CHAPTER - II

ICONIC CHARACTERS OF BRAHMANIC SARASVATI

In Indian mythology we find different aspects of Sarasvati. The earliest representation of Sarasvati was merely as a terrestrial river. It originally stood for a primitive, but mighty stream mentioned at several places in the Rigveda, and considered divine apparently for the sacredness of its waters. Since the Sarasvati, at that remote stage, was a river held in high reverence, it was considered the best of all the rivers mentioned there.

But, curiously enough, in one of the mantras of the Rigveda Vasishtha, a renowned sage, is described as performing sacrifice on the bank of the river Sarasvati. He invokes Sarasvati to come over and grant him food. The mantra however, suggests that she is conceived here as a river-goddess presiding over the sacrifice held in her honour, and is invoked to receive oblations.

It is, however, apparent that Sarasvati in the Rigveda has been described both as a river and as a river-goddess. In the Rigveda we do not find a clear picture of the various parts of Sarasvati as is found in the post-Vedic literature of many of the gods and goddesses. But it is no wonder that the ascription of limbs had begun even in the time of this Veda. In one of the Rigvedic mantras, we, of course, come across the description of

1. RV., 1.3.12; 11.41.16; 111.23.4; v.42.12, 43.11; VI. 52.6; v11. 36.6.96.1.2; VIII. 21.17.18, 54.4; X. 17.7, 54.9, 75.5, etc.
2. RV., VII.95.6; v11.86.2.
3. RV., 1.164.49.
Sarasvati's breasts. They are obviously described as invoking pleasure, as giving superior wealth, and a possessing wealth. Indeed, the ascription of breasts to Sarasvati is significant and implies various aspects of her personality. "If we take Sarasvati as a river", as Dr. M.I. Khan Writers, "the breasts will imply its health-some waters endowed with wealth. Waters may also stand for Sarasvati residing in the clouds, or for cloud itself. The cloud, then would be the physical form of Sarasvati and the breasts would, thus symbolise the storehouse of the water she possess. While shedding it to the earth she brings happiness and wealth to the world." 1

Though, we do not find expressive reference to any specific form of Sarasvati in the Rgveda, there is a description of the beauty of Sarasvati in one of the mantras of this Veda. In the Rgveda 2 she is however, called 'subhra' which seems to be a step towards her anthropomorphosis. Since she is aptly called 'subhra', it is probably for this reason that in the later classical literature, she is conceived as of white complexion and as wearing white cloth 'subhra-Vastravrta'. Although, this colour of Sarasvati is a very interesting point, particularly so far as her anthropomorphosis is concerned, a landmark in development has been paved towards the iconographical character of the goddess in her entering the puranic era. It is the Puranas, which at first have anthropomorphised her to the fullest extent.

1. M.I. Khan, Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature, p. 32.
2. RV., V.42.12; VII. 95.6, 96.2.
and provide to us several iconographical references to her. In the Purāṇas, we, of course, find the prescription for the images of various gods and goddesses. Among the Purāṇas, the Agni1, the Matya2, the Viṣṇudharmottara3, the Markandeya4, the Bhāgavata5, the Linga6, the Padma7, the Skanda8, and the Brhad-dhārāma9 appear to deal with the iconographical description of Sarasvati. But, curiously enough, the fact that in the Puranic age, the theory of image-making had already been put to practice, is evident from some Puranic accounts. In the Skanda Purāṇa10, the king Ambuyīci who, after having known the great powers of Sarasvati, had a great regard in his heart for her, is said to have made an earthen image taking the clay out of the river Sarasvati. In the Nagarakhanda of this Purāṇa11 it is stated that king Baladeva made an earthen idol of Sarasvati and worshipped her with garlands and perfumes. She is said to have possessed four hands having lotus and aksamāla in the two right hands, while kamandalu and pustakā.

1. Agni Purāṇa, XLIX, 15
2. Matya Purāṇa, CCLI, 24; Ibid., CCLX 40; Ibid, CCLX 44
4. In the Devi-Mahatya of the Markandeya Purāṇa it is mentioned that the Mahā-Sarasvati holds an ankuśa in one of her hands.
5. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Ch. 111, Verse 16.
7. Padma Purāṇa, Ch. XVI, verses 306-309.
9. Brhadharma Purāṇa, Ch. VI, Verses 39-40
10. Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 46 16-17.
in the left hands, she sits on a holy stone. It is stated in this purana that Sarasvati possesses Jatamukuta with crescent moon over the head. Her neck is of blue colour and she has three eyes. Similarly, in the Vamana purana, Sarasvati is said to have been installed in the form of a linga at the sthanurtirsha by Siva himself. It is however, apparent that in the puranic age, there are not only allusions to iconographical feitures of Sarasvati, but also the witness that this was gradually translated into the real iconography.

Whatever might have been the fact, the religious and secular literature apparently provide us the iconographic details of the personified river goddess Sarasvati. In consequence of this fact it is now necessary to give a brief account of the chief iconic features of Sarasvati as found in different Brahmanical texts which deal with this prominently.

So far as her anthropomorphosis is concerned, the puranas, while describing certain rules for making the image of Sarasvati, appear to prescribe how the image of Sarasvati should be made with her consort. In the puranas we, of course, find a clear description of her site, colour, number of faces, number of hands with emblems as well as of her Vahanas (Vehicles). However, the Agni purana, while describing the image of Brahma, lays down that the images of Sarasvati and

2. Agni Purana, XL IX. 15.
Savitri should be respectively at the left and right sides of Brahma’s image. Similarly, the Matsya Purana also prescribes that Brahma (Sarasvati as either wife or daughter) should be made like Brahma in all respects to his iconic features. According to this purana Brahma who should be made riding a swan or seated on a lotus, should be made of four hands and to his left, there should be the image of Savitri and to right that of Sarasvati.

The colour is also a very interesting point regarding the iconographic character of the goddess Sarasvati. In the Rgveda she is called ‘Subhra’ which stands for her body white in colour and it is probably for this reason that in the later classical literature, she is, by all means, conceived as of white complexion and as wearing white cloth ‘Subhra-Vastravrita’. In the Vrathamvalvarta Purana she is called ‘parama-Jyotisvarupa’, ‘Jyotisvarupa’, and ‘Suklavarna’, while in the Agni purana Sarasvati is also described as ‘Svetabha’ (one of white lusture). However, all these epithets obviously describe Sarasvati to have a purely white complexion. Among the other puranas, the Linga, the padma and the Brhadharma Purana repeatedly describe her as of white colour.

1. Matsya Purana, CCLI. 24; Ibid., CCLX 40; Ibid., CCLX 44.
2. Rgveda, V. 24, VII, 95.6. 96.2.
3. Vrathamvalvarta Purana, 11. 5. 10.
4. Ibid., 11.5.34.
5. Ibid., 1.3.54, 11.2.54, 4.46.
6. Agni Purana, L. 16.
7. Linga Purana, Ch. XXIII, Verse 31.
9. Brhadharma Purana, 1.3.55, 1.3.56.
It is not only her complexion that is white, but at the same time, she is also described to have white eyes like lotuses. Saratpan - Kajalocana in the Brahmavaivarta Purana. In the same Purana Sarasvati is also called 'sudati' having 'beautiful and shining teeth'. Similarly, in the Matsya Purana we find the word 'suklayastraṇi' (white garments) and 'suklamālaya' (white garland) used for her. All these facts however, implies that the most familiar colour of her is all and all white.

Besides these Puranas, the Tantras and the Śīlpa texts, while describing the iconographic characteristics of Sarasvatī, repeatedly describe her to have a purely white complexion. According to the Tantras she is white-complexioned (svetavarna), smeared with white sandal-paste (sveta-Candana-Carccita) and decked with garland and clothes (subhram Svacchavilepamāla - vasanam sitaram - khando jvalam). The Saradatila - Katantra, a Tantric text, describes her as snow-white and three-eyed goddess. Like the Tantras, the Amsuād-bhedagama and the Purva - Karapagama, the two Agama texts, have been

1. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, 1.3.55.
2. Ibid., 1.3.56.
4. Saradatilakatantra, Ch. VI, verses, 34-36 and 113-123.
referred to by T.A. Gopinath Rao as containing description of Sarasvati. According to these two Agama texts, Sarasvati the goddess of learning and eloquence, is seated upon a white lotus, is of white complexion and is draped in white clothes. In the Aparajitaprapata, by her other epithets like 'svetabhujā', 'svetāngi' and 'candrasekhara', Sarasvati seems to be out and out of white colour. Thus, the most familiar colour of the goddess Sarasvati is apparently white.

It is emphasised that "her white colour is one of the three colours representing her three 'guṇas' in her capacity of one of the five prakṛtis. But so far as her 'sattva-guṇatmika' form of prakṛti is concerned, it does not represent her 'śiddha-sattvāsvārūpā' form only; it also stands for a psychological connotation. Since knowledge is generally understood to evolve from sattvāguna, it is quite reasonable to hold Sarasvati as goddess possessed of white colour. Knowledge is also thought as identical with Sattva (Sattvam Jñānaḥ)".

In association with her description as having the white colour, the Brahmanic Sarasvati is also called svāma which usually stands for black colour. But, interestingly enough, we find Sarasvati of Brahmanism as Nilasarasvati in the Tantras, though this colour of Sarasvati has not been mentioned in the Purāṇas.

