

# Ganesh Chaturthi

One of the most anticipated and lively festivals in India, Sri Ganesha Chaturthi is dedicated to the beloved elephant-headed god, Ganesha. Worshipped throughout the world wherever large Indian populations are found, the fervent devotion and colorful celebrations which attend this festival reveal just how vital Ganesha is to the spiritual heartbeat of India.

Even though each Hindu deity represents only a few aspects of the one Lord, devotees in India naturally tend to hold dearest one form more than another, for instance maybe Shiva more than Krishna, or Rama more than Kali, etc. However, all easily love and worship Lord Ganesha. He is said to be the remover of obstacles and a bringer of good fortune. Add to this His plump belly and cheerful nature, and it's no wonder that everyone adores Him! Therefore, before any worship is offered, or beginning any undertaking whatsoever, Ganesha is propitiated. This is why His image is found in all temples and on all altars. His blessings ensure smooth sailing!

As with all of the Hindu deities, the symbolism of Ganesha is multi-layered and profound. He represents Pranava, the seed syllable OM. Just as Ganesha comes first before the other gods, OM comes at the beginning of all other mantras. The symbol for OM even resembles an elephant head! OM represents the Nada, the original substratum of Creation, from which all else arises. That substratum is identical to our essential nature, the Self. Usually depicted riding a mouse (the ego), Ganesha represents the Self in its complete conquest over egoism. He is also depicted holding an ankusha (goad), which represents His Lordship over the entire world.

There is a symbolic story that tells of how Ganesha came by His elephant head, and received the honor of being worshipped before all of the other gods.

Traditionally held to be Ganesha's birthday, the Chaturthi day itself falls on the 4th day of the bright fortnight of Bhadrapada\* (August-September). It is preceded by over a week of pujas, bhajans and cultural programs. A clay idol of Ganesha is made and worshipped on all of the festival days with prayers and devotional songs. The festivities culminate with the Ganesha Visarjan, where the idol is carried in a procession to the sea, river, or other large body of water, to be ceremonially immersed. The symbolism of this immersion ceremony reveals that at the heart of worship of different deities there remains the profound understanding that all forms are temporary, having both their origin and final destination in the formless Absolute.

\*Bhadrapada is a Hindu lunar month.



## M.A. CENTER SATSANG

SEPTEMBER 15, 2007 BULLETIN

[www.amma.org/bayarea](http://www.amma.org/bayarea)

*If we focus on the eternal,  
we will remain unaffected by  
the changing experiences of life. – Amma*

Mata Amritanandamayi Center (M. A. Center)  
10200 Crow Canyon Road; Castro Valley, CA 94552  
Tel: 510.537.9417 Website: [www.amma.org](http://www.amma.org)

To have an announcement included in this bulletin please send to: Richard Morey, richardmorey@sbcglobal.net by Friday noon.

WELCOME to M.A. Center, a spiritual home for devotees throughout the Bay Area. Let us know if you have any questions, and feel free to join us for any of our programs!

### THIS EVENING'S PROGRAM SCHEDULE

5:00 pm – Chanting the 1,000 Names of the Divine Mother  
6:00 pm – 108 Names of Mata Amritanandamayi & Meditation  
6:30 pm – Spiritual talk  
7:30 pm – Bhajans (devotional singing)  
8:45 pm – Arati & Closing Prayers  
9:00 pm – Dinner

The bookstore and library will be open after this evening's program, and join us for a delicious vegetarian dinner on the balcony. We also have a bake sale on the balcony after Satsang, with the proceeds going to building homes for the poor.

### UPCOMING M.A CENTER SCHEDULE

*In addition our Saturday evening programs, the following special events will be held at the M.A. Center. All events are held in Amrita Hall unless otherwise noted.*

**This evening we are celebrating Ganesha Chaturthi**, the birthday of Lord Ganesha, remover of obstacles and bringer of good fortune. We are having a puja in celebration of Ganesha Chaturthi.

**Sunday, Sept. 16** *Yoga Day Retreat*; 10 am – 5 pm; For more information and to register go to: <http://www.amma.org/events/yoga-retreat.html>

**Friday, September 21** *Puja & Visarjana (Immersion) of Lord Ganesha in Ashram Pond*, followed by bhajans; 7:30 pm

**Saturday, September 22** *Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique® Refresher Course*; 3:15 – 4:45 pm.

