

SARASWATI PUJA

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We have tried to put a few lines from our limited knowledge on the way Saraswati Puja is understood and celebrated in Orissa, India. This Puja used to be celebrated mostly in Odissa and West Bengal but now it is being celebrated all over the world.

Goddess Saraswati is the goddess of learning, one of the 33 million Hindu gods and goddesses. The celebration takes place on the 5th day of the bright fortnight (day 1 is the first day following the New Moon day of the lunar month called Magh. This day is called Vasant Panchami, Saraswati Day, or Saraswati Puja. Vasant Panchami signifies the beginning of Vasant Ritu (spring season) in Odissa.

She carries a Veena. She sits on a Lotus flower. She wears a white saree.

(Question: Why has she gotten four hands and where can we find out the answer?)

On this day Goddess Saraswati is worshipped in various names and fames – the Goddess of Learning, the deightry of Gayatri, the fountain of arts and science, and the symbol of supreme vedantic knowledge. Children are taught their first words on this day (as an auspicious beginning to learning). Schools, colleges etc., (places of learning) organize special worship of Saraswati.

She is worshiped even by the supreme god, Bramah (as described in the first Puspanjali in this booklet).

(Note: Since the contents of this write up have not been scrutinized by any authority any or all facts can be challenged. As is often said, Hinduism is a way of life rather than a religion. If you accept this as a fact, we invite any comments.)

SOME ANECDOTES

Once upon a time there was a great king who had an intelligent and beautiful daughter of marriageable age. Her only condition of the marriage was that the groom must outperform her wit. Ambassadors were sent to different places in search of such a person but she defeated all of them. Disgusted ambassadors one day picked up a person with the least intelligence, a man cutting a branch of a tree while standing on it.

In the interview with the princess as a part of the test of intelligence she pointed a finger at him. The person thought she meant to blind him by one eye, and so angrily he pointed his two fingers at her eyes meaning to blind her both. The princess was very satisfied with his action and agreed to marry him. Her meaning of the one finger was that there is one and only god, Bramah. She interpreted his two fingers to mean that there is no second one confirming her anticipation.

Of course on the first night together she found out the level on intelligence of Kalidas, the person she married. He was driven out by the princess and was told not to return unless he became an intelligent person. He prayed all gods and goddesses for rescue but most intently prayed Saraswati. Saraswati listened to him. He was so idiot that Saraswati herself had to give birth to him seven times before he was declared to be a wise man. He became the Great poet Kalidas, author of Meghaduta a Sanskrit masterpiece.

Know what? Pleased with Saraswati he prayed her by reciting the second Puspanjali in this handout. This Puspanjali begins with an admiration of her beautiful body beginning with the description of her eyes downward rather than her feet, an insulting gesture of describing a respectable woman.