Like Brahmanic Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and eloquence in Buddhism is not only mentioned in various Buddhist religious texts, but also she is universally known to have secured a very great important place in Indian art and sculpture.

It is however, emphasised that the Brahmanic Sarasvati had a universal appeal on the followers of all the major religious system in India. In consequence of this fact the Buddhists appear to have borrowed in Brahmanic Sarasvati and modified her form in different ways. We are, of course, told that Sarasvati in the Tantras gradually appears to be introduced into the Mahayana Buddhism. Because of that fact we find an astonishing similarity between the goddess of learning in Buddhism and to that of the Tantras. This is however, evident while we cast a look on the iconic features of Janquilitara, Sitatar and Vajratara in Buddhism.

(i) Different forms of Buddhistic Sarasvati.

Worship of Sarasvati is widely prevalent among them owing to the belief that like Manjusri and Prajnaparamita, she

1. Manjusri is important in the Buddhist pantheon as that God of learning. The Buddhists believe that the worship of Manjusri can confer upon them wisdom, retentive memory, intelligence and eloquence and enables them to master over sacred scriptures.

2. Prajnaparamita is the embodiment of the prajnaparamita Sutra and she is considered to be the goddess of transcendental. Knowledge which Sutra stands for. She bestow knowledge, wisdom and eloquence.
bestows knowledge, intelligence and memory. She is also believed to confer wisdom and learning on her worshippers. Like Brahmanic Sarasvati, the Buddhist goddess of learning and wisdom shows four different forms, viz., Vajra-Sarasvati, Vajravinā-Sarasvati, Vajra-Sārada and Maha-Sarasvati. Besides these four varieties, there is also another form of the goddess, namely Aryasarasvati. The iconographic features of these forms of Sarasvati are clearly marked out in the Sadhanamala. However, this iconographic texts appears to display their individual characteristics.

As regards the iconographical features of these forms of Sarasvati it is now necessary here to analyse their faces, hands with their emblems and colours. The colour of the Buddhistic Sarasvati is a very interesting point. We know that the vedic and post-vedic literature describe Brahmanic Sarasvati to have a purely white-complexion. Similarly, some of the goddesses of learning in Buddhism, viz., Maha-Sarasvati, Vajravinā-Sarasvati and Arya-Sarasvati, are also white complexioned. In the Sadhanamala, quite a different colour has been associated with Sarasvati. In this Buddhist religious text Vajra-Sarasvati is said to have one face, the right face of which is blue and the left white. Even this iconographical text describe her to have a purely red-complexion. In the Buddhist iconography, one

2. Sadhanamala, 163.
interesting image of Mahamayuri is sometimes associated with Sarasvati in consideration of her special symbols, qualities and attributes. However, the Sadhana of Mahamayuri describes her two forms. In one form she has a green complexion, six arms, and three faces, each endowed with three eyes. Her right and left faces are of blue and white complexion, respectively.

In Buddhist iconography, face attains very great importance. While describing the iconic character of Sarasvati in Buddhism, it is emphasised that she may have either one or three faces. In the Sadhanamala Vajra-Sarasvati is described as having three faces.

The hands of the Buddhistic goddess of learning vary to a great extent. Sarasvati in Buddhism is said to have either two arms or six arms. In case, she is two armed, she has her four forms under different names as Mahasarasvati, Vairasarasvati, Vajravina-Sarasvati and Vairasarada. On the contrary, Mahasarasvati and Vairasarasvati are also said to have six arms holding various emblems.

Whatever the case might have been, it is beyond doubt true that the Buddhists assigned the goddess of learning and eloquence.

1. Nispamayogavali, p.42.
3. Sadhanamala, No. 163.
5. A.C. Vidyabhushan, Sarasvati (Bengali), p.92, Figs. 42, 29.
a very superb position in their traditional rites and customary
religious system. In the Sadhanamala we however, find an wonderful
iconographical depictions of the Buddhist Sarasvatī from the following
accounts.