1. Aparajitaprapa, CCXXX. 15.
3. Brahmavaivarta Purana, 1.3.56.
4. Śrīvidyārāṇava - Tantra, 11.1.
In iconography, face attains very great importance. In the Purāṇas, while describing the face of the goddess Sarasvati, she is often mentioned as having one to four faces. According to the Matsya Purāṇa¹ like Brahma, Brahmaṇi should have four faces. Similarly, in the Vayu Purāṇa² she is described as having four heads. According to the Vishnu-dharmottara Purāṇa³, Sarasvati has only one face. Moreover, like Brahma, Sarasvati has also been depicted to have five faces. In this form she has been called 'Sarada'⁴.

In the Purāṇas, while describing the iconographic characteristics of Brahmācari Sarasvati, the number of hands apparently vary to a great extent. It is, however, emphasised that in the Purāṇas Sarasvati is mostly alluded to as having four hands. But by some of her purānic epithets like 'Vinapustakadharini' she seems to have only two hands having a lute (or vīṇā) and book (pustaka)⁵. In the Līṅga Purāṇa⁶ she is also alluded to as having two hands. According to the Padma Purāṇa⁷ she holds the horns of a deer and a white lotus in her two hands. In the Tantras the goddess of learning and eloquence is also described as having a pen and a book in her two hands.

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¹. Matsya Purāṇa, CCLXI, 24.
². Vayu Purāṇa, XXIII. 55.
⁵. Vṛhma-vaivarta Purāṇa, 11.1.35, 2.55.
⁶. Līṅga Purāṇa, Ch. XXIII, verse 31.
Though Sarasvati is mostly alluded to as having two hands in ancient Indian literature, art and iconography, she is also portrayed as having four hands in the secular and religious literature. According to the Matsya-Purāṇa¹ the image of Sarasvati should be made as having four hands. Similarly, the Agni Purāṇa² appears to prescribe that the image of Sarasvati should be made as having four hands and holding a book, a rosary, a lute and lotus in her respective hands. In the Vishnudharmottare Purāṇa we find a number of references to her iconic character. At one place of this Purāṇa³ Sarasvati has been described as having four hands. In her two right hands, she holds a book and a rosary, while in her two left hands, she holds a water-vessel and a lute. At another of the Vishnu-dharmottare Purāṇa⁴ Sarasvati is also described as having a rosary, axya, a trident in her two right hands and a book and a water vessel in her left hands. Thus, trident has been given the place of lute(Viçag). In the same Purāṇa⁵ she is mentioned as usual to have a book, and a rosary in her right hands and a lute and a water-vessel in her left hands. The Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa⁶ and the Vayu Purāṇa⁷ also prescribe that the image of Sarasvati should be made as having four hands.

4. Ibid., 227.
5. Ibid., 154.
6. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, 11.1.1.44.
Even, the image of Sarasvati is described to have four hands with a lotus, a rosary, a water-vessel and a book in her respective hands. Sarasvati is also portrayed as having four hands in the Bhagavata Purana. In the Brhaddharma Purana, she is said to have possessed four hands holding nectar (Sudhabhapda), book (pustaka), hand-pose (mudra), and rosary (akshamala) in her hands.

Besides these Puranas, the Tantras, while describing the iconographic features of the goddess Sarasvati, prescribe six dhyanas of Sarasvati. In one of the dhyanas she is described as holding a lotus, rosary, water-vessel as well as book in her four hands. According to the Saradaflikatantra, a Tantric text, she carries jana-mudra, a rosary, a jar of full nectar, a book in her four hands. Moreover, some of the silpa texts refer to four armed Sarasvati having lyre (vina), book, rosary, water vessel, pen, white lotus etc. The Silparatna, a

1. Skanda Purana, VI. 46. 16. 9.
2. Bhagavata Purana, Ch. 111, Verse 16.
5. Saradaflikatantra, Ch. VI, Verses 34-36 & 113-123.
6. The Amsumad - bhedagama and the purvaka ranagama (Kanailal Bhattacharya, Sarasvati, p. 71); Vishnudharmottara Purana (Ch. LXVI); Aparajitaproccha (ch 230); Rupamandha (Ch. V, Verses 61-63).
7. Silparatna, Ch. XXIV, Verses 4 & 8.
Silpa text of the 16th century, describes a ten-armed Sarasvati holding lyre (Vina), disc (Cakra), conch-shell (Sankha), bowl (Kapala), noose (Pasa), axe (Parasu), a vessel containing vector (Sudha-Kumbha), a book (Veda), rosary (Akshamala) and lotus (Padma). In this Silpa text Sarasvati has been mentioned as blue necked and three-eyed deity.

However, from the above descriptions of Sarasvati collected from the various sections of the Puranas, the Tantras as well as the Silpa texts it appears that there is no unanimity as regards the number of hands of Brahmanic Sarasvati is supposed to have. In the Linga, Padma and Skanda Puranas she is not only mentioned as with two hands, but also the similar iconographic features is found in the Tantric as well as the Silpa texts. On the other hand, in the Matsya, Bhagavata, Agni Skanda, Brahaddharma, Vishgudharmottara, Brahmanavarta and the Vayu Puranas she is portrayed as having four hands. Even the Tantric and the Silpa texts refer to the four armed Sarasvati. The usual objects which are held in the hands, of the goddess, are book (Pustaka), rosary (Akshamala), lyre (Vina), white lotus (Sveta purjarika), Water-vessel (Kamandalu), necktar (Sudhabhanda, disc (Cakra), Conch-shell (Sankha), bowl (Kapala), noose (Pasa), axe (Parasu) etc., though, the horn of a deer, the trident, elephant-goad (Ankusa) are also mentioned in the religious texts of ancient India.

1. Padma Purana: Srstikhandha, Ch. XVI. verses 307.
2. Cf. Dr. Priyabala shah, op. cit., p. 225
We may next try to ascertain the nature of her vehicles. A comprehensive study of different iconographical texts as well as the archaeological remains of ancient India apparently refer to the seat (āśanas) and the vehicles (Vahanas) of Sarasvati. She is usually represented sitting on white lotus. Among the purāṇas, the Matsya1 and padma2 purāṇas refer to white lotus as her seat. According to the Amśumadbhāgā and the Purvakāraṇāgama, the two Purāṇa Texts3 Sarasvati, the goddess of speech and wisdom, is seated upon the white lotus, while some of the Tantric texts4 also mention the white lotus as her seat.

It is however, emphasised that while white lotus is represented as the seat (āśana) of the goddess Sarasvati, she is generally provided with a swan, a peacock, a ram or even a lion as her vehicle. As regards the swan the iconographical texts prescribe that only the swan has been alluded to as the vehicle (Vahana) of Sarasvati. The Matsya Purāṇa5 which devotes most of its chapters on iconographical aspects, prescribes that Brahma should be made riding on a swan or seated on a lotus. Even this Brahmanical text, while prescribing the identical formula for the making the images of Brahma and Sarasvati states that

1. Matrya purāṇa,ystem. 40.
5. Matsya purāṇa, CCLX. 40.
Brahman! (Sarasvati as either wife or daughter of Brahma) should be made like Brahma in all respects to his iconic features. In consequence of this fact it seems that since the swan as the vehicle of Brahma, Sarasvati has inherited the swan as her vehicle from her father or husband Brahma.

In this perspective it will be worth while to note that the swan is not only mentioned in the episodes of the Puranas, but the tantric texts also refer to her as the vehicle (Vahana) of Sarasvati. Even, the Rupamandana, a Silpa text, refer to the swan as the vehicle of the goddess Sarasvati.

Besides the swan, the lion, peacock and ram have been alluded to as the vehicle of Sarasvati. It is, however, emphasised that while the lion appears to be represented as vehicle (Vahana) of Sarasvati in the Bhagavata Purana, the peacock and the ram hardly finds mention in the Puranas. But curiously enough, they have been depicted as the vehicle of this deity in Indian sculptures and paintings.

From the above descriptions of Sarasvati collected from the different iconographical texts of ancient India it appears that Sarasvati is, on the whole, found as either standing or sitting posture with various vehicles (Vahanas), seats (Asanas) and emblems (Ayudhas) of her hands. She is white-complexioned, dressed in white garments and decked with various ornaments. She is shown as holding a lyre (Vina), manuscript (Pustaka),

2. Rupamandana, Ch. V. Verses 61-63.
3. Bhagavata Purana, Ch. 111, verse 16.
Thus, all sorts of her emblems held in the hands and all kinds of vehicles which are inevitably associated with the goddess Sarasvati, are known to have maintained a formidable position in the domain of Indian religious and cultural life exercising their influences even today. However, the most familiar colour of the goddess of learning and speech is always white, the significance of which has already been explained. No wonder, her white complexion (Svetavarna), white garments (Śuklavastra), white garland (Śuklamālya) and ointment (anulepa) consequently suggest her purity.

Similarly, the manuscript and the musical instrument which are held in the hands of the goddess, are indicative of her close connection with learning and fine arts. The rosary in the hand of the goddess usually represents time. On the other hand, the water-vessel of the goddess Sarasvati imply the great truth that learning cannot flourish without the combination of devotion, meditation and sacrifice. Thus, the swan (hamsa) is taken to be a very superior bird and is said to possess a sense
of spirituality and divinity. The association of the swan (hamsa) with her, in a way, implies her becoming pure, for she is the embodiment of knowledge or is possessed of knowledge, and it is knowledge through which purity is gained. Similarly, the association of the goddess with a peacock relates her to the river Sarasvati, on the banks of which the bird is known to have roosted in abundance in ancient times. In the Bhagavata Purana Sarasvati is also mentioned as ten-handed, blue-necked, three-eyed and having lion as her vehicle. This is suggestive of her Sakti aspect and her connection with Siva. Thus, ram as the vehicle of Sarasvati associates her with Agni.¹

Through we find iconic features of Sarasvati in various iconographic texts, in sculptural representations she has not always been delineated strictly according to the canonical texts. In many cases artists imaginations have however, played to some extent, but as are evident, deviations are quite minor since she can be easily recognised through the symbols associated with her.

