

CHAPTER - II

SOURCES :

- A) LITERARY
- B) ARCHAEOLOGICAL

The worship of the goddess of learning is ancient and widespread. The materials for the study of the conceptual and iconographic features may be categorised under two heads - literary and archaeological.

Literary Sources :

There is no dearth of references to Sarasvatī in the vast literature of ancient and medieval India. Starting from the Ṛgveda she is represented in her different forms in the Brāhmaṇas, the great epics, the Purāṇas, the Āgāmas, the Tantras and the Śilpa texts. Besides the Brāhmaṇical tradition, she is also referred to in the vast Jaina literatures and Buddhist works. However from the iconographic point of view, the texts are not unanimous to number of hands Sarasvatī is supposed to have. In Hindu Iconography, the goddess of learning has several forms with wide variety in emblems and vehicles. The literary works mention the sitting, standing and dancing images. Sometimes the deity is shown associated with Brahmā both as His daughter and wife, with Viṣṇu as His consort, and associated with Śiva also.

Brāhmaṇical Literatures :

The Brāhmaṇical literatures describe about the iconography of two armed, four armed and multi-armed Sarasvatī.

In the Agni-Purāṇaṣ, Sarasvatī is described as a two-armed goddess.¹ Here she is illustrated as a vīṇādhārinī and is known as puṣṭi, the śakti of viṣṇu. This is rather interesting as Sarasvatī is usually shown holding a vīṇā with her two hands and touching the cords of the instrument. So puṣṭi may here be taken as variant of Sarasvatī.

According to Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa² in her two-armed icons, Sarasvatī should have vīṇā and pustaka in her hands.

In the Śrīmad Devībhāgavatam,³ Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning holds a vīṇā and a book in her two hands. Her colour is white and defeats even the eight of the crores of moon.

The Śīlparatna,⁴ a śīlpa text of 16th century A.D., describes vāgiśvarī as white complexioned and is having crescent on her fore head. She is seated on white lotus. The deity holds a pen and a book in her both the hands.

In another instance in Śīlparatna, she is said to have hold aṅkuśā in one hand and the other have a book. She is three-eyed and has ardhachandra on her head. She is of white colour and wears necklace made of 'akṣhasutra'.⁵

Sarasvatī having four-arms, is noticed in various Purāṇas.

The Viṣṇudharmottara⁶ Purāṇa (7th century A.D.) states that the goddess Sarasvatī should be represented with

four-arms. She stands upon a white lotus in samabhāṅga. She carries book and rosary in her right hands and displays Vyākhyāna mudrā and a Kamaṇḍalu in her two left hands. Alternatively, she holds book, rosary in her right and trident and Kamaṇḍalu in her left hands.

In the Agni-Purāṇa,⁷ the description of the four-armed goddess is more or less same like that of Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa. It prescribes rosary and book to be held in her two hands, while the front two hands should be exhibited as playing upon a vīṇā.

In the Matsya Purāṇa,⁸ the four armed deity Sarasvatī holds a vīṇā, an akṣamālā, a kamaṇḍalu and a pustaka in her respective hands. Sometimes a pāśā is seen in place of akṣamālā. It is also stated that she would be worshipped with white garlands, sandal-paste and white clothes.

According to Sūta-Saṁhitā of the Skanḍa Purāṇa,⁹ the goddess has four hands having lotus and akṣamālā in the two right hands. A Kamaṇḍalu and a Pustaka should be held in the left hands. She is adorned with Jaṭāmukuta on her head in which a crescent moon is depicted. She is called Nilagrīvā and trīnayanā which imply that she has a blue neck and three eyes as that of Śiva.

The Devī-Māhātmya of the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa¹⁰ describes the goddess of learning as four-handed holding aṅkuśa, vīṇā, akṣamālā, and pustaka. The attribute aṅkuśa indicates her close association with Śiva.

In another instance Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa states that Gāyatrī is worshipped in the evening in the form of Sarasvatī.¹¹ Her colour is blue black like viṣṇu. She is having four hands and her eyes are like lotus petals. She carries saṅkha, chakra, gaḍā in her three hands and shows abhaya mudrā in the fourth hand. She is clad in yellow silken cloth after her body being coated with sandal paste. She is seated on blue seat. Her form represents Sāmveda. Her vāhana is Garuda. She should be carved as riding on the back of Garuda.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa describes Sarasvatī as a consort of Viṣṇu.¹² She sits on the back of a lion. She has four arms, red-eyes, exposed hair and developed and pointed breasts. She wears no garment and her appearance is fierce.

According to Bṛahad-dharma Purāṇa,¹³ an Upa-Purāṇa, Sarasvatī possesses Sudhāḥānda (pot of nectar), Vidyā, mudrā and akṣamālā. She is richly adorned with various kinds of jewelleries. She is three-eyed.

Besides the Purāṇas, many śilpa and tantra texts also refers to the goddess of learning and her iconography.

The Amśumād-bhedāgama and the Pūrvakāraṇāgāma, the two Āgāma texts have been referred by T.A.Gopinath Rao as containing description of Sarasvatī.¹⁴ According to Amśumād-bhedāgama,¹⁵ white complexioned Sarasvatī is seated upon a white lotus and is draped in white clothes. She holds a rosary in her right hand and the other should exhibit the vyākhyāna muḍrā and the left hands carry respectively a book

and a white lotus (Puṇḍarikā). She wears a Yajñopavīta and has the Jaṭāmukuta on the head. She is decked with various ornaments like pearl-necklace, ear-rings, armlets, bangles, bracelets and so on. It is further mentioned that the Kuṇḍalas of Sarasvatī should be made of rubies.

The Pūrvakāraṇāgāma¹⁶ mentions a rosary and a book to be held by the two hands of the goddess, whereas the remaining two hands are to carry sudanḍa and a Kamaṇḍalu (Karaka). The four-armed deity is also decked with various ornaments, but here unlike Amśumādbhedāgama, the pearl is prescribed for her ear rings.

In another instance, the Pūrvakāraṇāgāma states that she is four-handed, white in colour, seated on white lotus, ears bejewelled with pearls. She wears yajñopavīta and other necklaces and garlands. She carries mirror, book, akṣamālā and the fourth exhibits Kāṭaka mudrā. She has three eyes.¹⁷

According to Aparājita prucchā,¹⁸ four-armed icon of Sarasvatī finds mention and her attributes are the same as described in Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa. She holds akṣamālā, vīṇā, pustaka and kamaṇḍalu in four hands. She is a snow white deity in white garments and has blue-neck. The only difference with that of viṣṇudharmottara is that here she is described as seated on Padmāsana and known as Śvetangī, Nilakanthī and Chandrasekharā.

According to Rūpamaṇḍana,¹⁹ the goddess is seated on white lotus and her colour is white. She is four-armed and has a Jaṭāmukuta and ear-rings made of pearl. She has three-eyes. She carries Sudaṇḍa and akṣamālā in her two right hands and in the left pustaka and padma respectively.

In Dipārṇava,²⁰ twelve forms of Sarasvatī are mentioned such as Sarasvatī, Kamalā, Jayā, Vijayā, Sāraṅgi, Tumbarī, Nārādī, Sarvamaṅgalā, Vidyādhara, Sarvavidyā and Śāradā. The images of these forms are always four armed but varies, only in their attributes and mudrās. As a rule, in the hands of the devī, among akṣamālā, pustaka, vīṇā, padma, varaḍa and abhaya, any four should be present as her attributes.²¹ Sarasvatī (second) is also called as hamsavāhinī.

The Devatā-murti Prakaraṇa²² refers to a four-armed image of Goddess of learning. She holds in her three hands lotus, akṣasutra, book and she shows the abhaya mudrā in the fourth one.

In the Daśa-sloki of Rahasyapañishad,²³ she is described as four-handed, carrying akṣamālā, aṅkuśā, Pāśā and Pustaka. She wears garland of pearls. Her neck is like saṅkha decorated with all ornaments. She resides on the tip of the tongue of Her devotees. Her hair is adorned by the crescent moon.

