

## Ganesh Visarjan

Widespread campaigns are already on for an eco-friendly Ganesh Chaturthi festival but still a large section of the society are unaware of the pollution and environmental damage caused by Plaster of Paris idols and chemical paints. Some large Ganesh Pandal committees, to attract maximum crowd conveniently forget the environmental impact caused by the idols. In 2009, date of Ganesh Chaturthi festival is August 23.

The main pollution is caused by the Plaster of Paris Ganesh idols and the chemical paints used in them.



- Plaster of Paris (POP) is not a naturally occurring material and contains gypsum, sulphur, phosphorus and magnesium. The idols take several months to dissolve in water and in the process poison the waters of lake, ponds, rivers and seas.
- The chemical paints used to decorate the Ganesh idol contain mercury, lead, cadmium and carbon and this increases the acidity and heavy metal content in the water.

- Several accessories used during the Ganesh Puja like Thermocole, plastic flowers, cloth, incense, camphor and numerous other materials are dumped carelessly adding more strain to the already polluted rivers and lakes.



- Careless dumping of Ganesh idols in water bodies blocks the natural flow of water. This results in stagnation and breeding of mosquitoes and other harmful pests.



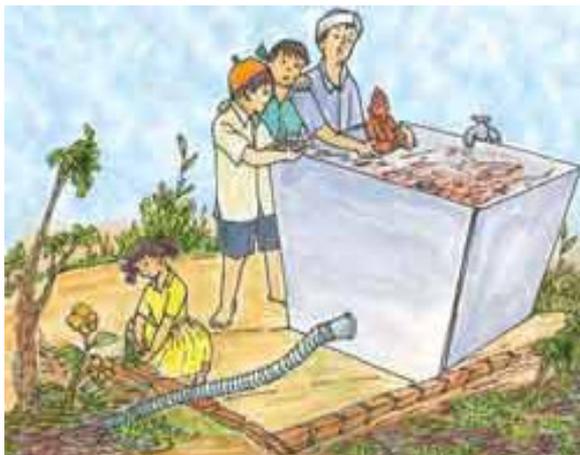
- The polluted water causes several diseases including skin diseases.
- The pollution from Ganesh Chaturthi idols also damages the ecosystem, kills fishes

and water plants.

- In many areas, the same polluted water gets pumped into homes.

Ganesh Chaturthi festival ends with the Visarjan or immersion of the idols in water. Ganesh visarjan ceremony normally takes place on the Ananta Chaturdasi day, which falls 12 days after the Ganesh Chaturthi day. In 2009, date of Ganesh Visarjan as per tradition is on September 3. But there are people who do the immersion ceremony before the main Visarjan day of Ananta Chaturdasi.

There are no strict rules; usually the Ganesh Visarjan ceremony depends on family tradition. Symbolically, Lord Ganesha visits the home on Ganesh Chaturthi day and it is for the family to decide when they want to give him the farewell.



There are several families that perform the Ganesh Visarjan ceremony on the very next day after Vinayaka Chaturthi. Other dates that are chosen for Ganapati immersion are 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th (the Ananta Chaurdasi day after Ganesh Chaturthi).

Please make sure that you do not immerse any plastic waste along with the clay Ganesha idol and be proudly part of the eco-friendly Ganesh festival. Use clay idol and immerse only the soluble parts. You can also symbolically sprinkle water on the Ganesh idol. You can also immerse Ganesha in a bucket of water at home and then use it to water plants. If you are using idol of metal, then it can be reused next year.

### **Alternatives:**

- Use eco-friendly clay idols painted with natural colors.
- Use permanent idols made of stone and perform a symbolic immersion and reuse the idol each year.
- Avoid public water bodies to immerse the idols, instead immerse idol in bucket or tub.