(a) Mahāsaravatī

The Sadhanamala describes an interesting iconographical
depiction of Mahāsaravatī. According to the dhyana she appears
to be a maiden of twelve years, and her bosom is uneven with
half-developed breasts like flower-buds. She illuminates the three
world with the immeasurable light that radiates from her body. She
is usually bedecked in various ornaments of the period and wears a
beautiful pearl necklace held in her breast. Her right hand is held
in Varada-poses, while in her left hands, she bears a long stalk
of lotus. She is all and all white. The worshipper should conceive
of the goddess Mahāsaravatī as resplendent like the autumn moon,
resting on the moon over the white lotus with its stalk. Thus, the
Sadhanamala not only describes two-armed Mahā-Saratvati to have a
purely white complexion, but also she wears white garments. Even,
the flowers which are held in the hands of the goddess, are almost
white in colour. She is also described to have used sandal-paste

1. Sadhanamala, Dhyana No. 162.
which is white in colour. This goddess is said to have attended by four duties identical in form with herself prajñā is in front of her, Medha to her right, smrti to her left and Mati in the West. It is however, emphasised that though an interesting iconic characters of Maha-Sarasvati appears to be described in the Buddhist religious texts, but this is hardly found in the sculptural representations.

(b) Vajrasarasvatī

In Buddhism there is another goddess of learning, who is generally known under the name as Vajrasarasvatī. She is said to have three faces, the right phase of which are blue, and the left white. An interesting feature of this goddess is that the Buddhist religious texts repeatedly describe her to have a purely red complexion and not white complexion as is generally found in the images of some other goddesses of learning in Buddhism and Brahmanism. She is also mentioned as having six hands. In her three right hands, she holds the lotus (pārākṣa) on which is the prajñāpāramitā book, the sword (āsā), and the cutter (Kartari), while in her three left hands, she bears the Kapala of
Brahma (Brahmakapāla), the jewel (ratna) and the discus (cakra). According to the dhyānas she stands in the pratyalidha attitude on the red lotus. Her hairs are brown and raised upwards. However, three śādhanas (Nos. 161, 163 and 167) of the Śadhanamāla are devoted to her.

(c) Vajra-vīna-sarasvatī

In the Śadhanamāla another outstanding figure of the goddess of learning and eloquence, who is generally known as Vajravīna-sarasvatī, is also described as having one face. Like Mahāsarasvatī, she is mostly alluded to as having two arms. She wears a high bejewelled crown and is bedecked with various ornaments. She also wears a crescent-shaped necklace. She is white in complexion and shows a serene and beautiful appearance. It is no wonder that we find a great deal of similarity between the iconographical features of Mahāsarasvatī and to that of Vajravīna-sarasvatī. An interesting feature in this figure of Śrī Sarasvatī is that she is mentioned as holding a lute (Vīna) in her hands as in generally exhibited in the contemporary images of Brahmānic Sarasvatī. She may be represented as accompanied by four divinities like prajñā, Medhā, Smṛti and Nāti. She is believed to confer wisdom, memory and intelligence on her worshippers. A śādhana (No. 165), in the Śadhanamāla is assigned to her worship.

(d) **Vajrasarada**

In the *Sadhana-mala* Vajrasarada has been described as resting upon a pure white lotus. In this Buddhist text, while describing the iconic character of different forms of the Buddhistic Sarasvati, Vajrasarada is mentioned as having two hands and three-eyes. She is however, shown as having lotus in her right hand and a book in her left hand. Like other Buddhistic goddesses of learning and eloquence, she is white-complexioned as well. She wears a bejewelled crown and various ornaments of the period. She may also be accompanied by the four attendants like *prajna*, *medha*, *sarti* and *hiti*. It is to be noted that since the *Sadhana* is silent about the *asana* (posture), she may have any one of the usual attitudes.

(e) **Arya-Sarasvati**

In the *Sadhana-mala*, while describing the iconic features of Arya-Sarasvati, she is mentioned to be an elegant figure. She seems to be the common name of *Sarasvati* of the Vajrayanists. She appears to be a maiden of sixteen and is in the prime of youth. In the *Sadhana-mala* she is described as having two hands. She holds in the left hand the stalk of a lotus on which rests the *prajnaparamita* book.

---

Like other Buddhistic goddesses of learning, she is also described to have a purely white complexion. Even, she is also shown as wearing white garments. In connection with this we have to note that as the Sadhanas are silent about the symbol carried in the right hand, this hand may or may not remain empty. Similarly, the sadhana being silent about the asana (posture), she may also have any one of the usual attitudes.