The Asvalāyana Kalpasutra²⁴ gives the characters of Dhenu Vāgiśvarī, as one of the form of Sarasvatī. Her colour is white like crystal. She wears white garlands, and

is clad in white clothes. She is decorated with pearl necklaces. She has four hands carrying ankusa, akṣasutra, pāśa and book. Her Jaṭāmukuṭa is decorated with crescent moon. Her face is like full moon and she is having three eyes. She wears golden anklets.

Pancharatrāgāma in its kriyāpāda states the characteristics of Vāgiśvarī, another form of Sarasvatī.²⁵ She is also white in colour, seated on white lotus. She wears Jaṭāmukuṭa. Her ears are decorated with ratna kuṇḍalas. She uses Yajñopavīta and pearl-garlands. She is having three eyes and four hands. She carries in her hand a stylus probably for the purpose of writing and a book, akṣamālā and Kamaṇḍalu.

Hemadri²⁶ in his work Chaturavargachintāmanī, also refers about the four-armed image of Sarasvatī. It mentions that rosary, book, Viṇā and a Kamaṇḍalu should be held in her four hands.

The Mānsāra Granthā²⁷ states that Sarasvatī is seated on Padmāsana. She is of white colour, having four-hands and two-eyes. She has Karaṇḍamukuṭa, Kesābandha, ratnakūṇḍala, Padmahāra, nupura.

Śrī Tatvanidhī²⁸ in its description of Sarasvatī follows the mārķendeya Purāṇa and describes her as Viṣṇurupinī. Therefore, she has Garuda as her mount and holds in her hands the emblems of viṣṇu such as saṅkha, chakra, Gadā and her fourth hand is usually in abhaya mudra. In other place of the same text, Sarasvatī has

been described as consort of Brahmā, i.e. Vāgiśvarī and carries staff, rosary, book and kuṇḍikā as her attributes.

The Sāradātilaka-tantra,²⁹ a Tantric text, contains a dhyāna of Sarasvatī and information about her iconic features. She carries a boon, rosary, skull and a book in her four hands and having the additional characteristic of her body formed of the alphabets. The quantities and attributes noted in the Tantra indicate her close association with Śiva.

In another instance of the same text, the goddess of learning has lotus, pustaka, rosary, akṣamālā in her four hands. She has three eyes, her breasts are developed and her colour is as bright as the rays of moon.³⁰

She is also said to have four-hands in another dhyāna of the tantra and carries the gesture of Jñānamudrā, a rosary of rudrākṣa, a jar full of nectar and the gesture of Pustaka mudrā.³¹ Her body is composed of the letters and on her forehead is found the crescent moon.

The Prapanchasāra Tantra³² also gives information about the four-armed icons of Sarasvatī. Her body is composed of letters. She has four hands and holds in her hands akṣamālā, kumbha, lekhānī and the other exhibits abhaya mudrā. She has three eyes and seated on a lotus seat. Her colour is white like Kuṇḍa flower.

The Goddess of learning has one face and four hands. She has matted hair. She holds in her hands akṣamālā, lotus, book and lute.³³ She is the giver of boon and knowledge. The same work states that she is four-armed and sits on the lotus. In her four hands, she holds pen, the book, lotus and kuṇḍa flower.³⁴

The Prapañchasāra Tantra³⁵ (chapter 7-3) also gives information about the four armed icon of Sarasvatī. The attributes in different hands are abstraction, rosary, pitcher and a book. Her body is composed by the alphabets. Chapters of the same tantra text gives viṇā, rosary, pitcher of nectar and a book in her respective four hands and describes the swan as her vehicle.³⁶

The Tantrasāra³⁷ also prescribes some dhyānas of Sarasvatī. In one instance she is white complexioned and is seated on a white flower with smiling face. She has four hands which hold lotus, rudrakṣamālā, a vessel and a book.

The Goddess of learning is seated on a lotus seat. She has three eyes, proportionate body and firm breasts. She has four hands which carry Japāmāla, two lotuses and a manuscript.³⁸

Besides the above discussed texts, there are a few texts which refers about the iconography of the multi-armed images of Sarasvatī.

In Vyakrutika-Rahasya³⁹ eight-armed image of Sarasvatī has been described. In it, her attributes are bāna, śula, ghaṇṭa, hala and dhanu, chakra, saṅkha and muśāla.

According to Chāṇḍī Kalpa,⁴⁰ Mahāsarasvatī is having eight hands carrying bell, śūla, plough, conch, pestle, wheel, bow and arrow. Her colour is white like that of the moon. She is borne from the body of Goddess Gaurī and the whole world depends upon her.

The Śilaparātna, a śilpa text of the 16th century A.D. describes a ten-armed Sarasvatī holding vīṇā, disc, conch-shell, bowl, noose, axe, a vessel of nectar, book, rosary and lotus. She is tri-nayanā.⁴¹

JAIN LITERATURE

Like Tantra, Vidyā-powers also have been assimilated in Jainism for securing peace and tranquility of body, mind and soul.⁴² The Jaina apparently became conscious of the Vidyās from atleast 5th century A.D., although we have some stray references to Vidyās even in the earliar Jaina works.⁴³ Jaina tradition speaks of as many as 48,000 Vidyās, out of which only sixteen are considered to be principal or Mahāvidyās.⁴⁴ According to Bhattacharya⁴⁵ " of all the conception in Jaina Iconography, the conception of Vidyādevīs or goddesss of learning is most original. In no other religion, the Goddess of learning are so numerous." Some of these Mahāvidyās like Rohinī, Prajñāpti, Kālī, Apraticakrā, Mahākālī, Gaurī, Vairoṭyā, Mānasī, Vajrasriṅhalā, Jvālāmalinī and Mahāmānasī also became the Yaksis in about the 8th and 9th century A.D.⁴⁶ By the medieval period, Kuṣmāṇḍī (or Ambikā), Padmāvati, Vairoṭyā, and Jvālāmalinī came to the forefront as the most powerful of all the Vidyās invoked and adored by the Jainas.⁴⁷

The earliest Vidyā to be worshipped by the Jainas was Sarasvatī, afterwards also called the Śrūtadevatā, the personified knowledge embodied in the sacred Jaina scriptures preached by the Jinas and the Kevalins.⁴⁸ She is regarded as the superintending deity of knowledge and learning in the

Jaina pantheon.⁴⁹ B.C.Bhattacharya⁵⁰ observes "she (Sarasvatī) seems to be at the head of collective body of body of sixteen Vidyā-devīs" and her worship is prior to that of other subordinate deities. However U.P.Shah refutes the view of Bhattacharya and remarks that Sarasvatī is unmistakably the goddess of learning and is no-way connected with the Sixteen Vidyā-devīs of the Jaina pantheon.⁵¹ Further the inference of Bhattacharya making Sarasvatī the "head of the collective body of the sixteen Vidyādevīs" is not supported by any Jaina tradition.⁵²

The Goddess Sarasvatī was paid homage by the Tīrthankaras even. In this Jaina pantheon, the twelve āṅga texts are described as the different limbs of the Śrutadevatā and the fourteen Purva texts are said to be her ornaments.⁵³ According to Jainism, knowledge is five-fold : Mati-Jñāna (Orinary knowledge), Śruta-Jñāna (knowledge from scriptures), Avadhi-Jñāna (supernatural cognition), Manaḥparyāya Jñāna (knowledge derived from perception of the thoughts of others) and Kevala-Jñāna (omniscience).⁵⁴ Sarasvatī is invoked for dispelling the darkness of ignorance and for removing the infatuation caused by the Jñānāvarṇiya Karma (i.e. the Karma Matter Covering right knowledge). In Jainism, the goddess of learning is named variously as Sarasvatī, Śrutadevatā, Śāradā, Bhāratī, Bhāṣa, Vāk, Vāk-devatā, Vāgīśvarī, Vāgvādinī, Vānī and Brāhmī.⁵⁵ However as compared to the Brāhmaṇic pantheon, where in Sarasvatī is the goddess of both learning and fine

arts, she, in the Jaina pantheon, has remained as the goddess only of learning, there is so at least upto the close of 9th century A.D. As a result no literary reference or sculptural representation suggesting her connection with music and other fine arts is available before the 10th century A.D.⁵⁶

The Jaina śrutadevī, approximately very closely, resembles the Brāhmaṇical Sarasvatī. She is endowed with two, four-hands, and rarely multi-handed. She as the bestower of knowledge and purity has been endowed with symbols like manuscript, rosary, Varadamudrā and water-vessel. She is worshipped both by the Śvetāmbara and the Digambara while the Śvetāmbara give her a swan as her vehicle, the Digambara provides her with a peacock, both the birds agreeing with the conception of Sarasvatī as a river goddess in Hinduism.⁵⁷

Thus Sarasvatī enjoys unquestionable popularity among the Jainas from the very ancient times and the antiquity of her worship can be established from various literary references, as discussed below.