Since the iconographical texts appear to provide iconographic descriptions of the personified river-goddess Sarasvati, it is, at present, necessary

¹. The rosary, water-vessel and swan are not only associated with Sarasvati, but also they are found with Brahma. This fact, no doubt, point to her relation with Brahma.
to unfold a rough account of this goddess of learning and wisdom, who has been represented in Indian sculptures and paintings. By a comprehensive study of her iconographic details, it is however, obvious that Sarasvati is, on the whole, found as either standing or sitting posture in sculptural representations.

A. THE IMAGE OF STANDING SARASVATI

The iconographic texts, while describing the iconic features of Sarasvati, prescribe that she should be made as standing along with or without her partners. She is consequently depicted as different postures in Indian sculptures as well as paintings.

In Indian art and iconography the goddess Sarasvati is frequently found as standing alone. Sometimes she appears to be represented as standing either with Brahma, the creator of the universe, or with Vishnu. Besides, there are certain figures of the goddess in dancing pose. Now we have to give a specific description of certain images of standing Sarasvati having different iconographic features.
The Image of Standing Sarasvati in Various Postures.

Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and eloquence, is generally known to have been represented as standing in various iconographical texts. It is no wonder that it remains not only a mere literary theory, but has also taken iconographical form. This iconic feature of the goddess is however, exhibited in paintings, numismatic and sculptural representation.

It is emphasised that several paintings exhibiting the goddess in standing postures have been discovered from different places of Indian sub-continent. While describing the iconographical characteristics of Standing Sarasvati in paintings we may firstly refer to the interesting paintings on the walls of the Kailas temple of Ellora in the Deccan belonging to the Rashtrakuta dynasty. We know that the temple of Kailasa at Ellora which is the most extensive and sumptuous was hewn out of a rocky-hill side by Krishna in the 8th Century A.D. In this great temple at Ellora an image of the personified river-goddess Sarasvati stands in tribhanga-pose on a lotus amidst foliage and creeper. The tall and slender figure with charming anatomical features is carved along with two other personified river-goddess Ganga-Yamuna in this temple of Deccan.

The figure of standing Sarasvati is not only exhibited in Indian paintings, but her standing posture is also found in Indian sculptural representations. In this context we can now refer to an important Brahmanical sculpture which is said to have belonged to the 10th Century A.D. Dr. J.N. Banerjea studies this interesting Brahmanical sculpture hailing from Khiching (Orissa), along with the Bharhat relief. It shows the half-length figure of a seven-hooded Nagini playing on a Vina. She is beautifully decorated with ornaments and wearing a Karandamukuta, usually worn by the goddess. In view of Dr. J.N. Banerjea the number of hands behind her head and the type of headress worn by the goddess obviously prove that she is not an ordinary snakemainden, but is a goddess with much iconographic affinity with Sarasvati. In this perspective Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, while describing the iconic features of the said deity, also refer to the association of the goddess Sarasvati with the snake. This suggestion is also confirmed by some literary evidences. In the Atharvaveda the Goddess Sarasvati is said to have been associated with snake. We also find a great deal of similarity between the iconic features of Sarasvati and to

1. J.N. Banerjea, DHI, p. 378
2. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati, (Calcutta, 1983), p. 92, pl. XXV.
that of the Buddhist goddess Jāngūliṭāra in the Buddhist Pantheon. In fact, this goddess of snake is presented with arms, the normals ones she plays on a lute, with the second right hand she makes the mudrā of protection and with the second left hand she holds a snake. If painted she is white, as well as her clothes, ornaments and the snake she holds. This apparently shows that the goddess of snake is equated with Sarasvati, similar iconographic features of the goddess of learning is also found in the Jain pantheon. However, Vairātya, one of the goddesses of learning (vidyādevīs) in Jainism, is said to have been associated with the snake. Considering all these facts we have to note that the association of the goddess with snake had a long antiquity.

The standing Sarasvati is also found in Central Indian sculptural representations. In central India paramāra art was prolific in its sculptural output. The greatest builder and lover of art of the paramāra dynasty of Malwa was Rājā Bhoja who is said to have been ruled from 1018 A.D. During his reign we find a life-size inscribed image of Veṣdevī.

2. A.C. Vidyabhusan, Sarasvati (Bengali Book), p. 107, fig. 40 (Ka).
3. R.C. Majumdar (Ed.), The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. V, p. 658, fig. 117; see also O.C. Ganguli, A Image of Sarasvati in the British Museum, Rupam, No. 17, 1924; also see, M.I. Khan, Sarasvati, p. 211, pl. IV.
the goddess of speech and learning. This important Brahmanical sculpture of the early medieval period is now preserved in the British Museum. However, the figure of the goddess standing in triflex pose is said to have been installed by the king Bhoja in the main wall of his Sarasvati Mandir (temple), a sort of University of learning at Dhara. This, of course, shows paramara sculpture at its best. The base of the image bears a dated inscription mentioning that it was made by the sculptor Manthala in 1034 A.D. The four hands along with the objects held by the goddess are broken. In the upper right hand a part of a broken lyre may be identified. The pearl garlands, incircling her breasts follow the prescription of the text, while the expression of the face recalls the verses describing her serenity. A figure of a lion is found as her vehicle. In consequence of this fact she may be identified as Vasdevi. Two male attendants, one is shown bearded and holding a staff in the left hands, and the other representing a dwarfish figure holding a nectar pot, are on her right side. To her left is a female figure, seated on the lion, and with right hand supplicating to the goddess. "This Sarasvati", as remarked by Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya,1

1. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta 1983), p. 94, pl. XXVI.
probably symbolises Paravati or the Sakti of Siva, and represents, a sattvika aspect. The goddess is shown wearing rich ornaments like the crown, the necklace, the armlets, the bracelets, the pendant round the lion and anklets. Thus, O.C. Ganguly writes, "an example of Brahmanical sculpture it is a chief docuvre of rare beauty in its exquisite serenity of pose, in its entrancing and balancing rhythm, in the elegance and suavity of its aquiline features, and in the general restraint in the treatment of the anatomy which is almost wholly free from my exaggeration". However, this figure of the goddess is said to have secured a high esteem in the realm of West India medieval sculpture.

It will worth to note here that the image of standing Sarasvati are not only represented on Indian sculptures and paintings, but the same iconic features are also exhibited on some gold coins which were issued by one Sam Charadeva ruling over Eastern Bengal by about the 6th Century A.D. On the reverse of his gold coins of Rñalîla type, Sarasvati appears to be depicted as standing in tribhanga-pose and facing to her right. She rests her left hand on a lotus of long stalk, while she draws another lotus towards her face.

Another lotus is also found beneath the allow of the goddess and under it there is a small figure of duck (hamsa). 1

1. Since the duck accompanying the goddess has not been properly identified, the scholars are not unanimous regarding the identity of this goddess. Thus Smith (IMC, I, p. 122, pl. XVI. 13) took the bird to be peacock, and this identity of the bird is also followed by Dr. D.C. Sircar (The Studies in Indian Coins', 1968, p. 382, pl. XV. 15). J. Allen (BMC, GD., p. 150) describes it as hamsa (duck), while the figure of the goddess is to be considered by him as Lakshmi. Dr. J.N. Banerjee (DBT, 1956, p. 265), who was not sure about the identity of the goddess, put a query mark after Sarasvati. On the other hand, N. K. Bhatasri (Num. Sup., 1923, p. 56) describes the bird as hamsa (duck) and the goddess as Sarasvati. This identification is also followed by A.S. Altekar and (CGB, p. 328), Samaresh Bandyopadhyay (JAIH, Vol. V, pp. 182-91).

However, the goddess on the reverse of the Rajalila type coins may be considered as Sarasvati, if the bird is to be regarded as hamsa (duck), the vehicle (vahana) of Sarasvati. As we know that in the Hindu iconography the goddess Sarasvati is usually said to have been associated with hamsa (duck), while in the sculptural representations as well as on coins and seals the goddess Lakshmi, whose association with hamsa is hardly known, appears to be associated with the elephants, garuda, peacock, OWL, Varaha (Boar), tortoise, rat, etc., as her vehicle.
The Brahmanical sculpture is known to have been contributed most to the high esteem in which the pala art is held. A two-armed image of standing *Sarasvati* from the District of 24-Parganas of West Bengal is a good example of the best sculptural representation of the *pala* of Bengal by about the 10th Century A.D. This image of standing *Sarasvati* is depicted as plying on a lute held in her hands. Besides, the quaint Jewellery of the period, she also wears a diaphanous *sari* secure with an elaborate girdle (*mekhalā*). This is now preserved in the Asutoosh Museum.

We have then to describe another interesting image of standing *Sarasvati* from West Bengal. This figure of the goddess is undoubtedly a remarkable collection because of the rarity of independent images of the goddess in eastern India. This image preserved in the Museum of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture of *Vigya-Bharati* is no doubt a remarkable piece of art belonging to the 10th Century A.D. She is shown as standing on a full-blown double petalled lotus in slight flexion. Her eyes are half-closed in meditative mood. She is found as having a lute in her two front hands, and a book and a rosary in her left and right back hands respectively. She is attended by a female cauri-bearer on either side, while two Gandharvas with garlands are shown above on the stela².