In addition to her description it is also emphasised that under Vajrayana influence Sarasvati is said to have been incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon. In consequence of this fact she gradually became the Sakti (female consort) of Bodhisattva Manjusri, the Buddhist god of Transcendental wisdom. She is also said to have been associated with wisdom (prajna) and compassion (karuna). It is no wonder that in the sculptural representation Sarasvati is evidently exhibited as a companion of Avalokitesvara. Similarly, in the Buddhist iconography the images of Mahamayuri, Vaisnavi and Aryajanguli are also associated with Sarasvati in consideration of their special symbols, qualities and attributes.

Whatever may be the fact, the iconic features of the Buddhistic Sarasvati is not only mentioned in the various Buddhist iconographical texts, but also the goddess appears to be represented in the Buddhistic art and sculptures.
(ii) Images of the Buddhistic Sarasvati in India

It will be worth while to note here that in sculptural representations we have often found many images of different forms of the Buddhistic Sarasvati. But interestingly enough, though the actual images of the Buddhistic Sarasvati are very few in number, they are generally found in those places where a large number of images of the Buddhist gods and goddesses are discovered since ancient past.

The earliest representation of the goddess Sarasvati with Buddhistic association is the one discovered from Ghantasala, a Buddhist site of the Andhra State. The goddess stands in samabhanga pose having four hands. In her two upper hands, she holds a lotus bud and a noose. Her right lower hand is placed over the head of a swan, while the left lower hand is shown as hanging. She wears an ear-ring, a necklace, a Karanta-mukuta on her head and a diaphanous sādi tied to her girdle. This image is said to have belonged to the 2nd century B.C. Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya suggests that although the image comes from a Buddhist site, from her iconographical features she appears to be Sarasvati of the Brahmanical tradition. He is also of opinion that Sarasvati made her advent in the pantheon of the Buddhists in a late date, when Mahāyāna Buddhism came under domination by the followers of Tantric systems.

1. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), p. 131, pl. II.
2. Ibid., p. 132.
3. Ibid., p. 132.
In the Museum of Nalanda there is an interesting stone image of **Sarasvati** belonging to the 9th Century A.D. The goddess with two legs crossed is shown as sitting on a lotus supported on a ghāṭa. Her right hand is in the **Varada-mudra** while the left one has been broken away. The hair is in the form of a neat chignon clasped by a pearl tiara and with a crescent moon on the right side. She is bedecked with various ornaments of pearls. Her face bears a calm and serene expression. The goddess is flanked by four male figures on either side. They are shown as seated on lotuses. Three of them bear a manuscript in the left hand, while the right hands are either broken away or with indistinct emblems. The hands of the figure at the left upper are missing.

It is however, emphasised that this goddess has been previously identified as Kotisri, a name of Durga, while Dr. B. Bhattacharya, identifies her with **Vajrasārada**. On the other hand, Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya² is inclined to identify the present image of the goddess with the image of **Mahāsarasvatī**. It is no wonder that in the Sādhanamāla the goddess holding **Varada mudra** in the right hand, and a white lily by stalk in the left, and accompanied by four goddesses like **Prajñā**, **Madhā**, **Smṛti** and **Mati** is to be identified as **Mahāsarasvatī**. These iconic features of the goddess are apparently found in the present image. In consequence of this fact the present image may be identified as **Mahā-Sarasvatī**.

---

2. Ibid., p. 133.
The Sarnath site Museum preserves an image of two-armed *Sarasvati*-belonging to the 6th Century A.D. The image is made of Chunar sandstone. The goddess is shown as sitting in *lalitasana*. She plays on a *vina* (lute) by her two hands. We find a foliage of a tree above her head and to her proper right is shown a jar upside down. It is no wonder that this *Sarasvati* shows no iconographical differences from the usual Brahmanical representation of the deity. In consequence of this fact we are still uncertain to take this image to be the Buddhistic *Sarasvati*, though the present image of the goddess comes from a renowned Buddhist site.

Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya also refers to an interesting image of *Sarasvati*². This is now preserved in the Nahar collection, Calcutta. This two-armed goddess, belonging to the *pala* period, is seated in *padmasana* on a full-bloomed lotus-seat. Like Brahmanic *Sarasvati* she is shown as playing on *vina* (lute) by her two hands. The hair is arranged in a neat chignon with a tiara. She is bedecked with various ornaments like ear-rings, necklace, armlets and bracelets. She has a calm and serene expression. In view of Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya³ the presence of a stupa by the upper right side of an otherwise plain stela identified the goddess with *Sarasvati* of the Buddhist association.