**Saturday, September 22** *Fall Equinox Celebration*; 4:00-5:00 pm at the Ashram Labyrinth (on the hill behind the Mandapam-dining hall by the pond). There will be a Crystal Bowl and flute concert, walking meditation, and a small ceremony to express our gratitude to Amma in the form of Mother Earth.

**Wednesday, September 26** *Live Webcast with Amma*; 8:30 pm (tentative time).

**Thursday, September 27**, *Amma's 54<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration – all day event.*

**Sunday, September 30** *Amma's Birthstar Puja*; 6:00 pm.

**Saturday, October 6** *Dances of Universal Peace*; 3:00 – 5:00 pm.

**Friday, October 12 – Saturday, October 20** *Navaratri Celebration, nightly pujas, 7:30 pm (except Saturdays at 6:00 pm); weekdays in the Main House Puja Room; Friday-Sunday in Amrita Hall.*

**Saturday – Sunday, October 13-14** *Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique® course* will be taught. Online registration will be available soon. Tel: 510.537.9417/Email: [iam@ammachi.org](mailto:iam@ammachi.org).

**Saturday, October 13** *Newcomers Tea & Tour*; 4:00 – 6:00 pm.

**Sunday, October 21** *Vijayadasami Puja*; 9:00 am.

### ONGOING M.A. CENTER PROGRAMS

**Regular Evening Programs** Evening bhajans are held each weekday evening at 8:00 pm in the Main House Puja Room.

**Saturday Morning IAM Practice** from 9 – 10 am in the Main House Puja Room. IAM practitioners, start Saturday seva with IAM group guided practice. Get questions answered. Renew and deepen your practice.

**Saturday Seva (selfless service)** We do a variety of service projects during the day, including sorting medical supplies, working on the facilities, gardening, chopping vegetables, etc. We begin at 9 am; lunch is provided for everyone involved at 1 pm; then we continue until 5 pm. Everyone is warmly invited to join us for any or all of the day.

**Hatha Yoga** classes are held Saturdays, 4:30 – 5:45 pm, in the Main House Puja Room.

**Amrita Bala Kendra Program** This program for children ages 4 –12 is held every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month from 3:30 – 5:30 pm. For additional information and to register, please contact Sudhir Aggarwal at [aggarwal3@gmail.com](mailto:aggarwal3@gmail.com) or at 818-262-3895.

**Prayer List** At the end of each Saturday evening program, we read a “prayer list.” If you would like to add someone to the list, please send their name to [prayers@amma.org](mailto:prayers@amma.org).

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**Attention all MASSAGE THERAPISTS!** There are many opportunities for seva throughout the year for you. We need massage therapists to volunteer to do 15-30 minute treatments both at the MA Center during retreats and out in the community at our Amma booths at local fairs and festivals. If you are interested in being on the resource list for this, please email Valsala at [valsala108@yahoo.com](mailto:valsala108@yahoo.com) with your information.

**Tuesday, October 16** **The MA Center is part of Interfaith-San Ramon Valley**, (I-SRV) as a way to participate in activities and discussions which will foster a deeper understanding of, and communication between, different faith communities in our local area.

One area of focus for the group is to address homeless issues in the Tri-Valley region. Surprisingly, there are upwards of 7000 people who are homeless in Contra Costa County alone. Many are families with children.

On Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup> is an all-day event called Project Homeless Connect. 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM at Willow Pass Center, 2748 East Olivera Road, in Concord.

Our help is needed for this one day, one-stop shop to offer a variety of services to people experiencing homelessness by connecting them with benefits, medical care, counseling, social services, shelter and other services. Volunteers will help in the following ways: Help people complete applications, greet and route people, provide translation, serve food, or provide services.

To volunteer, contact 925 313-6124. Be sure to let them know that you found out through the MA Center, part of the San Ramon Valley Interfaith group.

Perhaps devotees can carpool and plan to spend all or part of the day serving in this meaningful way. If you are able to help, please network together and participate with other faith communities in our area in helping those who are down and out during these times.

Please see a flyer about the day's event at this url:

[http://www.cchealth.org/services/homeless/pdf/homeless\\_connect2\\_2007.pdf](http://www.cchealth.org/services/homeless/pdf/homeless_connect2_2007.pdf)