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1. M.I. Khan, *Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature*, p. 213, pl. XII.
2. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, *Sarasvati*, p. 96, pl. see Frontispiece.
In the Patna Museum there is a standing bronze image of two-armed Sarasvati which is discovered from Nalanda. The figure of the goddess is shown as standing in a slightly bent (abhangad) pose. The figure of the goddess is holding a vina (lute) in her hands. She wears a lower garment up to the ankle and a short kasu across her breasts. She not only wears a headdress of Karandamukuta type, but also the figure is decorated with various ornaments like double necklace, earrings, armlets, anklets, and waist-band.

We also find a sculpture from Jamsa representing Sarasvati. This standing image of four-armed goddess which is now preserved in the Allahabad Museum, is carved out of the buff coloured sandstone. She is shown as standing in tribhanga pose. She is depicted as holding diagonally a comparatively long vina (lute) by her two hands, while she carries a lotus by the upper right hand, the lower left being broken. There is a tiny figure of a swan near her foot as her vehicle.

Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya studies a number of Sarasvati images which are generally found in different parts of Assam. Of them,

1. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), p. 92, pl. XXIV.
an interesting sculpture of two-armed sarasvati recovered from sibarayya is shown as standing in tribhanga-pose. she holds a lute (vina) in her two hands across the chest. she wears a ratna-kundala-hara, girdles and anklets. in view of Dr. Bhatacharyya's compositional simplicity of the figure, wearing semi-diaphanous drapery flowing round her body, marks it out as one of the most elegant examples of the early art of Assam.2

The figure shows a smiling face. However, the regional ethnic impact is to be exhibited in its physiognomical treatment. While describing the iconic character of the figure of standing sarasvati, Dr. Kanailal Bhatacharyya also refer to similar but less artistic form of sarasvati. It has been recovered from the ruins of the Tamravarti temple at Sadiya by Bloch3.

A.C. Vidyabhushan4 refers to an image of sarasvati standing in dvibhanga pose. The figure of the goddess appears to be represented as holding a lute in her hands. It is now presented in the Vangiya Sahitya Parishad. We also find another image of two-armed sarasvati5 in Vidyabhushan's book entitled 'sarasvati' (Bengali). She is however, found as standing alone and holding a lute in her two hands. She wears an elaborate headdress and is decked with various ornaments.

2. Ibid., p. 97.
4. A.C. Vidyabhushan, Sarasvati, p. 86, Fig. XVII (Kha).
5. Ibid. p. 78, Fig. 11 (Kha).
(ii) The Image of Sarasvati as standing with Brahma.

Since a landmark in development has been paved towards the iconographical character of the goddess Sarasvati in her entering the puranic era, the Agni Purana¹, while describing the image of Brahma along with Sarasvati, lays down that the images of Sarasvati and Savitri should be made respectively at the left and right sides of Brahma's image. Thus, the Matsya purana² which also prescribed how the image of Sarasvati and Savitri should be made with Brahma, states that to Brahma's left there should be made with the image of Savitri and to right that of Sarasvati. But, interestingly enough, it is not a puranic theory and has practically taken iconographical form through the ages. In consequence of this fact the said duties are given their proper places by depicting both of them with Brahma. The features is, of course, available in some of the famous sculptures like Mirpur Khas in Sindh³ and the early chola and late Hoysala schools⁴. On the other hand, we find the dual image of Brahma and Sarasvati in the Mathura Sculpture⁵. But the striking feature of this sculptural representation is the absence of Savitri who

¹ Agni Purana, XLIX. 15.
² Matsya Purana, CCLX. 44.
⁴ Ibid, p. 518.
⁵ B.C. Bhattacharyya, The Jain Iconography, p. 19 and p. 43.
has been represented with Sarasvati by the Agni and Matsya Puranas.

In addition to this it is very interesting to note that in section (adhyaya) XLIV of the Vishnu-dharmottara Purana Brahma has been delineated as sitting in the lotus-posture and has Savitri placed in his left lap. But we have no iconographical form in accordance with this Puranic theory. On the contrary, there is an image of Brahma along with Sarasvati preserved in Indian Museum, Calcutta. Sarasvati is however, placed in the left lap of Brahma whose shoulder is embraced by one hand of Sarasvati².

(iii) The Image of Sarasvati as standing with Vishnu.

Though Sarasvati is known to have been described as either wife or daughter of Brahma in the Puranic accounts of her origin, some of the puranas also delineate Lakshmi and Sarasvati as the two wives of Vishnu. However, the Kalika-Purana³ which appears to prescribe how the images of Lakshmi and Sarasvati should be made with Vishnu lays down that the images Lakshmi and Sarasvati should be made respectively at the right and left sides of Vishnu's image.

2. A.C. Vidyabhushan, Sarasvati (Bengali), p. 90.
In consequence of this fact, Sarasvati has been depicted in Indian paintings and sculptural representations along with her male partner in accordance with the puranic theory.

However, the fact that Sarasvati is popularly known as one of the consorts of Vishnu, is amply corroborated by the numerous images of the Pala-Sena period in which she is shown as accompanying Vishnu by his left as Pushti (or Sarasvati), while Lakshmi standing to the right. In this context we have to describe a magnificent bronze image of Vishnu from Rangpur district of modern Bangladesh. This image is now preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. We find here the goddess Sarasvati as the parśva-devata. She stands in tribhanga posture holding noose (pāsa), in her left hand, while the right hand being in abhayamudra. She is shown as wearing a diaphanous lower garment. She is decked with a highly bejewelled crown and decorated with various ornaments like necklace, armlets, bracelets, bangles and waist-band.

In Indian Museum we also find a stone sculpture of Sarasvati, which similarly depict her as a parśva-devata of Vishnu. She is shown as standing in tribhanga-pose at the left side of Vishnu on a lotus. She plays on a lute (vina) by both the hands. She is exhibited as putting on a

1. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati, (Calcutta, 1983), p. 95, pl. XXVII.
2. Ibid., p. 95, pl. XXVI.
lower garment with highly conventionalised undulating striation leaving the upper portion of the body fully bare. She is usually decorated with various ornaments of the contemporary era. The goddess has also the Chakra- purusha on her left side. This sub-ordinate figure is also found to be standing in abhaya-mudra.

In the Asutosh Museum of Calcutta there is a magnificent two-armed stone image of Sarasvati, she appears to be represented here as the parśa-devata of Vishnu. This image of the goddess is said to have belonged to the pala-sena period. She is also shown as standing in tribhanga pose and playing on the lute. The handsome figure of the goddess is decorated with various jewellaries of the period. Her soft smiling face is fully enliven.

We find another interesting stone figure of Sarasvati of the pala age. This image of the goddess is now preserved in the Patna Museum. The two-armed goddess, standing in tribhanga-pose, is represented as holding a Vīṇa (lute) by her left hand, while the right hand is placed on the waist.

Another fragmentary sculptures of two-armed Pushṭi (Sarasvati) shows her as one of the consorts of Vishnu. The delicately carved figure holds a Vīṇa (lute) in her hands. This goddess who is otherwise known as the goddess sarasvati is said to have been belonged to Gahadavala dynasty ruling over northern India in the eleventh.

1. J.N. Banerjea, DHI, (1955), pl. XVIII. 3; also see, Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), p. 96, pl. XXIX.
2. B.P. Sinha, Bharatiya Kala Ko Bihara Ki Dana, p. 131, Fig. 102; Cf. K. Bhattacharyya, Op. Cit. p. 96.
twelve century A.D. This interesting image is found in Gorakhpur
district of U.P. and it is now preserved in the State Museum of
Lucknow.

In the Banīya Sahitya Parishad Museum there are
numerous highly bejewelled images of Sarasvatī. The figure of
the goddess is however, shown as either standing in adhānga or
standing in tribhānga poses and holding vīṇā (lute) in her hands.
But, interestingly enough, in all of them she is represented as
a Parśvadevata of Viṣṇu. This type of Sarasvatī is said to
have been recovered from different parts of Bengal and Bihar.

In the Banīya Sahitya Parishad Museum we find an in-
teresting image of Viṣṇu as standing in samapadasthanaka.
Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are, however, flanked at the right and
left sides of Viṣṇu. Sarasvatī is found here as standing in
tribhānga pose and holding a lute in her hands.

Amulya charan Vidyabhushan also refers to four images
of Viṣṇu, which are preserved in the Banīya Sahitya Parishad
Museum of Calcutta. The god is however, flanked by Sarasvatī
at the left side of him. The goddess is shown as standing in
tribhānga pose and holding a lute (vīṇā) in her hands.

1. M.I. Khan, Sarasvatī in Sanskrit Literature, (New Delhi,
1978), p. 212, pl. VIII.
2. M. Ganguly, Handbook to the Sculpture in the Museum of
3. A.C. Vidyabhushan, Sarasvatī (Bengali), p. 85, fig.XVII(a)
4. Ibid, p. 86.
In the Museum of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad there is another image of Vishnu, which is flanked by Sarasvati. She is found here as standing on lotus.

A. C. Vidyabhusan also refers to two images of Vishnu. These images are, of course, made of copper and the god is also flanked by Sarasvati. The goddess appears to be depicted here as standing in triebhanga pose.

There are also two images of Vishnu in the Museum of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad. Sarasvati also appears to be depicted as the Companion of Vishnu at his left side. She is however, represented there as standing in abhanga pose and decorated with various Jewelleries holding a lute (vina) in her hands.

In the Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1911-1912, five images of Vishnu which are discovered in the district of Rangpur in modern Bangladesh, have been described elaborately. The god is however, attended by Lakshmi and Sarasvati at the right and left sides of him respectively. She is shown here as holding a lute in her hands.

We find an image of Vishnu of trivikrama-type from Niyamatpur of Raishahi district of modern Bangladesh. The god is not only shown as standing in samapadasthanka, but also he is flanked by Lakshmi with the Sankha Purusha on her right and Sarasvati with the Cakra-Purusha on her left. This image of Vishnu is at present preserved in the Varendra.