Two-armed variety of Sarasvatī is referred to in Śrī Kallāṇakāṇḍam-stuti,⁵⁸ Sarasvatī Yantra Pujā of Subhachandra,⁵⁹ writings of Bapabhatti Suri,⁶⁰ Ratnasāgar,⁶¹ writings of Manisundara Suri⁶² etc.

Śrī Kallāṇakāṇḍam-stuti⁶³ (in Prākṛit) refers the goddess of learning as Vāgīsvarī. She is said to have whiteness⁶⁴ ^{to} ^{as} ^{of} ^{the} ^{colour} and rests on a lotus seat. She possesses the book and the lotus in her two hands.

Sarasvatīyantra Pujā of Subhachandra⁶⁴ ~~refers~~ ^{depicts} the deity as Mayūravāhini. This deity has three eyes and is riding on a peacock. She holds the rosary and the book in her hands. It is datable to circa 10th century A.D.⁶⁵

Bapabhatti Suri⁶⁶ describes the two-armed form of the Goddess in a laudatory stanza dedicated to the Goddess. The devī holds a manuscript with Varada mudrā and a lotus in her hands. The verse is datable to circa 8th century A.D.⁶⁷

The Pañcākala-bhāṣya⁶⁸ describes the devī holding the book in her left hand while the Bhāgavatī Sutra⁶⁹ refers ^{to} her carrying a full blown lotus in her hand.

Manisundara Suri (15th century A.D.)⁷¹ in his work Śrī Śāradā-Stavāṣṭaka refers ^{to} the Goddess having the Viṇā and the book in her two hands.

The four-armed Sarasvatī appears to have enjoyed the highest veneration among both the Śvetāmbara and the Digambara sects. The Goddess in both the sects bear almost identical attributes, barring the Vāhana. The texts like Sarasvatī Kalpa of Bapabhatti Suri,⁷² Nirvāṇakalikā,⁷³ Bhāratī Kalpa,⁷⁴ Pratiṣṭhā Sārodhāra,⁷⁵ Jīnendra Kalyāṇ-ābhyudaya,⁷⁶ Śāradā-stotra of Malayakīrti,⁷⁷ Ācāradinkara of Vardhman Sūri⁷⁸ etc. refers to the four-armed icons of the Goddess.

The Sarasvatī Kalpa of Bapabhatti Suri gives two sets of symbols for four-armed Sarasvatī.⁷⁹ The first one describes the Goddess as of white complexion and holding the

Vīṇā, the book, the rosary of pearls and the white lotus in her hands. She puts on white garment and wears ornaments of pearls. Jinaprabha Sūrī of Vividha-tīrtha-kalpa (14th century A.D.),⁸⁰ gives the same form in his Sāradāstava, but prescribes a lotus seat. The other form in Sarasvatī-kalpa states that the Goddess should be attributed with the abhaya mudrā, the Varada mudrā, Pustaka and a lotus. A third form is also prescribed, in which the Goddess is shown seated on a lotus in the Padmāsana, with lotuses in her four hands.⁸¹ The Sarasvatī-kalpa is dated to circa 10th-11th century A.D.⁸²

According to the Nirvāṇa Kalikā of Pādalipta Sūrī (III) (Circa A.D.900),⁸³ Sarasvatī carries a book, a rosary, a lotus, the Varadamudrā and various other objects in her other hands.

The Bhāratī-Kalpa (dated to circa 11th century A.D.) refers the devī as tri-netrā, and prescribes abhayamudrā, Jñāna mudrā, rosary and manuscript as attributes of the devī.⁸⁴

The Digāmbara text Pratiṣṭhā sārodhāra⁸⁵ refers to her as riding on a peacock but gives no iconographic details. The Jina Saṃhitā of Ekasandhi represents another Digāmbara tradition. It describes the deity (Vāṇī) as seated in Parṣyāṅka-āsana, three-eyed, ^{having} crescent in her Jaṭā and four-armed. The four-hands show the Jñānamudrā, the rosary, the abhaya and the book.⁸⁶

The Vidyānuvādaṅga Jīnendrakalyāṇābhyudaya⁸⁷ recommended two sets of objects for the goddess. The first

one refers ^{to} her as Brāhmī and describes her as displaying the Vyākhyāna mudrā, the rosary, the abhaya and the fruit. She has three faces, a lotus seat and peacock mount. The other one mentions Sarasvatī as Bhāṣā, riding on a swan and showing the pāśā, the lotus, the book and the abhaya mudrā in the four hands.⁸⁸

A verse in the Sārādā stotra of Malayakīrti⁸⁹ states that the lower right hand of the Goddess Sarasvatī should hold the Varada mudrā, right upper hand a rosary, the lower left hand a Pustaka and the left upper hand a lotus.

The Ācāradīnīkāra of Vardhamānsūrī⁹⁰ describes the goddess as Bhagavatī Brāhmanī. She is four-handed and carries Vīṇā, Pustaka, Padma and akṣhamālā. It is datable to Circa 15th century A.D.⁹¹

BUDDHIST LITERATURE

The Goddess Sarasvatī plays an important part in the Buddhist pantheon like that of in Brahmanical and Jaina. It appears that the Buddhists have borrowed the idea and concept of the goddess of learning from the Brahmanical pantheon.⁹² However in the Vajrayāna pantheon, her popularity increased. Since she was the Hindu goddess of learning, she was associated with Mañjuśrī, the Buddhist God of Transcendental wisdom and also with Prajñāpāramitā, considered to be the goddess of transcendental wisdom.⁹³ Her worship is widely prevalent among the followers of Buddhism like Mañjuśrī and Prajñāpāramitā, because she is also believed by the Buddhists as bestowing knowledge, wisdom and memory.⁹⁴

Sarasvatī has five different forms in Buddhist Iconography. The Śādhnamālā contains the iconographic features of these forms, ~~which are~~ stated below.

i) Mahāsarasvatī :

The Goddess is two-armed, shows the Varadamudrā in her right hand and carries in the left the white lotus with its stem. She is white-complexioned, extremely compassionate, having a smiling face and wears garments decorated with white sandal flowers. The Goddess is conceived as ⁴twelve years old. She is always being surrounded by four deities identical in form with herself - Prajñā in front of her, Medhā to her right, Smṛiti to her left, and Mati in the west. These four divinities may also accompany other varieties of Sarasvatī.⁹⁵

ii) Vajravīṇā Sarasvatī :

Like Mahāsarasvatī, she is also white-complexioned and has two arms. But here she plays a vīṇā with both of her hands. She may also be represented in association with the four divinities as described above.⁹⁶

iii) Vajrasāradā :

She is seated on a lotus and has a crescent in the crown. She has three eyes and two arms, holding lotus and book, in her left and right hand respectively. She may also be attended by the above mentioned four divinities. The Sādhana is silent about the specification of particular āsana.⁹⁷

iv) Ārya Sarasvatī :

