

President of India Graces Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Adikabi Sarala Das; Presents Kalinga Ratna Award 2024

- The Hon'ble President of India, **Smt. Droupadi Murmu**, attended the **birth anniversary celebrations of Adikabi Sarala Das** at **Cuttack, Odisha**.
- On this occasion, she presented the prestigious **Kalinga Ratna Award 2024** to **Shri Dharmendra Pradhan**, Hon'ble Union Minister for Education.
- The President congratulated:
 - **Shri Dharmendra Pradhan** for receiving the **Kalinga Ratna Award 2024**.
 - **Shri Bijaya Nayak** for receiving the '**Sarala Samman**' literary award.
- She appreciated **Sarala Sahitya Sansad** for preserving Sarala Das's legacy and organizing literary programs in his honour.
- The President highlighted:
 - **Adikabi Sarala Das's contribution** to Indian literature through the **Odia Mahabharata** and other works.
 - India's **cultural and linguistic diversity**, describing it as a **rainbow of unity amidst diversity**.
 - The importance of **Indian languages in education**, praising the **National Education Policy 2020** for promoting **mother-tongue education**, while also encouraging learning other languages.

About Adikabi Sarala Das: Life and Literary Contributions

- **Adikabi Sarala Das** is revered as the **originator of Odia literature**, born in **Kanakavati Patana** (modern Jagatsinghpur District, Odisha).
- Known for authoring **three major Odia epics**:
 1. **Mahabharata (Odia version)**
 2. **Vilanka Ramayana**

3. Chandi Purana

- He also wrote **Laxmi Narayana Vachanika**.
- His early name was **Siddheswara Parida**; later known as **Sarala Das** ('Servant of Sarala'), after Goddess Sarala who, according to legend, blessed him with poetic abilities.
- Sarala Das received no formal education and was self-taught, attributing his knowledge to divine grace.
- He composed much of his poetry at **Munigosain**, and spent his last years in a mutt near **river Budha nadi**.
- Though following the **Sanskrit Mahabharata**, Sarala Das introduced **original stories and local narratives**, making his Odia Mahabharata unique.
- His Mahabharata is regarded as a **new creation**, akin to **Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa**.
- His writing style:
 - Simple, direct, and musical, avoiding excessive Sanskritisation.
 - Used colloquial language for public accessibility.
 - Emphasized religious themes over romantic ones.
 - Notable for its distinct metrical structure and folk style influence.
- His **Chandi Purana** narrates Goddess Durga's battle with Mahishasura but includes deviations from Sanskrit tradition.
- His **Vilanka Ramayana** narrates the fight between Rama and Shahasrasira Ravana.
- Sarala Das was conferred the title '**Sudra Muni**' by the **Mukti Mandap Pandit Sabha**, recognizing his spiritual contributions.
- He is believed to have served as a **soldier in the army of the Gajapati King of Odisha**, with his military experiences reflected in his writings.

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