1. A.C. Vidyabhusan, Sarasvati (Bengali), p. 86;
2. Ibid.,
3. Ibid., Fig. 18(Ka) and 18 (Kha)
4. Archeological Survey of India, Annual Report, Pl. LXX No. 1; pl. LXXXI. No. 3.4.5.
Research Museum, Rajshahi University. This image is said to have been represented in Indian Sculptures of eleventh century A.D.¹

In the Varendra Research Museum there is another image of Vishnu of Sridhara type². This image, of course, comes from Niyamatpur of Rajshahi District in Bangladesh. To its right there is the image of Lekshmi and to left that of Sarasvati. These goddess have also the Sankha Purusha and Cakra-Purusha on their right and left respectively.

It will be worth while to describe here that there is an image of Sarasvati, fragment from a Vishnu image. This, of course, comes from Balubari in the district of Dinajpur³.

Considering all these iconographical features of Brahmanic Sarasvati it is an obvious fact that in Indian sculptures and paintings the goddess appears to be represented as standing in accordance with the prescriptions of different casuical texts, although artists’ imaginations have played to some extent. Besides these iconic features of the images of standing Sarasvati, an attempt has been made to offer a vivid description of Sarasvati who is often found as dancing in the Brahmanical sculptures and paintings.

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1. Varendra Research Museum, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh, Museum No. 2884.
2. Ibid., Museum No. 2885.
3. Ibid., Museum No. 2845.
iv) The Image of Dancing Sarasvati

Though iconographic texts, while describing the image of Sarasvati, obviously retain no prescriptions for the image of Sarasvati in dancing pose, but in the Mysore territory we find the Kesava temple of Somnathpur and the Hoyshaleswara temple of Halebid which were built and decorated with sculptures and various images of gods and goddesses along with the image of dancing Sarasvati under the aegis of the Hoyasalas for the purpose of worship by about the 12th A.D. In the temples she is however, presented as having more than four arms and holding the lute in her hands.

In the Kesava temple of Somnathpur we however, find the image of Sarasvati dancing with her right-foot placed on the ground and the left raised and bent at knee. This image of four-armed Sarasvati under a Mango tree carries a rosary, a goad, a book and a lute in her hands. She is gracefully decorated with various ornaments.

In the Hoyaleswara temple of Halebid the six-armed dancing image of Sarasvati, which has been regarded as one of the masterpieces of the Hoyasala art holds a rosary, goad, lotus, noose, book and lute in her hands. In view of Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya this type of Sarasvati in the Hoyaleswara temple of Halebid

1. A.C. Vidyabhusan, Sarasvati (Bengali), p. 87, Fig. XX(Ka).
2. M.I. Khan, Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature, p. 214, pl. XII.
is considered as the sakti of Śiva, possibly for holding rosary, ākūśa, and pāśa, the ayudhas of Śiva along with her usual attributes like lotus, vīṇa with a bamboo stem and pustaka. She is not only exhibited as wearing a high bejewelled crown, but also the goddess is bedecked with various ornaments of the period. The goddess is flanked by a Cauri-bearer on either side and her vahana (vehicle), the swan, is depicted near her right foot.¹

We have then to describe another interesting four-armed dancing image of Sarasvati from Halebid of Karnataka having a very nice facial expression. She holds a mala in the Upper right hand, a noose in the upper left hand and a Kamandalu in the lower left hand. She is shown as wearing a crown on head having Chatra, prabhāmāndala and tārā. The left foot of the goddess is placed just below the right knee and her right foot rests on a lotus. On her left a man is seen beating a drum, while another standing on her right, and almost totally broken, possibly, played with Cymbal².

In the Lākṣmi-Nārāyaṇa temple of Māndya in the district of Karnataka there is an eight handed image of dancing Sarasvati belonging to the 12th Century A.D. It is emphasised that


the goddess holds वीणा, अंकुश, शुला, पुष्टक and पासा, while
the objects held by her other two hands are irresognisble.
She is shown as wearing different ornaments like pearl necklace,
armlets, bracelets, girdles and anklets. She also wears a small
crown on her head and there is an elaborately decorated toraga
over her head. Her left foot is placed just below the right knee
and the right foot is on a lotus base on the pedestal. A figure
of a man beats a drum standing on the pedestal at her left side
while another figure on her right side is totally broken. It
seems to be a beautiful specimen of Hoyasala art.

We find another interesting six-handed image of dancing
Sarasvatī is found in the Krishna temple at Somnathpur, Karnataka
representing the Hoyasala art in its best creative phase. She
is found as holding वीणा, शुला, a lotus stalk, पुष्टक and पासा
in her hands. She is decked with various Jewellaries and wears
a decorated Karandamukuta on her head.

Besides, there is another four-armed image of dancing
Sarasvatī in the Aghoresvara temple, Govindahalli, Mandya
district, Karnataka. She is shown as holding वीणा by two front
hands and a पासा by the Upper left, while the Upper right hand
is broken. We find a tiny figure of a swan on her left side on
the pedestal. She is bedecked in Ornaments of the period.

p. 99, pl. XXXII.
2. Ibid., p. 100, pl. XXXIII.
3. Ibid., pp. 99-100.
B. THE IMAGE OF SITTING SARASVATI

In Brahmanical sculptures and paintings Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and wisdom, is generally known to have been represented as either sitting on lotus-seat or seated on different vehicles (Vahanas) in accordance with the prescriptions of various iconographical texts. But, curiously enough, the goddess is not only found as sitting in padmasana (lotus-posture) on lotus-seat, but also the daily is to be represented as sitting in Lalitasana. Sometimes the goddess is to be exhibited as sitting in Ardhaparyankasana or in Sukhasana. Besides, we also find several images of the goddess Sarasvati on certain vehicles like the swan, peacock, lion and so on.

(i) The Image of Sarasvati as sitting in Lotus-posture (padmasana).

The religious and secular literature provide us the iconographic details of Sarasvati as sitting in white lotus-seat. It will however, be worth while to note here that in iconography lotus attains very great importance. In fact, lotus, which appears to be regarded
as a very beautiful flower from the time immemorial, has been adopted by one and all. Lotus is not only known by the religious and secular literature of ancient India, but also it appears to be represented in sculptures and painting of various countries in all ages. In its earliest representation all, of course, find a number of references to lotus in several places of the Rigveda. In the post Vedic period the Brahmanas often speak of lotus, while the poets always consider it to be the most beautiful and delicious flower in the epoch of Sanskrit literature. It is, therefore natural that in art and sculptures lotus appears to be an essential thing in order to offer a clear significance. In course of time lotus secures not only its great position in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Pantheons, but the lotus shows its sculptural representation of different religious faiths of ancient India. It seems that when the Buddhism was spread outside India, the lotus had secured its prominent place in arts and sculptures of Java, Sumatra, Śyāma and Japan.
In the Brāhmaṇas we find the lotus-flower which is closely related to Prajāpati, the creator of the Universe. The Tattiriya-Brahmaṇa, while describing the mystery of the creation states that the whole world was filled up with waters. It is said that while the Prajāpati desires to create the universe, he sees a 'Pushkar-Parna' (Lotus-leaf) as standing into waters at that very auspicious moment of creation. In the Tattiriya-Aranyaka the Prajāpati is said to have been born from the lotus, while the whole world was filled up with waters. Similar account of lotus-flower is also found in the episodes of the Purāṇas. In the Mahabharata Brahma, the creator of the universe is also said to have been produced from the navel of the meditative god Viṣṇu. On the other hand, lotus is also closely associated with Viṣṇu. In the nomenclature of Viṣṇu he is otherwise known as 'Padmanabha' holding a lotus by one of his four hands. Since Lakṣmī (or Śrī), the consort of Viṣṇu, is intimately associated with lotus, she is also called 'Padma'.

1. As regards the origin of both the goddess and lotus it is generally known that the lotus-flower is naturally generated in water while the goddess Lakṣmī or Śrī is universally believed to have been born of water with lotus in her hands. The lotus is known as the first creative principle Lakṣmī is however, associated with lotus flower from the birth. Her association with lotus as often mentioned in the Śrī Sukta of the Vedic Parāśīthā in which the goddess
In the episodes of different puranas Lotus is often mentioned as the seat and footstool. But, curiously enough, the gods and goddesses are, by all means, found as either standing or sitting on lotus-flower. In Indian mythology and sculptures Brahman, the creator of the Universe, appears to be represented as sitting on lotus which is known to have been born from the navel of god Vishnu.

Lakshmi or Sri is invariably represented holding Lotus in her hands, seated on lotuses and resting amidst lotuses. This features is, by all means, reflected in the sculptural representations as well as on the coins and seals of earlier times of India.

In the Sri-sukta of the Rgvedic Parisishtha Lakshmi of Sri appears to be known as 'lotus-coloured' goddess for her association with lotus. Even she is called 'padmini' and 'padma-malini' in the same literary monument of ancient India. In consequence of this fact the goddess seems to be represented as 'padma' who resides in the Lotus-flowers. She seems to be identical with 'Kamala', the tenth and last of the Dasamahavidyas, the ten manifestations of the great goddess, the consort of Siva, for her association with lotus. Besides this, her close connection with lotus is also found in the different puranas in which the goddess, Lakshmi is actually represented as 'Padmalaya' (the goddess who resides in the lotuses), 'padmahasta' (holding lotus in hand), and 'padmakshi' (Lotus-eyed) from her birth. Ultimately, it appears that the goddess Lakshmi is wholly incomprehensible without the lotus.
Thus, the lotus also appears to be used as the sitting place (or seat) of Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesvara along with their respective consorts like Sarasvati, Lakshmi, and Parvati. It will be worth while to note here that in the religious and secular literature lotus is not only associated with Agni, Ganesh and Pavan, but also they are usually depicted as sitting on lotus-seat in art and iconography in accordance with the prescriptions of the canonical texts. Similarly, Surya, Indra, and Vishnu along with his avatars (incarnation of Vishnu) are known to have used the lotus-flower as their footstool. In the sculptural representations of Udayagiri, Bharhut, and Sanchi we, of course, find a number of lotus-seats on which the images of various goddesses are depicted as sitting.