She is another variation of Sarasvatī and also called Vajrasarasvatī i.e. Sarasvatī of Vajrayānists. Conceived as a girl of Sixteen, she is white in complexion, and wears white clothes. She is also two-armed. She holds in her right hand the red lotus and carries the stalk of a lotus in the left on which rests Prajñāpāramitā book.⁹⁸

v) Vajrasarasvatī :

Though a Vajrayānist deity, she, here, has displayed an entirely different form. She has three faces and six arms. She is red complexioned but her hairs are brown and raised upwards. Her right face is blue and left one white.

moon and ^agarland of white lotuses. She is draped in a white silk. Her body lacks self-existence, emits light rays without end and has in back a shining curtain in the form of a moon. This is the white Sarasvatī of the Brahmin Kilā School, (f.no.413).¹⁰⁵

(ii) There is the secret evocation of the red Sarasvatī in the lineage of the Kashmirian Pandit Bhikshaparama (f.no.505). After going through various ritual performances and meditation, the officiant imagines that he becomes the Devī Sarasvatī. The devī is one faced, and two-armed. The right hand holds the wish-granting jewel (cintāmani) and the left hand holds the knowledge mirror (jñānadarsa). She is thought of as her right leg bent forward and left retracted. She is decorated with various head ornaments of jewel, ear-ring, necklace, bracelets, pearl girdle, and a silk garment. She is of sixteen years and having calm, smiling ^{face} and charming body, sending out innumerable rays. The officiant imagines that the appearances are devoid of self existence and imagines on the head a white OM, on the neck a red AH, and in the heart a black HUM.¹⁰⁶

(iii) Here for the red Sarasvatī as a consort in the Bo-don lineage, the officiant follows various preliminaries, leading (f.no.542) to the officiant's becoming meditatively Vajradevī Vāgīsvarī. Her colour is conceived as red. ~~she has one~~ face and four-arms. The two basic hands of her embrace the

male deity, and with the remaining ~~ones, in the~~ left holds a precious musical instrument and in the remaining right slowly plays the instrument. Next to her is seated the Lord, the venerable Mañjughosa, ^{who is} four-armed ^{and} the ~~two basic~~ embraces the Goddess. The other right hand holds a sword that blazes with light rays and the left possesses a blue lotus ^{the} on top of which is the Prajñāpāramitā book. Both the deities are well-decorated with all manner of jewels. On the petal, to their east, is noticed Prajñā, ^{on} the southern one Matī, on the western one is smṛti and on the northern one is Medhā; each having one face and two arms, holding a sword with the right and a white lotus with the left. The central deities and the retinue all have on their forehead an OM, on their neck an AH, in their heart a HUM. In this case, there was no indication of the goddess's age, although the presumption is that she is here ^{that} also sixteen years old.¹⁰⁷

References

1. Agni Purāna, 49/20, 50/16.
2. Brahma-Vaivarta Purāna, Ch.IV, Sloka 19-29.
3. B.P.Basu, Śrīmad Devībhāgavatam, Vol.II.
4. Śilparatna, Vol.XCVII, Sloka 13.
5. Ibid, Vol.XVIII, Sloka 3.
6. Viṣṇuḥarmottara Purana, Ch.64.
7. Agni Purāna, Ch.XX.
8. Matsya Purāna, Ch.LXVI.
9. Skanda Purāna, Nagarakhanda, Ch.XLIX, Verses 18-20.
10. T.A.G.Gopinath Rao, EHI, Varanasi, 1971, p.334.
11. D.R.Rajeswari, Śakti Iconography, New Delhi, 1989, p.29.
12. Bhāgavata Purāna, Ch.III.
13. Brihaḍ Dharma Purāna, Ch.VI, Verses 39-40.
14. T.A.G.Gopinath Rao, op.cit, Vol.I, Varanasi, 1971, pp.377-378.
15. Aṁsūmāī-bhedāgāma, 48/114.
16. Pūrvakāraṅgāma in EHI, Vol.I, Appendix-C, p.138.
17. Rajeswari, op.cit, p.26.
18. Aparāīitaprucchā, Ch.230.
19. Rūpamaṇḍana, Ch.V, Verses 61-63.
20. Roy(ed.), Purātattva Viśeṣāṅka, Uttar Pradesh, May, 1981, p.59.
21. Ibid.

22. Devātamurti Prakarana, Sloka 81.
23. D.R.Rajeswari, Śakti Iconography, New Delhi, 1989, p.25.
24. Ibid, p.26.
25. Ibid.
26. Hemadri, 1/725 ; 2/47.
27. Mānsara 24/51-52,
Indumati Mishra, Pratimāviḡyān (Vaisnava Puran Ke Adhar Par), p.70.
28. Balaram Srivastav (ed.), Śrī Tatvanidhī, pp.96-98.
29. N.K.Bhattasali, Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, Dacca, 1929, p.189.
30. Sāradātilaka tantra, p.368, Sloka 37.
31. Ibid, Ch.VI, Verses 34-36 and 113-123.
32. A.Avalon (ed.), Prapañchasāra Tantra, Tantra texts, Vol.III, p.48, Sloka 3.
33. Ibid, Astama Patala, Sloka 29.
34. Ibid, p.60, Sloka 53-54.
35. Bhattasali, op.cit, p.189.
36. Ibid.
37. Panchanan Tarakarata, (ed.), Tantrasāra, p.198, Sloka 14.
38. Ibid, p.201, Sloka 25.
39. K.K.Roy (ed.), Purātatva Viśesāṅka, Uttar Pradesh, p.59.
40. The same form is also found in Mahābhārata, Bhisama Parvan, Adhyāya XXIII. The Hindu Mahāsarasavatī is known to be a variant of the Goddess Durgā or Bhadrakalī. Venkatesvara (ed.), Durgāsaptasatī, 1916, p.283, Verse 14-15.
41. Silparatna, Ch.XXIV, Verse 4.
42. Mohanlal Bhagwandas Jhaveri, Comparative and Critical Study of Mantrasāstra (Being the Introduction to Sri Bhairava Padmāvati Kalpa, Ahamedabad), 1944, p.294.

43. Sutrakrtanga (2.2.15 - P.L.Vaidya, Part-I, 1928, p.87) and Nayadhammakahad (XVI, 129 - N.N.Vaidya, p.189) refer to Uppayani, (Utpatani), Vetali, Gauri, Gandhari, Jambhani, Stambhani, Antaddhani (Antardhani) and several other Vidyās.
44. Sanghadasagani (C.A.D.700) and Hemacandra Suri (C mid 12th century A.D.) respectively in their works Vasudevahindi, and Trisastisalakapuriscarita mention that the Vidyas are 48,000 in number.
45. B.C.Bhattacharya, Jaina Iconography, Lahore, 1939, p.163.
46. M.N.P.Tiwari, Sarasvati in Jaina Tantric Worship, Paper read at the International Conference of South Asian Religious Art Studies in Pantheon of Power, September 1984, p.2.
47. Ibid.
48. H.R.Kapadia and Hiralal Jain (ed.), Caturvimsatika of Baopabhatti Suri, Appendix-A, Sarada Stotra-3), Bombay, 1926, p.181.
49. Bhattacharya, op.cit, pp.163-164.
50. Ibid.
51. U.P.Shah, Iconography of the Jaina Goddess Sarasvati, Journal of the University of Bombay, September 1941, p.212.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid, p.196.
54. U.P.Shah, op.cit, op.cit, Bombay, 1941, p.196.
55. Bhattacharya, op.cit, p.164.
56. M.N.P.Tiwari, op.cit, p.2.
57. Bhattacharya, op.cit, p.164.
58. Sri Kalyanakanda-Stuti, Verse 4.
59. Sarasvata Yantra Pujā, B.C.R.I, MS, No.192 of 1872-73.
60. Shah, op.cit, p.198.
61. Ratnasagar, p.2.
62. Sri Sāradā-Stavastaka, Verse 6.

