

Festive Decoration

Saraswati Puja

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Saraswati Puja in Eastern India has a broad impact on young minds. This is not just a 'Puja' (worshipping ceremony) to please the Goddess, but is also a scope to relish together the mirth and cheer of early spring. Devi Saraswati is probably worshipped in many countries in Asia but with different acquaintances. In Burma she is Thurathadi, in China she is Biancaitian, in Thailand she is known as Surasawadee and in Japanese as Benzaiten. As the country differs the appearance of the image changes, but the purpose of her worship remains the same, to please the deity of knowledge and wisdom. Again, Devi Saraswati combines in her single embodiment all the qualities of the nine Muses of the Hellenic tradition.

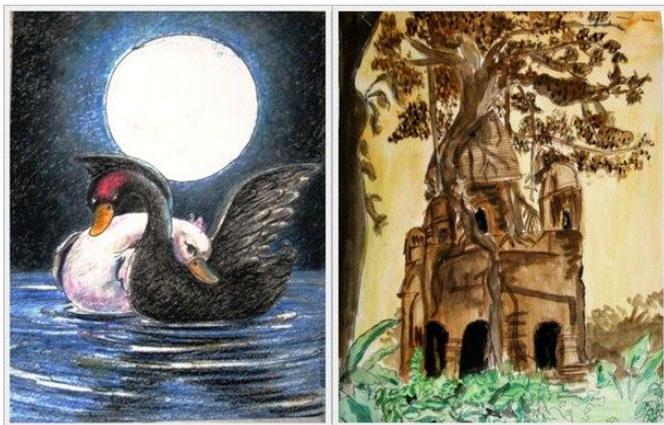
Saraswati Puja marks the beginning of spring and fittingly the goddess of creativity ushers in a season of creativity and festivity in nature. Inspired by the invisible natural and cultural forces boys and girls in their adolescence go on to organize the worship of knowledge, which is also transformed into love.



the swan represents the purity of knowledge.

In Eastern India, mainly in state of Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal Devi Saraswati is mostly worshipped by the students. They feel much enthusiastic to decorate the arena around the idol where that is placed. They are not

In India Devi Saraswati is depicted as a beautiful woman attired in a pure white sari and seated on a white lotus that symbolizes the absolute truth. There always remains a swan just next to her feet which is considered as a vehicle of the goddess. For this reason she is also named as 'Hangsha vahini' or 'Maral bahana' (someone who travels by swan). Devi saraswati holds a 'Veena' (a musical instrument) in her hands symbolizing her sway over art and technology together. An all over white appearance of the idol including the



artists, nor are they superb craft-persons, but they all enjoy working together in a team to do something precious. Apart from decorations they participate in drawing exhibitions, some other cultural programs, or some sort of charitable works.

Students of schools and colleges get involved in creating numerous decorative items on this occasion. A few years back the decoration used to be only of colourful paper crafts. But now the students are experimenting with newer thoughts within a moderate amount of budget.



In the process of decoration first and foremost comes the item of 'Rangoli' or 'Alpona'. The floor decoration in Saraswati Puja festival is almost an inevitable part in India. Working with 'aabir' (coloured powder) brings out colourful rangolis, where as paint, brush and chalk paste are used to draw alponas. Swans in Alpona make it more appropriate to put before the idol.



The decoration with pottery is a common practice all over the India. Decoration with earthen bowl, earthen lamp, lamp stand, wooden spoons, stuck on a mat base provides decorative yet cool look. The style and color of the statue complement the whole arrangement.

Sometimes the students try to think something bigger. Students of a college have tried to create a homely atmosphere of a village. One of the house women is seen lifting up water from a well, one is busy in worshipping on the 'Tulshi Mancha' (basil



plant), and another is busy in singing who the Devi is herself.

Devi Saraswati in all over 'Daaker saaj' (a variety

of paper craft) looks much graceful.

People also try their experimentations with the pandals. Some have tried it only with the news paper rolls which are technically simple, but conceptually awesome.

In another place total structure of the temple is



made of cow dung which itself is considered as an auspicious element in India.

The invitation cards of the schools and colleges are also worth mentioning as each one is a specimen of art. If one is from folk culture another is in a form of fine art. No one can be considered inferior to other.



This Puja festival is not only significant for its decorations, but it has some other aspects that give it a different identity.

Often the parents of their little children get a sacramental attempt to begin their studies before the Goddess. The children are taught to write down the initial letters of their alphabet to begin the lessons with her blessings.

As Devi saraswati is the Goddess of Knowledge, keeping an ink-pot is a compulsory process in this Puja. Generally an earthen inkpot is kept before the Goddess that is filled with milk instead of ink. A pen or 'Khager Kalam' (a reed of a tree) is placed there which is used to write down the 'pronam mantra' (worshipping words) with the milk on the leaves of wood apple. This is almost a must-do task for every student to please the Goddess.



In this occasion the girls are often seen in yellow saris, which is a symbolic colour of the mustard flower that blooms in this spring season. It also resembles the marigold that blooms in this time in abundance. With a rejuvenating spring, with an essence of love, with an energy for creativity, with an atmosphere of festivity the Saraswati Puja gets its greatest height to be enjoyed by the charming young boys and girls throughout the day.



Note

All the photos (except the first one) by Debasmita Goswami.

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