Whatever the case might have been, it is beyond doubt true that in iconographical texts Sarasvati has been described both as either standing or sitting on lotus-flower. So far as her sitting posture is concerned the Amsubhadagama and Purvakaramagama, while describing her image, also prescribe that she should be made as sitting in white coloured lotus. It remains not only a mere theory of the iconographical texts, but has also taken iconographical form, which is evident from the following accounts.
In the images from Tamil Nadu two-armed image of Sarasvati is simply shown seated in padmasana on a lotus-seat. This image of Sarasvati which is found in the Brahadiśvara temple of Tanjor belonged to the Chola dynasty in the 12th century A.D. Her right hand is damaged, while her left hand which is placed on the thigh holds a manuscript. She wears a high jatamukuta (crown) with canopied projection over which rises a tree. In view of Dr. J.N. Banerjea, the tree signifies the idea of knowledge (jñāna), as the Badhi-tree in the Vajrāsana Buddha figures usually indicates. The goddess is bedecked with various ornaments like earrings, double pearl necklace, armlets, waist-band and a breast-band (kucha-bandha). The goddess is flanked at the top by flying vidyādhāras while she is attended by a standing cauri-bearer on either side. This is, of course, a sublime product of Chola workmanship in the early medieval period.

In this context we can describe another interesting beautiful image of Sarasvati from the Gangaikonda Cholapuram in the District of Trichinapalli. On the north wing of the main Brahadiśvara temple the goddess however, is represented as sitting in padmasana pose on a double petalled lotus seat. She is depicted as having four hands. In her right and left hands she holds a rosary (akshamala) and a water-vessel (kamandulu) respectively, while her

1) J.N. Banerjea, DHI, p. 379, pl XX.5.
2) T.A. Gopinatha Rao, EHI, pl. CXIII; A.C. Vidyabhusan, Sarasvati (Bengali), p. 79, Fig 8; M.I. Khan, Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature, p. 214, pl. XV.; Kansailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), pp. 85 ff, pl. XIII.
front right hand is in Varadamudra and the front, left is placed on the thigh. She wears a high jatamukuta. The goddess is fully bejewelled having double-necklace, earrings, armlets, waist band as well as a sacred thread (yajnopavita). This image of Sarasvati is said to have belonged to the reign period of the Great Chola rulers like Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola of the early 11th Century A.D. It is, doubt, a beautiful specimen of the Chola art.

In the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay there is a damaged figure of Sarasvati from Karnataka belonging to the 11th Century A.D. this image of Sarasvati appears to be depicted as sitting in padmasana (lotus - posture) on a pedestal. She is found as having four arms. In her front left hand, she holds a manuscript, while face along with the objects held by her other three hands is unfortunately damaged. Even, she wears a broken tall crown and usually bejewelled with double - necklace, armlets, wrist-lets and waist - band. She also wears a sacred thread (Yajnopavita).

In the Kedaresvara temple, Nagalpur, Tamkund district, Karnataka, there is a four-armed image of Sarasvati belonging to the 11th - 12th Century A.D. on a pedestal. The goddess is shown as

2. Kanailal Battacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), pp. 86 ff, pl. XIV.
sitting in \textit{padmasana} (lotus-posture) on a pedestal. The goddess bears a manuscript in the front left and rosary (akshamala) in the front right hands. She is also shown as holding an elephant-good (\textit{ankusa}) and a noose (\textit{pasa}) in her upper right and left hands respectively. She wears a crown and bedecked in various ornaments like errings, pearl-necklace, wristlets, armlets and waist-band.\footnote{Dr. Kanailal Battacharya also studies a sculpture of Sarasvati belonging to the 12th Century A.D. The four-armed image of this goddess which is found in the temple of Mallikarjuna, Basarolu, Mandy district, Karnataka, is however, shown as sitting in \textit{padmasana} (lotus-posture). In her front right left hands she carries a rosary (akshamala) and a manuscript respectively, while in her upper right and left she holds an elephant good (\textit{ankusa}) and noose (\textit{pasa}) respectively she wears a highly decorated crown and is bejewelled with different ornaments like errings, (Kundalas), double - pearl - necklace, wristlets and armlets.}

Dr. Kanailal Battacharya\footnote{Dr. Kanailal Battacharya also refers to another Sarasvati image of the same iconographic traits, which is found in the same temple. In his view this image of Sarasvati is of a later date.} also studies a sculpture of Sarasvati belonging to the 12th Century A.D. The four-armed image of this goddess which is found in the temple of Mallikarjuna, Basarolu, Mandy district, Karnataka, is however, shown as sitting in \textit{padmasana} (lotus-posture). In her front right left hands she carries a rosary (akshamala) and a manuscript respectively, while in her upper right and left she holds an elephant good (\textit{ankusa}) and noose (\textit{pasa}) respectively she wears a highly decorated crown and is bejewelled with different ornaments like errings, (Kundalas), double - pearl - necklace, wristlets and armlets.

2. Ibid. p. 87.
3. Ibid., p. 87.
Another four-armed image of Sarasvati is found in the Lakshmi-Narasayan temple, Shishaghatta, Mandy district, Karnataka, as sitting in padmasana (lotus-posture). She is depicted as holding usual attributes like rosary (aksamala), elephant-goad (ankusa), noose (pasa) as well as book (pustaka). But unfortunately the face of the deity is damaged. She is generally decked with a highly decorated crown and is bedecked in ornaments of the period. She wears a sacred thread (Yajnopavita). There is a tiny figure of a swan as her vehicle in the centre of the lower portion of the pedestal.

In the Nagesvara temple, Mosale, Hassan district, Mysore, we find an interesting four-armed image of Sarasvati belonging to the 12th Century A.D. The deity is also shown as sitting in padmasana (lotus-posture). In her front right and upper right hands, she holds a rosary (aksamala) and a noose (pasa), while in her upper left hand we find an elephant goad (ankusa). On the other hand, left front hand is in the Varadamudra. She wears a Karandamukuta, ear rings (Karna Kundala), necklace, bracelets, wristlets and anklets. An interesting feature in this image is that the figure of a bull is depicted as her mount and not a swan as is generally found in the contemporary images of the goddess Sarasvati from other parts of Southern India.

2. Ibid, p. 88, Pl. XVIII.
There is a four-armed image of Sarasvati in the Chennigaraya temple, Nagalpur, Tumkur district, Karnataka. The goddess appears to be represented as sitting in padmasana (lotus-posture). She bears a manuscript and a rosary (aksamala) in the front left and right hands respectively, while there is an ankusa in her upper right hand. The upper left hand is totally lost. She wears various ornaments of the period and uses a sacred-thread. (Yajnopavita)

In the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, there is another four-armed image of Sarasvati belonging to Paryśāla School. She is seated in padmasana (lotus-posture) on a double lotus-seat. She holds a rosary (aksamala) and elephant good (ankusa) and a noose (pasa) in her three hands, while the lower left hand being broken. The goddess is bedecked with various jewelleries along with a sacred-thread in her body. She is flanked by a Cauri-bearer on either side. It is has been suggested by Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya that from the elaborate stela, with undulating rolls connecting the kirtimukha at its top and two makaras (Fishes) on the sides, and also from its metallic Chiselling, the image appears to have been carved sometimes in the later part of the 12th Century A.D.

2. Ibid, p. 89, pl. XIX.
In the Bucchesvara temple, Koravanqala, Hassan district, Karnataka there is an image of Sarasvati belonging to the 13th Century A.D. The goddess is shown as sitting in *padmasana* (Lotus-posture). She is also depicted as holding rosary (*aksamala*), elephant goad (*ankusa*), noose (*pasa*) and manuscript (*pustaka*) in her four hands. She is also bejewelled with a highly decorated Crown and is adorned with various Ornaments like pearl necklace, armlets, bracelets, Waist-band and anklets\(^1\).

In connection with this we have to describe an interesting four-armed image of Sarasvati belonging to the 13th Century A.D.\(^2\) This image of the goddess which is found in Halebid, is now preserved in Indian Museum, Calcutta. We find her as sitting in *padmasana* (Lotus-posture) on a double lotus throne. She wears usually various jeweleries of the period and holds rosary (*aksamala*), elephant-goad (*ankusa*), noose (*pasa*), as well as a manuscript (*pustaka*) in her four hands. The Kirtimukha on the top of the stela is of great importance. In opinion of Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya\(^3\) this image of the goddess Sarasvati is extremely conventional in style and therefore appears to be of a very late date, say of the 13th Century A.D.

Similarly, another image of Sarasvati from Bagali is said to have represented a very late example of Hoysala style of the 13th Century A.D. She is shown as sitting in *padmasana* posi.

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2. Ibid, p. 90.
The goddess appears to be depicted as having four hands. In her two right hands, she holds a rosary (aksamala) and an elephant goad (ankusa), which in her two left hands, she bears a book (nustaka) and a noose (pasā). It had an elaborate aureole behind, but it is now broken. In view of Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, it shows the feeling for minute details of the medieval art trend. The right front hand, which holds a rosary, has apparently been raised in abhaya pose. According to Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, the seated posture as well as the closed eyes with raised eyebrows speak of her meditative concentration.

