)

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Bye Bye Ganesha!

Lokamanya Tilak would be amazed. In 1896, this Maharashtran freedom fighter rallied his countrymen to make Ganesha Chaturthi festival so big and public it would unite India's diverse Hindu communities in the dim days of British rule. Today independence long since won, Lokmanya's vision has spread around the globe. Small pockets of resettled Hindus now employ the buoyant festival to further Hindu harmony, transcend linguistic parochialism, and meet on a common wavelength Ganesha, revered by all sects

Ganesha Visarajana is the 10th day of Ganesha Chaturthi, a festival commencing on chaturthi, the fourth day of Bhadrapada (September). On this last day, homemade, decorated clay images of Ganesha that have been worshipped in the home or temple, are ceremoniously paraded to the nearest body of water - ocean, river or well. After a final visarjana "farewell" puja the God of Wisdom is immersed - symbolizing His reabsorption into the all-pervasive, energy substratum of life.

Bombay is prestigiously the greatest of all Visarjana sites. Shops close as the worldly megapolis falls under Ganesha's devotional spell and hundred's of giant Ganeshas careen down lane and boulevard to the Indian Ocean. Sounds of every source - horn, can, conch, drum, flute and bell - mix in wild medley. Mrs. Sharma of California fondly remembers her favorite pan of the day "As children, we would all go around to all different homes to see as many Ganeshas as we could, sing one bhajan and receive some modakas (sweets)." It was friendly competition, she explains, just one aspect of a fun-filled day of religious companionship. Mr. Sharma remembers in his hometown of Udupi the royal family sponsored the pageant-like festival: "Lastly, Ganesha was ceremoniously taken out to the middle of the lake in a fishing boat with a priest and twenty or so devotees. Conches were blowing and many boats followed it." In the 50%-Hindu, French-speaking island of Mauritius, Marathis stay up all night on Visarjana eve. It's party time. Bhajan, pujas and frivolity blend as the happy-go-lucky nature of Lord Ganesha gets fully invoked. Californian Hindus converge below their Golden Gate for a full day of dance, song and puja, culminating when home-crafted Ganeshas are carried into the icy, pounding waves of the Pacific. The mayor of San Francisco has accepted an

invitation to attend this year. Other Visarjana locations outside India include: Houston, Texas; Johor Baru, Malaysia and, for the first time, Australia.

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