63. Śrī Kalyānakanda Stuti, Verse 4.
64. Shah, op.cit, p.201.
65. M.N.P.Tiwari, op.cit, p.8.
66. Shah, op.cit, p.198.
67. M.N.P.Tiwari, op.cit, p.3.
68. Pañcākalpa-bhāṣya, Kalpa
69. Bhāgavati Sutra, Vol.III, p.979.
70. Ratnāsāgar, p.2.
71. Śrī Sāradā-Stavastaka, Verse 6.
72. Bhairava Padmavati Kalpa, Appendix 12, p.70.
73. Nirvānakalika, p.37.
74. Tiwari, op.cit, p.7.
75. Pratisthā-Sarodhara, Adhyaya VI, p.132.
76. Jinendra-Kalyānabhyudaya (in MS), Folio 23, CF. U.P.Shah, op.cit, p.207.
77. Ibid, Folio, 98.
78. Pratisthā-Kalpa, p.146. B.C.Bhattacharya, The Jaina Iconography, p.163.
79. Bhairava Padmāvati Kalpa, Appendix 12, p.70 and Appendix 14, Verse 7.
80. U.P.Shah, op.cit,
81. Bhairava Padmāvati Kalpa, Appendix 12.
82. Tiwari, op.cit, p.7.
83. Nirvāna Kalikā, p.37.
84. Bharati Kalpā, See Bhairava Padmavati Kalpa, Appendix 11, verses 2 and 8.
85. Pratisthā Sarodhara, Adhyaya VI, p.132.
86. Jinasamīhtā, Ch.39, Verse 37-38.
87. Jinendra-Kalyānabhyudaya (in MS), Folio 23. U.P.Shah, op.cit, p.207.

88. U.P.Shah, op.cit, p.207.
89. Śrī Sarasvatī-stotra of Malayakirti, Verse 4.
90. Bhattacharya, op.cit, p.108.
91. Tiwari, op.cit, p.8.
92. R.S.Gupte, Iconography of the Hindus, Buddhist and Jains, Bombay, 1972, pp.117-118.
93. Ibid, p.118.
94. Ibid.
95. Sādhnamālā, Sādhana, No.162.
96. Ibid, Sādhana No.165.
97. Ibid, Sādhana, No.166.
98. Ibid, Sādhana, Nos. 164, 168.
99. Ibid, Sādhana, No.161, 163, 167
JIH, Vol.XLI, Part-II, December 1963, pp.685-86.
100. Niṣpānnayogāvali, p.70.
101. Ibid, p.73.
102. Ibid,
103. Young East, 1925, Vol.I, No.5
What Japan owes to India, pp.144-45.
Sādhanamālā, p.3.
104. Alexwayman, The Goddess Sarasvatī From India to Tibet in Kailash, A Journal of Himalayan Studies, Vol.V, No.3, 1977, pp.245-51.
105. Ibid, p.249.
106. Ibid, p.250.
107. Ibid, p.251.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES :

The Iconographical study of Sarasvatī is chiefly based on archaeological finds of different parts of India. Archaeological finds of Northern, Southern, Central, Western and Eastern India including sculptures in stone, wood, as well as in metal, seals, paintings and epigraphical and numismatic evidences have been taken into account. The vast span of time, at least from 2nd century A.D. upto 15th-16th century A.D. have yielded numerous images of Goddess of learning. Some of the images show clear iconographic features while others are damaged or in mutilated condition due to ravages by man and nature. Some icons also throw new light on the iconic features of the deity. However, inspite of regional or local variations in images, some of her distinct iconographic features were all through maintained. In different periods, her iconographical characteristic went through modification and ramification, just to meet the requisites of the creeds to which she belonged or to satisfy regional concept. Thus in the medieval temples of Orissa, Bihar, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujurat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Himanchal Pradesh etc, we find beautiful images of the goddess, having variations in their iconographic features.

EPIGRAPHS :

The Inscriptions of India as well as of Nepal, and Champa mention the goddess Sarasvatī. However unlike the major deities, she is referred to in a few inscriptions only. The inscriptions of various dynasties and the inscribed labels on the pedestals of the deity throw light on the worship of Sarasvatī.

The earliest inscriptional reference of the goddess of Sarasvati goes to the Maurya-scythian era, which refer frequently to Utsava and Samāj.¹ This Samāj were often held in honour of the deity e.g. Brahmā, Paśupati and Śiva or Sarasvatī.² The inscribed image of Sarasvatī found at Kaṅkālī Tilā (Mathurā) is the earliest of its kind.³ The inscription is in early Brāhmī character dated in the year 54 (Śaka Era 54) i.e. 132 A.D.⁴ now preserved in State Museum, Lucknow. This inscription is of very much importance because at first it refers to the Goddess as Sarasvatī, probably the earliest in India, caused to be made by an ironsmith named Gova (Gopa) at the request of the Jain Aryādeva, a narrator (Vāchaka) of perhaps Jain sacred lore and scripture, and secondly, the last line of the inscription on the image refers to the association of Sarasvatī with dancers too, which gives an idea about her being regarded by the Goddess of dance and music.⁵ The Kāmasutra and the Jayamaṅgalā commentary inform us that dramatic performances were held in the temples of Sarasvatī.⁶

The inscriptions of the medieval period give an idea about the origin, mythology, iconography and various aspects of Sarasvatī. In the Maihar Inscription of the middle of 10th century A.D.⁷ her origin is said to be the lotus like face of Brahman, on the stage of whose tongue, she dances according to another epigraph.⁸ Mangalagiri pillar Inscription (two pillar inscription) of the time of Krishnaraja of Vijaynagar also attests the above statement that the goddess of learning is generally supposed to dwell on the mouth of Chaturmukha (Brahmā).⁹ Sarasvatī is also described as in the Rewah plates of the time of Trailokya Malladeva of K.E.963¹⁰ (1212 A.D.) as dancing on the mouth of Chaturmukha (Brahmā). The Dhurti plates of Kālachuri Trailokyamalla¹¹ also refers to Sarasvatī as a female swan and where Sarasvatī always enjoys herself in assemblage in lotus (mouth of Brahmā). The Arulal Perumal Inscription of Saka-Samvat 1127 (1205-06 A.D.) of King Tammusiddhi¹² gives an interesting clue for the origin of Sarasvatī. It states that Bhāgirathī was responsible for bringing down the heavenly Sarasvatī (the gaṅgā and the Goddess of eloquence) at the same time to the earth.

Sarasvatī's association with Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva are known from various Inscriptions. A few Inscriptions refer her as wife of Brahmā and some as the daughter of Brahmā. One Inscription of Ittagi of A.D.1112 of Western Chalukyan king Vikramāditya VI refers Brahmā as the Lord of Vāṇī (Sarasvatī) and also as the lover of Sarasvatī.¹³

Sarasvatī's association with Viṣṇu in medieval period is well-reflected in the inscriptions. The Chatsu Inscription of Baladitya¹⁴ of 10th century A.D. refers Sarasvatī as a co-wife of Lakṣmī and as jealously guarding her husband's action (i.e. of Murārī). The same Inscription states that Sarasvatī is said to have aversion to the people endowed with Śrī.¹⁵ Sarasvatī's intimate relation with Nārāyana is also attested in the Khalari Stone Inscription of the reign of Haribrahmadeva dated in Vikram 1471 (1414 A.D.)¹⁶