2. Ibid., p. 134.
3. Ibid., p. 134.
While describing the iconic characters of the Buddhistic Sarasvati, we have to refer to an image of the goddess of the 11th Century A.D. This image of the deity is now preserved in the Balurghat College Museum, Balurghat, West Bengal. She is found as having four hands. The goddess is however, shown carrying a rosary (aksamala) and book (pustaka) in her upper hands and her lower hands are held in abhaya and varada poses. She wears a beautiful bejewelled crown and is usually adorned with various ornaments like ear-rings, double-pearl necklace, armlets, bracelets, waist-band and anklets. Around the goddess there are the images of Ganesh, dhyani Buddha Amitabha, Kapila etc. One the highly decorated pedestal we also exhibit the Naga couple with folded hands. But it is now uncertain to identify the present image of the goddess, though Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya is inclined to take this image to be a Tantric Buddhist duty.

Besides the above mentioned images of the Buddhistic Sarasvati, we have to refer to some contemporary images of Sarasvati having loin as the vehicle of the goddess. Like other Buddhistic Sarasvati they have been discovered from different places of India. However, the images of this variety are generally known as Vagiśvari who is otherwise regarded as the Sakti (consort) of Mahākāla in the Buddhist pantheon. A.C. Vidyabhushan refers to such image of Vagiśvari in his book entitled 'Sarasvati'. This image of the goddess, the upper portion of which is lost, has been discovered from Gandhāra and is

2. Ibid., p. 135.
3. A.C. Vidyabhushan, Sarasvati, pl. XV(b), p. 82.
at present preserved in the Lahore Museum. She is shown as sitting on the back of lion and playing on a vina (lyre) by her two hands.

A.C. Vidyabhushan also refers to another interesting image of Vagisvari. This image of the goddess has been discovered from Somanath hill, situated at a distance of about 15 miles from Bodhgaya. She is shown as sitting in lalitasana on a full-bloomed lotus having her left leg on another lotus placed on the back of the lion. Like other Buddhistic Sarasvati, this image of Vagisvari is found as having four hands. She is however, shown playing on vina (lyre) by her two front hands, while she holds a rosary (aksamala) and a book (pustaka) in her remaining two hands. She is also bedecked with various ornaments. An interesting feature of this image of the deity is that a male figure with folded hands kneels at the left corner of the pedestal. At the right corner of that pedestal we also find the inscription which describes the image as Vagisvari.

In addition to the description of Vagisvari's iconic characters we have to describe an wonderful image of Vagisvari which is said to have been carved in the first year of Gopala II. Cunningham had discovered the present image from Malanda and it is at present preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Like other images of Vagisvari this four armed goddess is also shown as sitting in Lalitasana on a lotus placed on lion's back. In her two upper hands

1. A. C. Vidyabhushan, Sarasvati. P. 82, pl. XV (a).
2. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1983), pp. 135-136, pl. XLIII.
she bears a mace (gada) and an axe (parasu), while by her two lower hands she draws out the tongues of two persons, who have probably committed sins by uttering false words, with a pair of tongs. She wears a crown on her head as well. Even, the goddess is decorated with different ornaments like ear-rings, double-necklace, armlets, bracelets, anklets etc. She is also flanked by the flying *vidyadhāras* by her two sides.

In connection with this we have to describe another interesting image of *Vāgīśvarī*. This goddess is also shown as sitting in *lalitāsana* with right leg supported on a lotus placed on the hind part of a lion situated on the pedestal. Like other images of *Vāgīśvarī*, this goddess has four hands. One of her right hands is in the *Varada-mudrā*, while she holds a sword (missing) in her another right hand. An interesting feature in this image is that while the goddess bears a mirror (*darpāna*) in her upper left hand, with her left lower hand she is drawing out by a pair of tongs the tongue of a figure shown on the pedestal. It is however, emphasised that this mirror is known to have been described as one of the attributes of *Sarasvatī* in the Brāhmaṇical literature. The goddess is also flanked by two female figures on either side of her. Besides these iconographic features of the present deity, we have to cast a look on the head of the goddess which is surrounded by a halo with lotus-petal borders. This interesting image of *Vāgīśvarī* is now preserved in the Museum of *Varendra* Research Society *Rajshahi*, Bangladesh.