In the sculptures from the Deccan, two-armed images of Brahmanic Sarasvatī are found as sitting on lotus-seat—such image of the goddess is however, exhibited in the Gadā of the Dharwar District. She is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-seat wearing a high jatamukūṭa and a crescent shaped necklace. An interesting feature in this image is that tiny figure of a swan is depicted as her mount in this sculptural representation.

In Kallesvara temple at Hirahadgallı, we find a four-armed image of Sarasvatī, but unfortunately all the arms are missing. This is a Chalukyan Specimen belonging to the 13th Century A.D.

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
An interesting feature of this image is that there is a tiny figure of swan on the face of the Central projection of the Santaratha pedestal. On the other faces of the ratha the figures of dancing girls are carved\(^1\). Similar image of the goddess is also found in the same temple.\(^2\)

Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya also refers to a beautiful image of \textit{sarasvati} in the Chalukyan Bhimesvara temple at Bhimar\(^3\). She is also found as sitting in the \textit{padmasana} on a lotus. She has four hands exhibiting \textit{abhaya} pose by the lower right hand and holding a bite (\textit{vina}) and a book in the remaining ones.

Another image of \textit{sarasvati} is also exhibited in the temple of the Heroes at Karempudi\(^4\). On the eastern wall of this temple she is depicted as sitting in \textit{padmasana}. This image of the goddess has also four arms, but unfortunately three of them are broken and the fourth shows a Club. Here we also find the figure of a pretty swan beneath her.

In the medieval sculptures from Bengal a four-armed image of \textit{sarasvati} appears to be depicted as sitting on double lotus-seat.

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3. Ibid, p. 91.
4. Ibid, pp. 10 ff.
This image which comes from Gaya District of Bihar, is now preserved in the Museum of Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi, Bangladesh. She is shown as playing on a Viṅga (lute) by her two front hands, while in her upper left and right hands, she bears a manuscript (pustaka) as well as a rosary (āksamāla) respectively.

K.A.N. Sastrī also refers to a six-armed image of Sarasvatī in his book intitled "The cholas". This image of the goddess is found in the Bhramesvara temple at Śrisailam. She is shown as seated on a pedestal containing the relief of a swan. She is holding a noose (pasa) and an axe (parasu) in her right hands, while in her upper left hand, she bears an elephant-good (ākusa) as well as an indistinct object, the lower left being-in the Varadamudra.

In connection to this it is very Curious to note that this iconoc features of Sarasvatī is not only exhibited in Indian art and iconography, but also the goddess appears to be represented as sitting in lotus posture in different countries outside India.

1. Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), p. 92, pl. XXIII.

2. K.A.N. Sastrī, the Cholas, pp. 729 - 759, pl. XXIII, 54.
ii) The Image of Sarasvati Seated on Lalitasana.

In Indian art and iconography Sarasvati is not only depicted as sitting with or without lotus-seat, but also the goddess is shown seated in Lalitasana in the Brahmanical sculptures of the central and Northern India.

In the sculptures from the Central India this iconic feature of Sarasvati is invariably followed by the Paramaras of Malwa. In the 10th Century A.D. the only example of this form of the goddess is found in the sculptures of the Paramara dynasty, where the image of Sarasvati appears to be represented as sitting in Lalitasana on a lotus. Two left hands of the goddess, along with the left corner of the pedestal, are damaged. She holds a rosary (aksamala) in her upper right hand, while the lower right hand is in the Varadamudra. She wears earrings, double necklace, bracelets, armlets and waist-band. Flying gandharvas, a couple on each side, holding long lotus stalks, are found on the Upper portion of stela. A male figure with turban on head stands in adoration in her right side, while her counterpart on the left has totally broken away. This interesting image of the goddess is now preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi.

1. M.I. Khan, Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature, p. 212, pl. V. Cf. also, Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati, (Calcutta, 1983), p. 81, pl. VI.
In South Indian sculptures we also find same iconic features of Sarasvati. In the Lakshmi-Narasimha temple, Hosaholalu, Mandy district, there is an interesting image of Sarasvati. She is shown as sitting in Lalitasana. This four-armed image appears to hold an elephant-goad (ankusa) and a lyre (vina) in her right hands, while she bears a noose (pasa) and a pot (sudhabhanda) in her left upper and lower hands respectively. Her face is damaged. She wears a crown, earrings, double-necklace, bracelets and anklets. These are also like those of other South Indian images of the Hoysala school.

In South Indian sculptures we have to refer another interesting image of Sarasvati. This image belonging to the 12th Century A.D. has been discovered from Halebid, Mysore. The goddess sits in Lalitasana on a dragon-like peacock which holds by its beak the stalk of a trailing plant. She is three-faced and six-handed. In her left hands the goddess holds a pot (sudhabhanda), a noose (pasa) an elephant-goad (ankusa), while in her right hands she bears a rosary (aksamala), a lyre (vina) and a trident (sila). She is highly bejewelled crown and decorated with

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1. M. I. Khan, Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature, p. 212, pl. V; Cf. also Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), p. 81, pl. VI.

2. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati, (Calcutta, 1983), pp. 89 - 90, pl. XXI.
earrings, double necklace, bracelets and anklets. On the highly decorated pedestal there are the figures of the donor and his wife with folded hands. However, this interesting image of sarasvati is undoubtedly a unique type in the iconography of South India.

In North Indian sculptures we also find same iconic features of sarasvati. In the National Museum, New Delhi there is a two armed bronze image of sarasvati belonging to the pala period of Bengal (C. 9th Century A.D.). The goddess is seated in Lalitasana with her left leg pendent and plays on a boat-shaped lyre (vina). She wears a semi-diaphanous cauli across her left shoulder and a lower garment. She wears a high bejewelled crown on her head and is bedecked in various ornaments like pearl necklace, earings and armlets. She is flanked by two attendant figures on either side. On the right lower corner of the pedestal we find a damaged figure of a swan as her vehicle.

In association with this we have to refer another interesting image of sarasvati of the 9th - 10th Century A.D. This image of the goddess2 is said to have been collected from Mathura and is now preserved in the British Museum, London. The figure of the

1. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta 1983), pp. 80-81, pl. V.
2. Ibid, pl. VII.
goddess is carved out of red stone. She is seated in lalita-sana on a plain pedestal. This four-armed goddess plays on a diagonally placed lyre (vina) by her two front hands and carries a rosary (aksamala) and a manuscript (pustaka) in her upper right and upper left hand, respectively. She wears a highly bejewelled crown and bedecked with various ornaments like necklace, bracelets and armlets. In this image of the goddess there is also the figure of a swan as her vehicle.

In the collection of the Dacca Museum we find a beautiful four-armed image of sarasvati. The figure of the goddess is carved in black stone and she sits on a double petalled lotus in lalita-sana with her right leg pendent and placed on a lotus. She plays on a lyre (vina) with her front two hands and holds a rosary (aksamala) and a manuscript (pustaka) in her back right and left hand, respectively. In the extreme proper right corner of the pedestal which is said to have been decorated with coils usually exhibited in the 12th Century pala-sena Sculptures. The Kirtimukha in the Centre of the lapering top of the prabhavali, the flying vidyadhara, the trifol arch over the head of the goddess, the female Cauri-bearers on her sides, the pancaratha pedestal, the figure of the dooner with folded hands

1. Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta 1983) pp. 83-84, pl. XI.
in the extreme right Corner - all these features, as suggested by
Dr. J. N. Banerjea, typify the sculpture as one of the fully
developed hieratic forms of Sarasvati. The sculpture was found
in the village of Vajrayogini near Dacca. It has been suggested
by Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya that "the objects held by these
images do not correspond exactly to the description of the
several dhyanas to be found in the different Tantras." In
his opinion "The only description that corresponds to the images
found in Bengal is contained in the first line of Verse 16,
Chapter 43, of the Agni Purana in which she is described as
'pustaka - malika - hasta vina-hasta' Sarasvati, i.e. Sarasvati
should have lyre, book and rosary in her hands".

In the Museum of the Varendra Research Society, at
Rajshahi in Bangladesh there is a unique four-armed image of
Sarasvati. The image of the goddess discovered from Chattingram
in the district of Bogra, is datable in the eleventh century A.D.
In this image the goddess is shown seated on a double - petalled
lotus in lalitasana having the right leg on a lotus placed on the
back of a ram. She plays on a Vina with her front - hands and
holds a rosary (aksamala) and a manuscript (pustaka) in the
Upper right and left hands.

2) Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati, (Calcutta, 1953), p. 84.
3) Ibid., p. 84.
4) Ibid., pp. 81-83, pl. VIII.
respectively. She wears a crown on her head and is decorated with beautiful earrings, double-necklace, armlets, bracelets, waist-band and anklets. The flying Vidvādhara, the trefoil arch over the head of the goddess, the female Cauri-bearers on the saides, the figure of the donor with folded hands and a sublime face of the goddess makes the sculptures significant. An interesting feature in this image is that a ram is depicted as her mount and not a swan as is generally found in the contemporary images of the goddess from other parts of Northern India. However the Chatingram Sarasvati should be especially mentioned as one of the finest examples of East Indian sculptures.