The erotic love expression of Viṣṇu with Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī is attested by one Bhubaneswar Inscription of about 12th century A.D.¹⁷ It states that "May Hari Make you prosperous; the God, who being desirous of embracing (Sarasvatī) with his body marked with Saffron-lines on the Jar like breasts of Lakṣmī (already) held by him in deep embrace, was thus taunted by the goddess of speech Sarasvatī - do not spoil thy fresh garland (Oh, Lord).¹⁸ In one Inscription dated Nepal Samvat 689,¹⁹ discovered at Mangalbazar at Lalitpur and collected in the Nepal Museum, both Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are delineated as the consorts of Viṣṇu. And they who are symbolised as the goddess of material as well as spiritual wealth were at daggers drawn against each other. This is the reason why the learned men have put forth the ~~above~~ saying in various literatures.²⁰ This saying is also inscribed in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription.²¹ In a 15th century Inscription, the association of the goddess Sarasvatī

with Viṣṇu is unambiguously declared in Nepal and she is considered to be the Śakti of Madhuripa, a name of Viṣṇu.²² Sarasvatī is interestingly ^{depicted} referred as daughter-in-law of Padmā (Lakṣmī) in one Inscription.²³

Sarasvatī's association with Śiva is mentioned in one of the Khajuraho Inscriptions,²⁴ where she is said to have taken her seat on the mouth of Lord Śiva. In the Pria-Ainkosi Stone Inscription of Champa²⁵ dated 868 A.D., she is also identified as Śakti of Śambhu, and also designated as Bāgīsvarī. The Kurda Stone Inscription (972-73 A.D.) refers to Sarasvatī as a Śakti of one of the trinity.²⁶

Just as Brahmān, Viṣṇu and Śiva came to be regarded as the three aspects of the same God, similarly the three goddesses - Sarasvatī, Śrī and Umā - became three aspects of the same goddess.²⁷ This was poetically expressed in the Inscription from Maihār (middle of the tenth century A.D.) as 'the Goddess, who is the divine power of the lotus - born, who is Kamalā in Viṣṇu's embrace, who is the fair complexioned one known throughout the world and worshipped as half the body of Girisā'.²⁸

Interestingly in Nepal, Sarasvatī is also regarded as the Śakti of Mañjuśrī. An Inscription on a stone slab depicting both Sarasvatī and Mañjuśrī, belonging to circa 17th century A.D. discovered at Thankol attests the above fact.²⁹ Another Inscription of N.S.857 of the Mañjuśrī:

temple located at Lalitpur, records a hymn inpraise of both Mañjunāth and Viswakarmā; where in also is noticed the concept of Sarasvatī as the Śakti of Mañjusrī.³⁰

Sarasvatī is known by various names from Inscriptions. In Nagpur Stone Inscription³¹ of Vikrama 1161 (1103 A.D.), there is a reference to Vāgdevayān in the dual number, which is rather interesting. According to Skanda³² and Pañcma Purāṇas,³³ Sarasvatī and Gāyatrī were two wives of Brahmā and the two goddesses also have some similar features. Hence Vāgdevyā here may refer to Sarasvatī and Gāyatrī.³⁴

The Inscription at Ittagi of W.Chalukya Vikramaditya VI refers Sarasvatī as Vāñī.³⁵ One Inscription, Dahod Stone Inscription of Mahamuda³⁶ (Begashe) V.S. 1545 (Saka Era 1410), Sultan of Gujrat refers to a Goddess, to whom Jaina writer Chandraprabha Suri³⁷ takes as Brāhmī alias Sarasvatī i.e. most probably Durgā-Sarasvatī of Śāradā shrine. The Bijholi Rock Inscription of Chahmana Somesvara, (V.S. 1226), adored the goddess of speech under her two appellations, Sāraçā and Bhāratī.³⁸ Pujaripali Stone Inscription of Gopāladeva³⁹ (K.E.) 11th century A.D. calls the Goddess as Gaurī whereas the Maihār Inscription refers her as identical with Brāhmī, Kamalā, Gaurī.

The Karanbel Stone Inscription of Jayasimha⁴⁰ describes the goddess as Çaturvritti, the presiding deity of the four arts viz, nr̥tya, gita, vādyā and kāvyā. The four arts flow in four streams, hence the goddess Çaturgati.⁴¹ Her

association with nṛtya is known from the Khalari Stone Inscription,⁴² Karkal Inscription of Bhairava II (Saka 1508),⁴³ Akalpundi grant of 1290 A.D.⁴⁴ etc. She is ^{portrayed} referred as a cunning dancing girl in an inscription of Ittagi of W.Chalukya.

The concept of goddess as the spirit of learning is found in the Chebrolu Inscription 1213 A.D. of Jaya,⁴⁵ which invokes the goddess as the divine ambrosial flow of learning. The Garavapadu grant (1260 A.D.) of Kāktiya Ganapatideva also adores the Goddess ^{and} describes as tejas = Sarasvat-ākhyam, i.e. the flame called ⁺Sarasvata.⁴⁶ An unpublished inscription in the Gwalior Museum⁴⁷ of Saṃvat 1038 refers ^{to that} that the Goddess of Sarasvatī with her bright lamp of learning, has enlightened this world, which had been enveloped by the darkness of ignorance. The Bheraghat Inscription of Queen Alhandevī (Chedi year 907)⁴⁸ invoking the blessing of Sarasvatī states that Sarasvatī brings about all intercourse of man and by partaking of even a small portion of whose elegance, man may secure greater weight in assemblies. One Jaina Inscription at the temple of Neminatha of Mount Abu ^{avers} refers that Sarasvatī's abode is said to be the minds of poets,⁴⁹ where as in another inscription she is mentioned as the cow of plenty to poets.⁵⁰ ^{That} Sarasvatī, the mother, is eminently ~~as~~ the bestower of learning, wisdom and poetic grace is also indicated in one Nagpur stone Inscription.⁵¹ In Madagihal Inscription of 1093 A.D.⁵², Sarasvatī is regarded as ^{the} (Mistress) of art of literature.

The Koni Stone Inscription⁵³ of (K.E.900) also refers Sarasvatī as ^{the goddess} who makes the practical life in the three worlds possible and causes the attainment of Imperishable goal. Karanabel Stone Inscription also speaks that she is the cause of the attainment of the four objects of human life.⁵⁴

Interestingly some Inscriptions also throw light on art, iconography and temples of Sarasvatī. Sarasvatī is described as seated on Haṁsa and in Padmāsana and everything ^{white} is associated with her ~~white~~ in various literatures, and it is amply supported by Inscriptional data. The Chebrolu Inscription of Jaya (Śaka-Samvat 1135) of Kākatiya king Gaṇapati⁵⁵ refers ^{to} Sarasvatī, as seated in Haṁsa. The Jaina Inscription of Temple of Neminath of Mt. Abhu refers to her Vahana as swan.⁵⁶ Raipur Stone Inscriptions⁵⁷ of Brahma Era (Vikrama) year 1458, and Dhurti plate⁵⁸ refer ^{to} lotus as an attribute in one of the hands of Sarasvatī. The Goddess of learning is associated with book and lyre is referred in ^{to} the Mandhata plates of Devapala of Vikrama Samvat 1282.⁵⁹ The Devi is said to have worn Kirita⁷ taratna mukuṭa, having Muktakesā (opened hair), and her body is like Viṇāspṭatika, as known from Srīngi-Rishi. Inscription of Prince Mokala of Mewar belonging to 15th century.⁶⁰ She is referred to as Sarva-Śukla-Sarasvatī as known from Rewah plates of Trailokya Malladeva of K.E.963 (1212 A.D.).⁶¹ The Kalvan plates of Yasodharma,⁶² one sub-ordinate chief of illustrious Bhoja ^{States} refers Sarasvatī having tilaka in her face and Kirita

mukuṭa ^{on the head.} ~~etc.~~ Sarasvatī sits on Divya Simhāsana is also known from one Inscription found at Rampur (M.P.) of about Samvat 1664 A.D.⁶³

