

TEMPLE OF SARADA MATA, UDHAMPUR

CHANDER M. BHAT



[Way to Sarada Temple from National Highway, 3 km from Udhampur]

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UDHAMPUR**

by

CHANDER M. BHAT

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The Goddess of the Divine Lute (*Veena*)

In this aspect She represents original knowledge
transcending all limitations.

Sarada is an epithet of *Saraswati*; the Goddess of learning.

She grants boons.

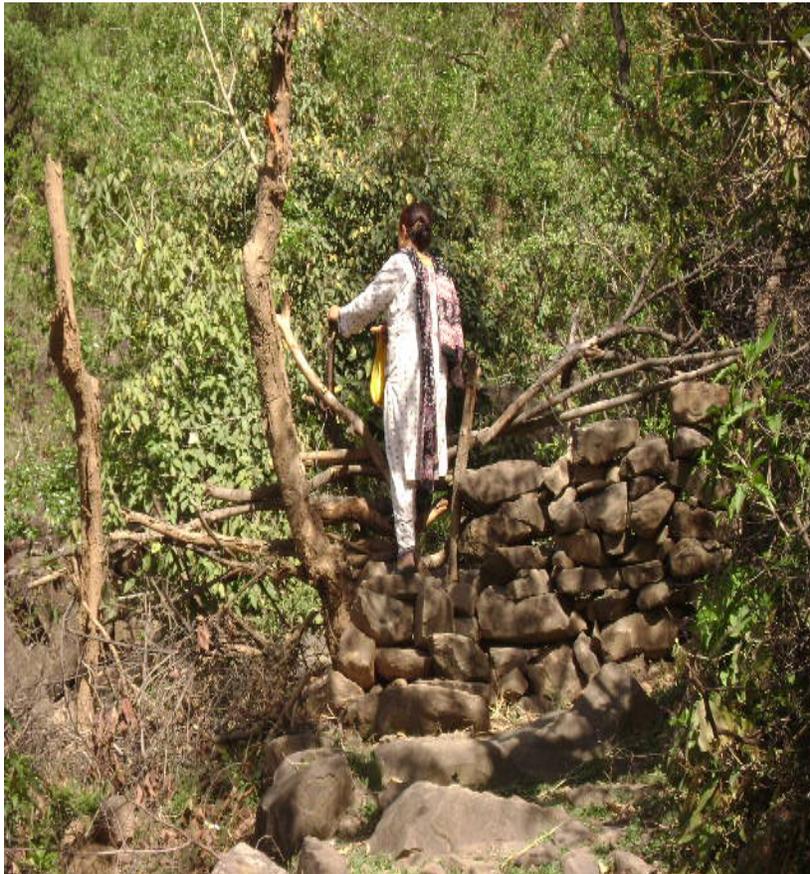
Her effulgence is the means of obtaining final emancipation.

Bhavani Nama Sahasra Stutih

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Udhampur popularly known as 'the land of Druva', Headquarter of District, is named after Raja Udham Singh, the eldest son of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of Dogra rule in Jammu and Kashmir. The town is said to have been built in place of dense forest where Udham Singh occasionally went on hunting trips till he developed great love for the spot and choose it as site for township. District Udhampur lies between 32 degree 34 minutes to 39 degree 30 minutes North Latitude and 74 degree 16 minutes to 75 degree 38 minutes East Longitude. The altitude of District Udhampur varies from 600 meter to 3,000 meter above sea level. The District is situated in the South-Eastern part of Jammu and Kashmir State and is bounded in the West by Rajouri District, in North-East by Doda District, in the South-East by Kathua District and in the South-West by Jammu District.



[Rough terrain while going to Sarada Temple]

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District Udhampur is rich in forest wealth. The total forest area of the district is 51.49%

Sarada is located within the jurisdiction of Udhampur District and forms a part of Village Gangara. The village is about 3 km from Udhampur town enroute Kashmir Valley on National Highway 1A. One has to climb a steep of about 1 km from national highway to reach the village. The name of the village is Sarada as per revenue records and it is believed that this village came into existence some 225 years ago. This village is situated on a hilltop overlooking its fields, the railway track, air strip, Udhampur town and Tawi River. The natural scenery of Sarada is very charming, surrounded by a dense forest from the West and by untrimmed trees and shrubs from other three sides. There is a steep path right from national highway up to the temple of Sarada.



[Tawi valley below the temple of Sarada]

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This path has been constructed by local residents with the help of Rural Development Department under Nehru Rojgar Yagna in the year 1981. The path is partially constructed on steps and partially by laying dressed stones all over the path up to the temple. It takes a pilgrim only half an hour to reach the temple. With the bright sunlight reflected in silvery pine trees above, and gurgling River Tawi meandering through the valley below, the pilgrim already is in a different world. The trekking undoubtedly is slow but not boring as the scenery alongside is most picturesque.

