

SARASWATHI POOJA

Saraswathi pooja falls usually on the ninth day of the Dussehra festival. Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi pooja is common to all Hindus, irrespective of caste and all those who perform this pooja on all nine days or atleast on the ninth day (which is common referred to as Saraswathi pooja) will be twice blessed by Goddess Durga.

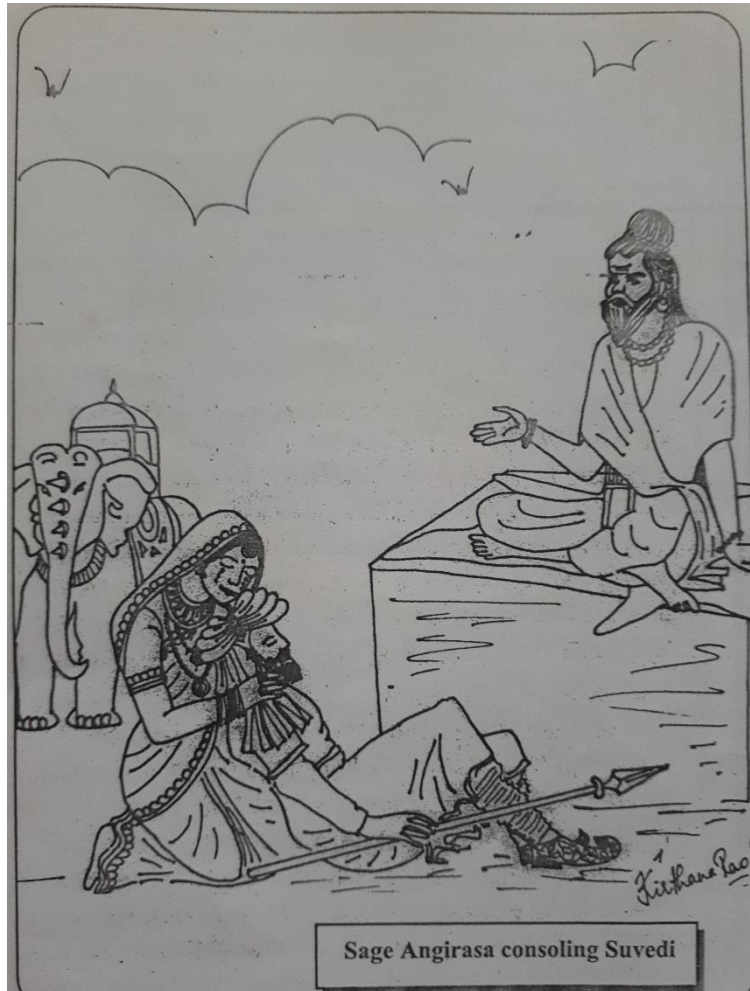
Pooja procedure : Goddess Saraswathi is the Goddess of Learning and as such books, musical instruments etc., are decorated with flowers and worshipped. Avahana is made on the previous day, and the regular pooja is performed on the Sarawathi pooja day.

Story of Saraswathi Pooja

Suta, the disciple of Sage Vyasa, addressing Saunaka and other Maharishis said, "O, Maharishis, I will tell you about another important Vrata. During Aswija month starting from the Sukla paksha pratipada, for nine consecutive days, Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi should be worshipped both in the morning and at night. If this is not possible for some reason, at least on the ninth day, the worship can be done on a smaller scale. By doing so, you will be twice blessed and you will attain Swarga Loka". The Maharishis in turn asked, "Mahatma, in the recent past, who all observed this Vrata and were benefited?"

Replying, Suta said, "Great souls, in Kruta yuga, there lived a benevolent king, Suketa, who ruled over a vast territory of land. At his disposal were a large troupe of horses, elephants and chariots. He led a dharmic life. His wife, the queen, was Suvedi, pious, good looking and intelligent. The king was powerful and had no enemies. People lived happily.

Such being the case, as time passed, suddenly enemies from some unknown quarters invaded his kingdom with powerful weapons and attacked the king. Taken aback, the king fought a valiant battle, ultimately only to be defeated, unable to bear the onslaught and was on the run. Suvedi, seeing her husband's fate, followed him. They roamed about in dense forest, day and



Sage Angirasa consoling Suvedi

night without food and shelter. The king fell sick and became too weak even to walk. Suvedi made him sleep on her lap and started crying.

Maharishi Angirasa, who happened to pass by noticing her asked, "O, Lady, God bless you. Why are you wandering in the forest? Who is this gentleman who is looking ill? Why do you look so dejected and forlorn?"

Suvedi was in tears and wept loudly. Angirasa consoled her saying, "Nobody in this world can achieve anything simply by crying, compose yourself. Tell me what troubles you?". Suvedi began to tell her tale of woe, "O, Maharishi, this is my husband. He is a king. Having been attacked by enemies and getting defeated, he began to flee. I too followed him and we are here in this forest without food and shelter. Tell us a way out of this impasse".

Angirasa took them to his ashram and told them of the existence of a Durga temple near Panchavati. He asked Suvedi to go to that place and offer worship to Goddess Durga who will certainly bless them and restore their kingdom. Suvedi also worshipped Durga devi for nine days and concluded the pooja on the tenth day.

By the grace of Goddess Durga, Suvedi's prayers were answered. She lived in the ashram with her husband under the care of Angirasa. Soon King Suketa also was rid of his illness. Soon Suvedi became pregnant and later gave birth to a baby boy. He was under the direct care of Maharishi Angirasa, who performed his Namakaranam (Naming ceremony) and named the child, Surya Prasad. Soon, Vidyabhyas and Upanayanam were performed and the boy was taught martial arts and Sastras. Suryaprasad came to know of his parents' fate. He decided to take revenge on his enemies. He invaded the enemies and a fierce battle ensued. Ultimately Suryaprasad emerged victorious. He took back his father's kingdom and looked after his parent well".
