



Durga Puja in Sarala Temple

Pandit Upendranath Hota

Sarala is worshipped both as Durga and Saraswati. The Goddess possesses three qualities and she is also worshipped in three ways. She symbolises TAMAH when she appears as Maha Kali, RAJAH when She appears as Maha Laxmi and SATVA when she appears as Saraswati "She is the "LIGHT", She is the "LIGHT OF THE SUN and MOON", She is the "AIR" which animate all beings, says the Vedic hymn to the Goddess. This is the germ which after wards developed into Mother worship. The highest of all feminine types in India is Mother. Mother is the power that manifests everywhere, She who brings out this universe and She who brings forth the destruction. Destruction is only the beginning of creation. The top of a hill is only the beginning of a valley.

In Puri Sri Jagannath appears as Bhairava and Vimala as Bhairavi. Here Mahalaxmi is a perfect Vaishnavi. But Mother Sarala is Mahakali, all three in one. She is established here on a Sri

Chakra, She is Herself Brahma-Shakti, Bramhani, Vishnu Sakti, 'Vaishnavi' and Rudra Sakti, 'Rudrani'. She is adorned with nine qualities, 'Srim, Hrim, Budhi, Lajya, Pusti, Shanti, Tusti, Kshyanti and Aiswarya.

During Durga Puja, Sarala is worshipped with all sanctity. Durga Devi appears at the time of Janmastami. However, people mostly start it



Goddess Sarala

from the '*Pratipada*' *Sukla Pakhya* of Aswina' or '*Sasthi*'. People chant hymns of Chandi from the day of '*Kalpaarambha*' till '*Navami*'. as per the rules of Durga Puja *B o d h a n A m a n t r a n a* , *Adhibasa* and *Pujana* are observed here very

strictly. Sandhi Puja is observed on *Saptami* and *Astami* and at the end of *Maha Navami Puja*.

During Durga Puja sixteen day long ceremonial rites are observed at Sarala. Sarala is dressed differently for sixteen days, each day with a new *Vesa*. A grand procession starts from the temple of Sarala towards *Landa Deula* (an



ancient ruined temple) and again returns to the temple after the worship of Lord Ganesha and other deities. In this procession the *Chalanti Pratima* (moving deity) of the Mother takes part. People putting on different masks dance merrily showing different feats. Different drum, *Ghanta* and musical instruments are sounded. During *Maha Saptami*, *Maha Astami* and *Maha Navami*, the worship of the Mother is done with *Sodasa Upachar*. The worship of the Mother is done in 'Navarna Mantra' depicted in the Tantrik texts. "*Aum, Aim, Hrim, Klim, Chamandai Bliche*" is the sacred mantra of the Devi. Aim, Hrim, Klim represent Sandini, Sambit, and Power of the Devi respectively and *Aum* is the sacred symbol of *Brahman*. Sarala is the embodiment of these three sources of the primordial energy. This worship of the Mother dates back to *Savarnima Manwantara*, from very ancient times.

Upto 1946 it was the custom to offer a buffalo as sacrifice on *Mahastami* before Goddess Sarala. But this practice of offering a buffalo as sacrifice was discarded when Dr. Kailashnath Katju was the Governor of Orissa. From that period a pumpkin is offered in lieu of a buffalo. Sarala is the *Vak Devi* (Goddess of learning) and *Mahisasura Mardini* (Destroyer of the demon Mahisasura). Sarala is *Asta Bhuja* (eight handed). She rides on a lion. She is *Parama Vaishnavi*. The great Oriya poet Sarala Das, was a devotee of Sarala Jhankada, Her abode is 57 Kms away from Cuttack. The present temple of Sarala is about 400 years old. Sarala is a famous Devi of Orissa and one of the eight famous *Sakti Pithas* of Orissa.

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Sarala Temple, Jhankada