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Ganesh Chaturthi

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Ganesh Chaturthi

Holiday Customs

Informant:

Nikhil Shivanand Math has been one of my family's friend for some time now. One of my favorite things about him is that he has a different perspective of the world. Specifically, because his family originated in a small-town, Dharwad, India. His mother and father immigrated in 1995 and just a short year later, Nikhil was born. He currently resides in Logan, Utah where he was born and raised. Nikhil is a very loud and humorous guy who lives life to the fullest.

Context:

Dharwad was established in 1855 and is a small city found in Karnataka, India. The meaning behind the name of the town means a place of rest from a state of exhaustion or travel. Dharwad is located on the edge of Western Ghats mountains and hence is a mountainous environment. There are many different God's and religions these people believe in and base their life off of. Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jain are among some of the most popular religions among the Hubli-Dharwad population. Among these religions, Nikhil's family is a part of the Hindu religion. I chose to interview Nihkhil while we were waiting for our next class to begin. We were in the quiet hallways of the Huntsman Hall on Utah State University's campus. Knowing Nikhil, he thrives in a naturally loud environment. Because of this, during my interview with him you could tell that he was overthinking the content that he wanted to relay to me about Ganesh Chaturthi.

Text:

Ganesh Chaturthi is a fall holiday that is typically celebrated early in the season. Specifically, it is a Hindu holiday celebrating the birth of Ganesh, the highly worshiped god. Let me back up—Shiva (who Nikhil is named after) and Parvati gave birth to Ganesh and his head was replaced with the head of an elephant [gestures with hands]. This is what represents my religion, and specifically the Indian god in pop culture. To celebrate, my mom and dad throw a large party and perform Puja, a [uh um...] prayer ritual. Generally, the Puja takes about 30 minutes, but depending on the company and what is included or not, it can literally take forever [clasps his hands]. During this time the selected priest conducts the prayer while others listen and ring small hand bells. [I asked him who the priest typically was]. Well, usually my dad does it, but typically

the host family is involved. At the end of the Puja, the whole group starts to chant directly to Ganesh. Respectfully, the group chants all 100 names of Ganesh, placing a flower on his shrine in-between names. Since my family is the host family each year, my responsibility in the puja is to place the flower on Ganesh's shrine. You would like this part [nudges me] there tends to be a lot of different colored flowers. Afterwards, each participant prays to the shine of Ganesh. Subsequently, everyone eats prasāda. [I asked him what it was made out of]. Well, it's a combination of all of the different dishes brought that night. It's usually like fruits with rice milk. It is essentially "blessed" food [nods his head]. The evening ends when everyone has danced, partied and had a good time.

Texture:

Nikhil discussed Ganesh with me with a sense of pride. He discussed the importance this holiday has in Dharwad, his home town and specifically his family. He was passionate about his responsibilities within his family tradition. You could tell by the way he talked, his body language, and his body posture that this was a monumental tradition for Nikhil. Knowing Nikhil, I am familiar with his sense of humor, buoyancy, and him being very personal. During our conversation, Nikhil's demeanor shifted, where he was serious, informative, and reverential.

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