The soil in Sarada may be classified in three ways: by composition, position, and the capability for bearing certain crops. Fields nearer the village does not enjoy greater facilities for maturing and irrigation. Since this village is totally hilly the chief class of soil is *bhatori* or stony soil. This type of soil is considered to be particularly suitable for the cultivation of such crops as wheat, gram (*cicer arietinum*), *til* (*sesamum indicum*) maize (*zea mays*), *urad* (*phaseolus radiatus*), and *moong* (*phaseolus mango*).

The total land under Sarada village is 243 hectares, of this, wasteland, shrub land, and the dry land count for more than 23 hectares, the habitation area, together with pathways, land owned by school and temple compound occupies nearly 66 hectares and the rest approximately 154 hectares is classified as grazing ground.

The temple of Sarada is situated at an altitude of 2000 feet in the North West of the village. Sarada is synonymous to Divine Mother. Sardapeeth or the abode of Sarada is the goddess of learning and fine arts. This temple came into existence when Sh. Gopal Dass of village Jakhani was in boyhood. His parents sought his admission in a nearby school. Being not interested in learning 3 R's he used to go to this place as there was shade of five black berry trees with a nice spring gushing out from the stem of a big tree. He used to sit under the shade of these trees and return to his home at the time of closing of schools pretending that he was in school. One day while sleeping under the shade of these trees he had a celestial dream. Mother came out from one of the tree trunk and said to Sh. Gopal Dass that I am residing in the hollow stem of the tree. Sh. Gopal Dass wake up and returned to his home with heavy heart. From that day he used to carry one bag of sand everyday with an

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intention to construct a temple on the spot. No wonder the holy spot became a sacred shrine to which thousands of devotees not only from Udhampur but from distant places



[Sanctum Sanctorum of Sarada Temple]

were attracted to seek blessings from Sarada Mata, the goddess in her three aspects of Sarada, Nanda and Saraswati.

The hollow trunk of the black berry tree from where the Divine Mother was discovered became the Sanctum Sanctorum of the temple which came up here with great efforts of Sh. Gopal Dass. Sh. Gopal Dass remained celibate throughout his life and is always seen in the temple premises doing some work or the other.

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The entrance of the temple is from the North-East side. The Divine Mother is facing towards an ancient temple on the opposite side River Tawi situated in a depilated fort. This temple has been built by Raja Udham Singh and there is an *asthapan* of Mother Nanda [The joy of self-realization. Self-realization is not attained. It is bestowed by the unconditional grace of the Supreme. The supreme joy when graced upon the devotees gives him surprise beyond expectation. That is the goddess Nanda].



[Sarada Mata's abode in a Trunk of a Black Berry Tree]

There is a holy spring locally known as *Bowli* coming out below the trunk of the holy tree, the water of which has been extended and is being stored in a closed reservoir which has two outlets. Pilgrims can take a bath under these outlets. An elderly person of the village told me that in olden days the water of the holy spring was stored in a reservoir and animal would die after taking the water from the reservoir. And in later years the animals of the village were not allowed to take the water of the holy spring.

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The Sarada temple occupies the centre of a rectangular court of 150 feet long and 40 feet broad. There are four black berry trees in the compound of the temple and all are in full bloom. Only the holy tree in which Mother is having its abode bears the fruit.

Sarada Varada Devi Mookshdhartri Saraswati

is a hymn meaning Sarada grants the boon of emancipation through wisdom



[Trunk of the Holy Tree]

In dark nights under the shade of the black berry trees, the sacred place present an atmosphere where one becomes one with God. And in moonlit nights, devotees experience something mystic all over the temple of Sarada Mata.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Chander M. Bhat

Born on 20th March, 1960 in Murran a village in North Kashmir, Chander M. Bhat is presently working as an Assistant Supdt. Posts, in Department of Posts, Govt. of India. His articles regarding Posts and of non-political nature stand widely published in various papers and magazines of the country. A booklet "How to Collect Stamps" published by the Department of Posts, has earned him genuine accolades. He worked on the project of tracing the roots of his co-villagers and of the village Murran, resulting into the culmination of a widely acclaimed book "Murran ...My Village. Man with depth, Chander M. Bhat has also another book, "Ocean by Drops" (collection of poems) in his vase having colorful poems. His book "Ancient History of Jammu and Kashmir", confirms his researching capability. Various research papers like "The Splendor that is Amarnath" and "Vitasta...The Sacred River of Kashmir" are valuable additions to his works that has proved very fruitful and guiding force in the exile period of Kashmiri Pandits community of which the author is also a member.

Presently the author is working on "OOL...THE NEST" - a six volume project [each volume of about 2500 pages] on all the 595 Kashmiri Pandit villages of Kashmir.

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