In the book entitled 'Sarasvati' Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya also refers to a six-handed image of Vāali. This image of the goddess discovered from Nalanda is datable in the 11th century A.D. She is shown as sitting in Lalitāsana on a double-petalled lotus throne, her right leg being on a full bloomed lotus. She bears a sword and a rosary (aksamala) in her two right hands, while her another right hand is in the Varada-mudrā. Thus, she holds a water-vessel and mace (gada) in her left front and the middle hands respectively.

More interesting feature in this image is that her back left hand is in the SimhaKarana-mudrā and holds a looking glass (darpana). Like other goddesses of learning and eloquence in Buddhism she is beautifully bedecked with different ornaments like ear-rings, a long necklace with a pendant, armlets, bracelets and anklets. Though her face is unfortunately damaged, her hair is nicely arranged in a big chignon. We also find a three-tiered Chatravali, a Buddhist sign, over her head. On the left side of the pedestal the figure of a lion is shown as sitting as her vehicle. The stela is artistically decorated with beaded borders, having a diverson in the lotus motif carved on each side of the border.

1. Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1933), pp. 136-137, pl. XLV.
2. Ibid.
In addition to the description of the iconographical characters of the Buddhist Sarasvati, we have to cast a look on the iconic features of Jangulitara, Vairatara and Sitara who are mostly renowned to have secured much popularity in Buddhism. It is however, emphasised that these Buddhist deities appear to display similar iconic features as is generally found in the Buddhistic Sarasvati.

Like Brahmanic and Buddhistic Sarasvati, Jangulitara is described to have a purely white complexion. It is not only her complexion that is white, but at the same time, she is described to have white garments as well as various ornaments she wears. Even, the snake which she holds, is white in colour. This goddess in Buddhism is represented with four-arms, with the normal ones she plays on a lute, with the second right hand she makes the mudra of protection and with the second left hand she holds a snake.

Another deity in Buddhism is known under the name as Vairatara who is said to be a white colour. She is also represented as sitting on lotus seat which is of white in colour. She is mostly alluded to as having two hands. Her right hand is in charity mudra and her left hand bears a lotus. An interesting feature in the figure of the goddess is that she is seated in paryankasana as is generally exhibited in some of the images of Brahmanic Sarasvati. She appears to be a maiden of sixteen years.

2. Sadhana, No. 96.
The iconographical features of the Buddhist Sarasvatī is also found in the image of Sitātara. This goddess in Buddhism is of white complexion. She is described as having four hands. She is said to have beautified with various ornaments. Sitātara is represented seated with legs locked, the sole of the feet turned upward. Her right hand is in charity Mudrā, and her left holding the stem of full-blown lotus in the argument Mudrā. Whatever the case might have been, it is beyond doubt true that Sitātara has shown a great deal of similarity with Sarasvatī in modern times.

Considering all these iconographical features of those three goddesses in Buddhism, it is however, ascertained that there are somewhat similarity between them and the Buddhist Sarasvatī. Though these three goddesses in Buddhism are not worshipped as the goddess of learning and eloquence they are profoundly influenced by the iconic features of the Brahmānical Sarasvatī.

By the study of different iconographical texts in Buddhism, we arrive at the conclusion that the Buddhistic Sarasvatī has inherited her iconic characters from the goddess of learning and wisdom in Brahmānism. The leads us to believe that in the olden days the Hindus and the Buddhists had come together to know each other. Even, this shown an inter-relationship between the mythologies of both the Hindus and the Buddhists.

While describing the iconographical features of Buddhist Sarasvati, it is emphasised that the goddess of learning and eloquence in Buddhism is said to have secured much popularity in India. Interestingly enough, the cult of the goddess became so universally accepted by the Buddhists during its Tantrayāna phase that her worship was not confined only in India, but also spread out into Nepal, Tibet, Java and Japan.

(iii) Buddhist Sarasvati in Nepal.

The Buddhist Sarasvati was not only worshipped by the Indian Buddhists, but also the goddess is said to have secured a great deal of popularity in Nepal where Buddhism was preached by Buddha himself. It is emphasised that in the period of Tantric domination a large number of Buddhist icons are known to have been transmitted through the Himalayan passes to Nepal, China and Tibet. In consequence of this fact the Nepalese were influenced by the introduction of image worship in Buddhism and thus Sarasvati was worshipped in Nepal along with other gods and goddesses. Though there are not enough images of Sarasvati in Nepal, we have to describe the iconic features of several images of Sarasvati in that country. However, in the Boston Museum
There is an interesting bronze image of Sarasvati. This charming image of the deity has been discovered from Nepal. She is shown as sitting in *lalitasana* on a lotus seat. Like other Buddhistic Sarasvati of India, she is found as having four hands. In her upper and lower left hands she holds a book (*pustaka*) and a lotus (*padma*) respectively. Her lower right hand is placed on the right thigh, while the attribute in her upper right hand is unrecognizable.