The colour of Sarasvatī is described as pure white in the vast literature and it is amply supported by Inscriptions of various periods. Dhurti plates of 963 K.E.⁶⁴ refers ^{to} the Goddess as all-white Sarasvatī and another inscription states that she looks like a white female swan.⁶⁵ The Kapalur grant of Saka Samvat 1258 (A.D.1336-37) of Harihara,⁶⁶ founder of the city Vijaynagar, ^{speaks of} refers Sarasvatī and states that her body resembles ^{the} splendour ^{of} the sky with its autumnal clouds. Her hair is said to have been decked with the digit of the moon and who carresses a parrot and has a lute. This Inscription is ~~rather~~ noteworthy because it at first refers to us about parrot's association with Sarasvatī. In some of the dhya ^{āna} mantras Sarasvatī is described as carrying book, akṣamālā, ~~veṇā~~ and also a parrot.⁶⁷ Parrot is the representation of all beings. People teach words to the parrot and while it repeats they ~~will~~ enjoy. In the same manner Sarasvatī bestowed ^{ed} upon the beings the knowledge and wisdom, when the people used it in their lines, she enjoys. A parrot is the symbolic representation of all other ^{beings.} ~~arts.~~ She (the Goddess) is the embodiment of all arts. Her white colour is the symbol of happiness and bliss. She is the form of Ānanda. Another Inscription of Kandukar (19) of A.D.1407-08⁶⁸ also refers ^{to} Sarasvatī as white

as jasmine and the moon and also speaks her as the giver of strength. A firman by the emperor of (No. IX) Delhi of Hijira 1088 refers to the Goddess of learning as Śārādā and speaks about her luster which equals that of crores of moon shining simultaneously.⁶⁹ One inscription of Śāka Samvat 1608 of Sri Sankarāchārya Matha, speaks of jasmine flowers which adorns the crown of Sarasvatī.⁷⁰

A few Inscriptions also give us an idea about the establishment of some temples dedicated to the Goddess of learning. The most important of those is that of Dhār Prasasti of Arjunavarman of Paramāra king (13th century).⁷¹ The inscription states that the drāmā, Pārijāta Mañjarī Nāṭaka by Mandana was acted for the first time in the city of Dhār. According to the prologue, the first performance of drama took place in a temple of the Goddess Sarasvatī. ~~The~~ famous Inscription of Dhār, inscribed ^{on} the pedestal of Vāgdevī, now preserved in London Museum, ^{describes} ~~refers~~ that the illustrious Bhoja, the moon among kings having first made the mother Goddess of speech, created an auspicious image and it is said to have most probably been kept in the Sarasvatī temple of Dhār.⁷² Thus here ~~there~~ is a reference to a temple dedicated to the Goddess of learning at Dhār in medieval period.

Another inscription worthy of mention in this respect is ^{dis} ~~re~~covered from Maihār (middle of 10th century A.D.).⁷³ The inscription refers ^{to} the person, in whose memory the Goddess Śārādā (Sarasvatī) was apparently installed in a

temple on the hill.⁷⁴ The reference is no doubt to the hill at Maihār, in which inscribed slabs are found referring to one Devadhara building, a temple, for the Goddess Sarasvatī in the memory of his son. This reference obviates the fact that Goddess Śāradā of Maihār was originally installed in the hill.

An Inscription is noticed by D.Mitra from a damaged stone sculpture from Wari representing an eight or ten-armed images.⁷⁵ The object of the inscription is to record the construction of an image by a person named Padmagiri. The image is stated to have been made (for installation) in the brick built house of one Padmagiri preceptor. The Paṅva-Pura as mentioned in inscription seems actually to have been a temple built by a person in question (the word Bhavana, which is a synonym of Pura) is sometimes used in the sense of a temple).⁷⁶ Here the inscription refers to the Goddess as Sarasvatī and ~~interestingly~~ have^{ing} eight or ten-armed^s, rare in eastern India.

Besides, there are also references about installation of Sarasvatī images. An fragmentary epigraph on the east wall of third Prākāra in the Raṅganāth Temple of Srirangam⁷⁷ in Trichinapaly makes a mention of a Sarasvatī bhandāra library. It also records that in an auxillary Mandapa, near the library provision was approximately made for the installation and worship of three presiding deities of learning i.e. Hyagriva, Sarasvatī and Vyāsa-Bhagavān.⁷⁸ One Gurgi^hstone Inscription of Kokalladeva II of 10th century A.D. describes that one

Śaiva ascetic named Prasāntasīva erected a temple of Śiva and attached Ganapati and Sarasvatī at the gate.⁷⁹ In an Inscription at Patan⁸⁰ (on the pedestal of an Image) calls it the image of Sārādā and gives V.S. 1440 (1383 A.D.) as the year of its installations by Sri Siddha Sūrī. Another inscription found at Landun, states that one Āsādevī, bows to Sarasvatī in (1219 ^{V.S.}~~A.D.~~ 1162 A.D.). Besides this, there are other inscripational references, which speaks about the installation of Sarasvatī.⁸¹

Thus a survey of some Indian inscriptions give us an idea that the antiquity of worship of Sarasvatī goes back atleast to 2nd century A.D. and continued upto 15th-16th century A.D.

NUMISMATIC :

Besides epigraphs there are also numismatic evidences of Sarasvatī worship. Iconographical representation of Sarasvatī are found in abundance in the Gupta period.⁸² The goddess of learning is known to have been represented on the reverse of the lyrist type of *coins of* Samudragupta ~~gold-coins~~.⁸³ The goddess ^{is} nimbate ^{is} seated to left on a wicker stool, wearing a loose robe, close fitting cap and jewellery, and holding a fillet in her outstretched right and cornucopiae in the left hand.⁸⁴ Some have identified her with Lakṣmī also, as Lakṣmī usually appears on the Gupta-Gold coins. But due to the absence of lotus in her hand, scholar identifies it as Sarasvatī. Though she (Sarasvatī) has not been given her specific symbol i.e. Viṇā in her hands, the Viṇā on the obverse is taken to identify her with Sarasvatī Viṇāpanī.⁸⁵ Similarly the goddess on the coins of Kumaragupta I of 'Tiger slayer' type is identified with Durgā, her Vāhana is peacock and she may also be taken to be Sarasvatī.⁸⁶ But it may represent Kaumārī, the better half of Kumāra Kārtikeya. Goddess Sarasvatī in tribhaṅga posture is also found on the reverse of one of the Rājalilā type of coins of Samāchārdeva, (C.550-575 A.D.), a predecessor of Sasānka of Gauḍa.⁸⁷ Here the goddess is standing on a lotus, with her left hand resting on a lotus with bent stalk and by the right hand draws up another lotus in front of her face and below it, there is a swan trying to snatch a lotus leaf in front by its

open beak.⁸⁸ The presence of swan evidently identifies the goddess to be Sarasvatī. A gold coin of the Gupta style and fabric in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, datable to 6th-7th century A.D. has the figure of a goddess on its reverse.⁸⁹ The goddess is nimbate, standing to left, holding lotus in outstretched right hand, behind her a lotus-plant and at her feet a haṁsa (or peacock according to Smith). Allan⁹⁰ describes it as the goddess of Lakṣmī. But Banarjēa states that "the haṁsa at the feet of the figure would justify us in identifying her as Sarasvatī, the counter-part of Lakṣmī."⁹¹ According to Gode,⁹² "If Banarjēa's remarks are correct, we have in the above coins numismatic evidence of the 7th century A.D. about Sarasvatī with haṁsa at her feet." Besides, Sarasvatī also appears on the coins of Narendravarma, a Bengal king of the late Gupta period as standing in tribhaṅga posture.

Like numismatic remains, "we have a few representation of Sarasvatī on seals and similar objects. Of the many religious seals that were unearthed by Marshal at Erita,⁹³ there is one circular seal No.18, which contains a Vase (bhadrā-ghaṭa) on the pedestal, below it is written in northern characters of the Gupta period, Sarasvatī.⁹⁴ The goddess of learning is thus represented here by means of ghaṭa emblem, as observes Banarjēa.⁹⁵ It is remarkable that the Purnāghaṭa implies the same meaning as that of a river.

