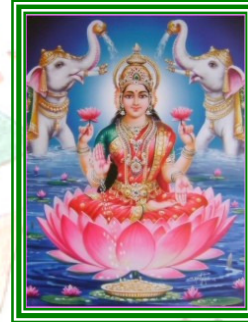
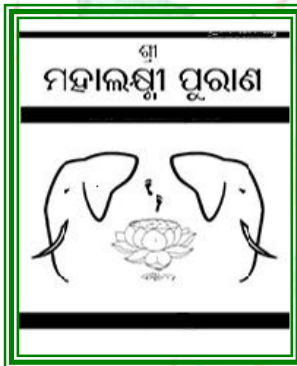




Manabasa Gurubar is a great festival for all Oriyas. It is the worship of Goddess *Lakshmi* in the month of *Margasira* as per traditional Oriya *Panjika* (Calendar). *Manabasa Gurubar* 2009 dates are November 5, November 12, November 19 and November 26. In Orissa, it is believed that Goddess *Laxmi*, the Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity, visit homes in *Margasira* month.



Legend



The Legend of *Manabasa Gurubar* is based on the ancient scripture "*Lakshmi Puran*". The untouchables were not allowed to pray, worship and do rituals to God in the ancient ages. At that time *Sriya* a woman from untouchables dares to pray and worship and wins over the support of Goddess *Lakshmi*. But the real story begins when *Lakshmi* got separated by Lord *Jagannath* at the behest of his brother *Balabhadra*. Because she ends discrimination on earth by encouraging even untouchables to conduct rituals and worship. As *Lakshmi* moves out of *Jagannath's* house, both *Jagannath* and *Balram* undergo immense suffering so much even they have to starve without water and food. The curse of *Lakshmi* had a severe impact on both the brothers for 12 years and they had a tough time. Soon they realised the importance of *Lakshmi* and were keen to bring her back to their home. *Lakshmi* returned to *Jagannath's* house on one condition that there will be no discrimination of caste and creed on earth. This unique story highlights the fact



that for God everyone was equal. Besides it reflected the reforms and progressive stance of Gods from the ancient times. Only in the end through *Narad* it is revealed that *Jagannath* to end castism and discrimination from this earth. He had himself "set up" these series of events which highlighted the social message besides the strength of true spirituality. The story not only draws an attention towards Castism but also gives an inspiration towards Women Empowerment.

Rituals



During the period the houses are kept neat and clean. “*Chita*” (Alpana) is drawn to welcome Goddess *Lakshmi*. Special *pujas* are offered to Goddess *Lakshmi*. According to Oriya scripture, Goddess *Lakshmi* is worshipped on every Thursday during the Oriya month of *Margasira* by, Oriya women, with utmost devotion. The women wake up very early in the morning and clean the house with broomsticks. It is believed that Goddess *Lakshmi* never visits a house if it is untidy and dirty. The doorsteps as well as the entrance are decorated with artistic Oriya’s alpana called *chita*. The decoration also constitutes a pot made of bamboo canes used in the earlier days for measuring paddy (known as *Mana*). It is filled up to the brink with newly harvested paddy. It is believed that Goddess *Lakshmi* visits every house during the *Puja*. This is continued for 4 Thursdays (even if there may be 5). In this *Puja* different type of tasty cuisine like *Manda Pitha*, *Khiri*, *Kakara*, *Chitau* etc. are prepared and distributed to neighbours. On this day all Oriya women read *Lakhmi Puran*. It marks the end of this auspicious occasion.

