



Saraswati Puja/Vasant Panchami

Saraswati Puja/Vasant Panchami, is a Hindu festival dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, the deity of knowledge, wisdom, learning, arts, and music. It is celebrated on the 'fifth day' (Sanskrit: Panchami) of the Hindu month of Magha (January–February), marking the arrival of 'Spring' (Sanskrit: Vasanta). On this sacred day, students and devotees worship the goddess seeking her blessings for wisdom, creativity, and success for both their families and themselves. Anyone can join to seek the

blessings of the goddess, irrespective of race, religion, or culture in this sacred and inclusive gathering.

Significance:

- **According to Hindu mythology:** Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe, felt that his creation was incomplete. He wanted wisdom and knowledge to bring life and meaning to the world. To fulfill this wish, he exhaled a sacred breath, and from his breath appeared Goddess Saraswati.
- **Goddess Saraswati:** Worshipped for wisdom, learning, and creativity, Saraswati is often depicted seated on a swan, holding a veena (a musical instrument) and sacred scriptures. She represents kindness and wisdom, teaching us that knowledge is valuable only when we remain humble and calm.

Rituals and Traditions:

- **Saraswati Idol or Picture:** People place idols or pictures of Goddess Saraswati in their homes, schools, and temples.
- **Yellow Color:** Vasant Panchami marks the arrival of spring, a season when nature comes alive with vibrant yellow flowers and the warm glow of the bright yellow sun. Yellow is the festival's theme, as it is considered Goddess Saraswati's favorite color. Yellow, symbolizing energy, knowledge, and prosperity, dominates the festival. People wear yellow clothes, prepare yellow-colored dishes like turmeric rice and use yellow flowers in decorations.
- **Significance for students:** On this auspicious day, students seek the blessings of Goddess Saraswati for their tools of learning and creativity. Traditionally, students take a break from their studies and offer their books, art supplies, musical instruments, and other learning tools to the goddess, asking for her divine blessings in their respective fields.
- **First Writing ceremony:** A special tradition on this day is introducing young children to learning. Parents encourage their little ones to write their first words in a ceremony called "Haat-e Khodi" or "Khadi-Chuan" or "Vidya-Arambha". This moment is celebrated with great joy as children take their first step toward education under the guidance of the goddess.
- **Havan (Sacred Fire Ritual):** Devotees perform a havan or puja, chanting Saraswati mantras like "Om Saraswati Namaha" and offering prayers.
- **Prasad:** Offerings of sweets, fruits, and yellow-colored foods (like turmeric or saffron rice) are distributed as prasad.

Celebrations Across India:

- **Eastern India (Bengal, Odisha, Assam):** Celebrated with grandeur in schools and households, with students performing cultural programs and organizing Saraswati puja.
- **North India:** Known as Vasant Panchami, it also marks the start of the spring season, with kite flying being a popular activity.
- **South India:** Saraswati Puja is celebrated during Navaratri as part of the nine-day festival.
- **West India:** Associated with agricultural and seasonal significance.

The festival is a blend of devotion, learning, and creativity, symbolizing the power of knowledge and the beauty of spring and the promise of new beginnings.