But we do not have any other evidence to support that such symbolic worship of the goddess was prevalent, though the possibility can not be ruled out. However, here it can be mentioned that formerly in Orissa, when no earthen images of Goddess like Durgā, Sarasvatī, Gaṇeśha, Kālī etc were worshipped, in its place only a 'Kalasha' or pitcher of water, sometimes topped with a coconut, was being invoked as the goddess and worshipped.⁹⁶

Besides a round seal found at Rajghat with pot and foliage on a pedestal and having gupta legend Śrī Sārasvata reminds us of the above Bhita seals.⁹⁷

Interestingly some monuments dedicated to the goddess are also noticed in different parts of India and Nepal. But their number is very less and the dilapidated condition does not give us a scope for study of their architecture. So far as temples dedicated to this goddess are concerned, mention may be made of Sāradāpīṭha at Kashmir (well known in 15th and 16th century A.D.),⁹⁸ sārādā shrine at Mainar (middle of 10th century A.D.),⁹⁹ Sarasvatī sadan at Dhār¹⁰⁰ (11th century A.D. Sāradāpīṭha at Sringeri (of Medieval period), Vāgeśvarī at Varanasi at Gadag¹⁰¹ (Karnataka) (Medieval period). Besides Vāgīśvarī temples in a village Thanjavur,¹⁰² sarasvatī temple at Basar . ~~etc are worth noticed.~~ In Nepal also, temples dedicated to the Goddess of learning are noticed at various places of medieval period.

References

1. R.C.Mazumdar and Others, An Advanced History of India, London, 1963, p.134.
2. Ibid.
3. V.A.Smith, Jaina Stupas and Other Antiquities of Mathura, Allahabad, 1901, p.56.
Luder's Inscription, No.54.
4. N.P.Joshi, Catalogue of the Brahmanical Sculptures in the State Museum, Lucknow, p.63.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. EI, Vol.XXXV, p.175, Verse 39.
8. Motupalli Pillar Inscription in EI, Vol.XII, p.190.
9. Ibid, Vol.VI, p.118, Verse 12.
10. Ibid, Vol.XXX, p.5, Verse 3.
11. CII, Vol.IV, Part I, pp.370-373.
12. Ibid, Vol.III, pp.204-205.
13. EI, Vol.VII, pp.153-54, Verse 9.
14. Ibid, Vol.XIII, p.41.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid, Vol.II, p.230.
17. Ibid, Vol.XII, p.13.
18. Ibid.
N.G.Mazumdar, Inscriptions of Bengal, Vol.III, p.25ff.
19. Rukmini Pradhan, Nepāli Janjēvan mā Devī Saraswatīka Sthāna : Ak Adhyana in Molam 8, No.1, December, 1980, p.

20. Hariram Joshi, Saraswati in Ralamba edited H.Joshi, Kathamandu, July-September 1981, No.3, p.41.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. EI, Vol.VI, p.118, Verse 11.
24. Hariram Joshi, op.cit, p.41.
25. Ibid.
26. Indian Antiquary, Vol.XII, p.264.
27. M.Mukhopadhyay, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī in Sanskrit in Sanskrit Inscriptions in D.C.Sircar (ed.), Calcutta, 1970, p.107.
28. EI, Vol.XXXV, p.174.
29. Joshi, op.cit, p.41.
30. Kantiourā-Silalekhā suchī, (ed.) Sankarman Rajavamsi, Rashtriya Abilekhagar, Kathamandu, p.125.
31. EI, Vol.II, p.182.
32. Skanda Purāna, Brahma Khanda, Setu. 40.
33. Padma Purāna, Uttara Khanda, III.
34. Mukhopadhyaya, op.cit, p.108.
35. EI, Vol.XIII, p.41.
36. Ibid, Vol.XXIV, p.22.
37. Hemachandra, Verse 39-46; Stein, Kalhana's (ed.), Chronicle of Kashmir, Vol.II, pp.279.
38. EI, Vol.XXVI, p.88.
39. CII, Vol.IV, Part-I, p.593.
40. EI, Vol.XXXV, pp.171-73.
41. Indian Antiquary, Vol.XVIII, p.216.
CII, Vol.IV, Part-I, pp.637-641.
42. Ibid, pp.576-578.
43. EI, Vol.VIII, p.135.

44. EI, Vol.XIII, pp.259-60.
45. Ibid, Vol.V, p.144.
46. Ibid, Vol.XVIII, p.350.
47. Ibid, Vol.XL, p.195.
48. Ibid, Vol.II, p.14.
CII, Vol.IV, pp.570-573.
49. EI, Vol.VIII, No.21.
50. CII, Vol.IV, Part-I, pp.570-573.
51. EI, Vol.II, p.182.
52. Ibid, Vol.XV, p.326.
53. CII, Vol.IV, Part-II, pp.463-470.
54. Ibid, pp.637-641.
55. EI, Vol.V, p.144.
56. Ibid, Vol.VIII, p.200.
57. CII, Vol.IV, Part-II, pp.570-573.
58. Ibid, Part-I, pp.370-373.
59. EI, Vol.IX, p.103.
60. Ibid, Vol.XXII, p.231.
61. Ibid, Vol.XXV, p.5.
62. Ibid, Vol.XIX, p.71.
63. Ibid, Vol.XXXVI, p.126.
64. CII, Vol.IV, Part-I, pp.370-373.
65. Ibid, Part-II, pp.570-573.
66. A.Butterworth and V.V.Chetty (ed.), Copper plate and Stone Inscriptions of South India, Vol.I, Delhi,1989, pp.109-117.
67. D.R.Rajeswari, Sakti Iconography, New Delhi,1989, p.27.
68. A.Butterworth and V.V.Chetty(ed.), op.cit, Vol.II, pp.505-506.
69. Gopinath Rao (ed.), Copper Plate Inscription belonging to Sri-Sankaracharya, The Sri Kamkoti-pitha, 1986, pp.113-123.

70. Gopinath Rao (ed), op.cit, pp.133-38.
71. EI, Vol.VIII, p.98.
72. Ibid, p.103.
73. Ibid, Vol.XXXV, pp.171-173.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid, Vol.XXXV, pp.183-184.
76. Luder's List of Inscriptions, No.952.
77. No.139 of the Madras Epigraphical Collection for 1938-39.
78. EI, Vol.XXV, p.325.
79. CII, Vol.IV, Part I, p.232.
80. U.P.Shah, Iconography of the Jain Goddess Sarasvatī, p.204.
81. Devendra Handa and Govinda Agrawal, A new Jaina Sarasvatī from Rajasthan, in East and West, Rome,1973, p.2.
82. M.N.P.Srivastav, Mother Goddess in Indian Art, Archaeology and Literature, p.134.
83. JIH, Vol.XLI, III, S.N. 123, p.690.
84. Ibid.
85. R.K.Mukherji, The Gupta Empire, p.35.
86. JIH, Vol.XLI, III, S.N.123, p.690.
87. Altekar, The Coinage of the Gupta Empire, p.328.
88. Ibid.
89. IHQ, Vol.XIV, no.2, p.307, June 1938.
90. J.Allan, CGC, BM, Pl.XXIV, p.150.
91. IHQ, Vol.XIV, no.2, p.307.
92. JISOA, Vol.IX, p.137, 1941.
93. A.K.Coomarswamy, Eastern Art, Vol.I, Pl.XXIII, p.50.

94. A.K.Commarswamy, op.cit, p.50.
95. J.N.Banarjea, DHI, p.97.
96. K.B.Das and L.K.Mohapatra, Folklore of Orissa, New Delhi, 1979, p.92.
97. Banarjea, op.cit, p.98.
98. JIH, Vol.XLI, Part-III, p.686.
99. EI, Vol.XXXV, pp.171-173.
100. JIH, Vol.XLI, Part-III, p.688.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