Another interesting four-armed image of the goddess Sarasvati was also discovered from Kalania in the district of Bogra, Bangladesh. This image of the goddess is now preserved in the Museum of the Varendra Research Society, at Rajshahi in Bangladesh. The image is also made of Siwaite and black basalt and belong to the 12th Century A.D. In this image the goddess is also shown seated on a double-petalled lotus in Lalitasana having the right leg on a lotus placed on the back of a ram. She plays on a viṇā with her front hands and holds a rosary (aksamala) and a

1. Kanailal Bhattaeharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), pp. 81-82, pl. IX.
manuscript (pastaka) in the upper right and left hand respectively. She wears a highly bejewelled crown on her head and is bedecked with beautiful ornaments like earrings, double-necklace, armlets, bracelets, waist-band and anklets. In this interesting sculpture we also find the flying Vidyadharas, the trefoil arch over the head of the goddess, the female cauri-bearers on her sides, the figure of the donor with holded hands and a sublim face of the goddess.

The Museum of the Varendra Research Society, at Rajshahi district in Bangladesh preserves an equally beautiful specimen of the above variety. This image of Sarasvati discovered from Deopora in the district of Rajshahi is also shown as sitting in lalitasana on a double-petalled lotus with her right leg on a lotus placed on the back of a ram. This beautiful specimen is one of the best example of medieval art. But unfortunately the upper portion of the image, together with two of her hands and their attributes, is damaged. The goddess is also bedecked with ornaments like double pearl necklace, armlets, bracelets, earrings nice waist band and anklets. On the left.

side of the goddess there is a standing figure of the Cauri-
bearer, while on the right side another figure is shown as
playing on a flute. The pancaratha pedestal, on which the
goddess sits, displays rolling vegetable designs generally
found in pala-sena sculptures of the late phase, and thus
the image may be placed in the 12th Century A.D.¹

The Vangiya Sahitya parishad² of Calcutta also preserves
a four-armed image of Sarasvati seated on a large lotus in
lalitasana. She holds rosary (aksamala) and book (pustaka)
in her upper right and left hands, while in her lower right
and left hands she bears a vina (lute) with a makara terminal
respectively. There is a figure of a ram near her leg
and her right leg is shown on the back of that ram³.

There is another interesting image of four armed
Sarasvati⁴. She is shown as seated on a full-blown lotus with
the pedant proper right leg resting on a lotus. Two frontal
hands of the goddess holds the vina (lute). The proper back
right and the proper back left hands are missing. A figure of a ram
is placed below the lotus pedestal as her vehicle. This image
is collected by K.C. Varman and is now preserved in the Malda
Museum.

²) M. Ganguly, Handbook to the Sculptures in the Museum,of
Vangiya Sahitya Parishad, p. 88, K(d) 4.
³) Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), p. 83
⁴) Art in Stone - A catalogue of Sculpture in Maldah
Museum, p. 21, pl. XI. Fig. 1.
There is however, an image of Sarasvati seated on a double-lotus seat. She holds a rosary and a book in her upper hands, while her lower hands carry a Vina (lyre). Her hair is beautifully arranged in dhammilla fashion and she wears typical ornaments. In this image a ram is also depicted as her mount. This image of Sarasvati discovered in the Gaya district belongs to the reign of the Pala dynasty by about the 9th Century A.D. This image is now preserved in the National Museum, New Delhi.

In this context it is not unnecessary to note that though the ram is sometimes exhibited in the North and East Indian medieval sculptural representation, but this vahana (Vahana) of the goddess Sarasvati hardly finds mention in iconographical texts. On the other hand, the ram is generally known to have been represented as the animal for the act of sacrifice in ancient Indian literary works. In the Sukla Yajurveda there is a reference to sacrificing of a female ram in the oblation for Sarasvati. Similarly in the Sankha Sutra female ram is mentioned as the animal for the act of sacrifice.

1. M. I. Khan, Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature (Ghaziabad, India), 1978, p. 213, pl. XI.
2. Sukla Yajurveda, 29, 58.
3. Sankha Sutra, 13, 13, T.
iii) The Image of Sarasvati Seated in Ardhaparyankasana

While describing the iconic character of Brahmanic Sarasvati it is emphasised that she is also shown seated in Ardhaparyankasana in sculptural representations. An interesting feature in this image of the goddess is that she is said to have eight arms and not two or four arms as is generally found in the contemporary images of the goddess from other parts of Northern India. It will be worth while to be note here that in the Sridurgasaptasati, while describing her iconic character, she is said to have right arms. It is no wonder that it remains not only a mere theory of the iconographical text, but has also taken iconographical form. Whatever the case might have been, it is an interesting fact that the head and four of the eight hands of the goddess are unfortunately damaged. However, two of the hands hold a lute (vina), and the three left hands hold a pustaka (book), a bell and a pot. A goose can be seen near her feet. This image of the goddess of learning and wisdom, fragment of a Temple-wall, discovered from Jamsot in the Allahabad Museum of Uttar Pradesh, belongs to the period of 12th Century A.D. It is now preserved in the Allahabad Museum of Uttar Pradesh.

Another image of Sarasvati is found in a niche of a temple in Tezpur, Assam. The goddess, seated in Ardhaparyanka with her left leg tucked up and the right one hanging down, is shown playing on a vina (lyre).

iv) The Image of Sarasvati seated in Sukhasana.

In the medieval sculptures from Northern Bengal Sarasvati is also shown seated in Sukhasana along with her consort, Vishnu. Vishnu is also seated in Sukhasana on the shoulder of Garuda who is represented in half kneeling position with his wings outstretched on both sides above and behind his shoulders. Lakshmi and Sarasvati are sitting in Sukhasana on Vishnu's right and left respectively. To the former's right is the Samkha Purusha and to the latter's left the Cakra-Purusha, both seated in Sukhasana.

On the right half of the richly decorated pedestal is seated a bearded figure playing on some kind of musical instrument, while on the left half is a kneeling devotee in worshipful attitude. The backslab is profusely ornamented with the conventional motifs. However, the image of the goddess of learning and wisdom discovered from the Nyamatpur of Rajshahi District of East Bengal (modern Bangladesh), invariably belongs to the period of 11th Century A.D. This image of the goddess is now preserved in the Varendra Research Museum, the university of Rajshahi District of East Bengal (modern Bangladesh). 1

The Image of Sarasvati Seated on Peacock

In Indian sculptures and paintings the image of Sarasvati is shown seated on a peacock as well. It is no wonder that though this vehicle of the Brahmanic Sarasvati hardly finds mention in the episodes of the puranas, but elsewhere it is frequently associated with the goddess of learning and eloquence. It will be worth while to note here that like Brahmanic Sarasvati, some of the goddesses of learning (Vidyadevia) in Jainism, such as Rohini, prajnapati and Apratikakra, are obviously known to have been associated with peacock as their vehicle.

As regards the association of Sarasvati with peacock as her vehicle Cunningham anticipates that the goddess of learning and wisdom seems to be represented with the peacock as the vehicle in Indian art and sculptures for its predominance on the banks of the river Sarasvati.

However, there is also a reference to peacock as the vehicle of Sarasvati in Moore's Hindu Pantheon in which we find a figure of four-armed Sarasvati seated on peacock. In South Indian sculptures she is also shown as seated on a peacock. A.C. Vidyabhushan refers to such an image of Sarasvati in his book entitled 'Sarasvati'. In this Bengali Book we also find a magnificent iconographical depiction of Sarasvati seated on a peacock. An interesting iconographical feature in this image is that the two-armed goddess appears to be depicted as resting her both hands on the head of the tiger on either side.

4. Ibid., p. 169.
6. A.C. Vidyabhushan, Sarasvati (Bengali), p. 81, fig. 11.
7. Ibid., p. 81, fig. 12.
In this perspective it is very interesting to note that in the manuscript of the Devi-mahatya of Markapureya Puraga, preserved in the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there is a beautiful painting of Sarasvati seated on the back of a peacock. She is painted as having four hands. In her two right hands, she holds a book (pustaka) and a lotus (padma), while in her two left hands, she bears a lotus (padma), and a lyre (vina). She is bedecked with various ornaments of very simple type and her long hairs fall up to the knee.

Now the implication of the peacock may be interpreted here. For the peacock, there is a Sankrit word 'sikhin'. This word denotes the sense of a peacock as well as of Agni. Agni has been identified with Sarasvati and Sarasvati (Speech) with sacrifice. However, following this identification, Dr. M. I. Khan is of opinion that the three flames of Agni represent the three forms of Sarasvati (Speech). He writes, "it is, perhaps to symbolise her psychological and philosophical relation with Agni that she hold the peacock, the symbol of Agni as her vehicle."

1) Dr. Kanaiyal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), p. 92, pl. XXII.
3) Vamana Purana, XXXII. 10; RV., 11. 1. 11.
4) Satapatha Brahmana, III. 1. 4. 9. 14.
5) M.I. Khan, Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature, p. 125.
6) Ibid. p. 125.
In addition to the description of sitting Sarasvati, we have to refer to a unique image of Vishnu which was discovered at Lakshmanakati in the district of Barisal, Bangladesh. The image is now preserved in the collection of the Dacca Museum. N. K. Bhattasali\(^1\) describes the image of Vishnu in his famous work intitled 'Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculpture in the Dacca Museum'. An interesting feature in this image is that while one of the right hand of Vishnu holds the stalk of a lotus on which sits the goddess Gaia-Lakshmi anointed by a pair of elephants, one of his left hand similarly holds the stalk of another lotus on which sits the goddess Sarasvati playing on her lyre (vina). "The vina in the hands of the goddess accompanying Vishnu in the images ordinarily met with," as pointed out by Kanailal Bhattacharyya\(^2\), "is of straight shape, but here the instrument is boat-shaped, similar to one held by Samudragupta as depicted on the Lyrist type of his coins."

1) N. K. Bhattasali, op. Cit., pp. 86-87, pl. XXXII.

2) Kanailal Bhattacharyya, op. Cit., pp. 84-85, pl. XII.