The goddess is also bedecked with various ornaments like a highly bejewelled crown, pearl necklace, armlets, bracelets and waist-band. It is however, the baroque exuberance of the intricate aureole that dominates the entire composition of the image. In view of Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya the goddess appears interesting because of her grotesque form, once again a contribution of *Tantric* imagery.

Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya also refers to a beautiful image of Sarasvati of the 16th Century A.D. This two-armed goddess sits in *virasana* on a double-petal lotus seat supported by a pair of swans. She is shown as holding a budding lotus in her left hand, while her right hand is in the *varada-mudra*. She wears a pearl necklace, *kundalas* and a pair of bangles. Her hair is in the form of a neat chignon clasped by a pearl tiara.

---

1. P. Pal, *The Arts of Nepal*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1975), Fig. 240.
3. Ibid., p. 141, pl. X47II
The top of the chignon appears to be decorated by a blooming lotus and a part of her upper body is covered by a scarf, the folds of which distinctly display an wonderful beauty of the image. Even the goddess appears to manifest a profound concentration of mind in her eyes. We find a circular marks of sandal-paste (tilaka) on her forehead. She is also flanked by a standing female figure with a cup of nectar (sudhabhan^a) on either side of her. Moreover, the two female figures are shown as playing on their musical instruments on her sides, while the other two figures offer oblations to her. Another interesting feature in this image of the goddess is that the circular aureol behind is edged with fire motifs and delicate in execution, and the pedestal is unique in design having animal motifs. This beautiful image of Buddhist Sarasvati is, at present, preserved in the Rumtek Monastery, Sikkim.

(iv) The image of the Buddhist Sarasvati in Tibet.

The introduction of the image worship in Buddhism is also known to have been influenced by the Tibetan Buddhists. It is emphasised that though the Buddhist Sarasvati in Tibet is hardly found as standing, almost

1. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati (Calcutta, 1933), p. 141, pl. XLVII.
2. Ibid., p. 141.
all the images of Sarasvati are generally represented as seated, playing on the vina (lyre), held in her lap. However, A.K. Gordon\(^1\) refers to such an image of Sarasvati discovered from the plateau. The goddess is shown as sitting in ardhaparyanka pose on a double petalled lotus seat. She is also represented as playing on a vina (lyre) by her two hands. Inside the decorated stela we find the depiction of seven, two of which in the left side are beyond recognition. Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya\(^2\) also refers to an image of the same type. This Buddhist Sarasvati is also shown as seated in the pratyalidha pose, playing on a vina (lyre), held in her hand. Like other Buddhist Sarasvati of contemporary era, she appears to wear a highly bejewelled crown, ear-rings, double-necklace, armlets and bracelets. Dr. Bhattacharyya however, suggests that 'the image seems to be an example of serene and tranquil, calm, and represents the typical art of Tibet\(^3\).

In connection with this it is also emphasised that there are some two-armed images of Buddhist Sarasvati in Tibet. This type of image is shown as seated in ardhaparyankasana, holding and playing on vina (lyre) by her two hands\(^4\).

---

3. Ibid., p. 142.
4. Ibid., p. 142, pl. XLVIII.
Besides, a large number of two-armed image of Buddhist Sarasvati, sitting or standing, but holding lotus (padma) in the left hand and showing varadāmudrā in the right hand, are also found in Tibet.

It will be worth while to note here that there is an interesting image of red-coloured Sarasvati. She appears to possess three faces and six arms. More interesting feature in this image of the goddess is that she is red in colour and not white complexion as in generally found in the contemporary images of the goddess from other parts of Northern India. This uncommon specimen of a red-coloured Sarasvati image is however, shown as seated in pratyaligha pose. In her three right hands, she bears the lotus (padma) on which is the prajñāpāramitā Book, the sword (khaśa) and the cutter (kārttrika), while her three left hands hold the Kapala of Brahma (Brahma-Kapala), the jewel (ratna) and discus (cakra). She is bedecked with different ornaments like ear-rings, double-necklace, armlets, bracelets, waist-band and anklets. However, W.E. Clerk has identified it as the Rakta-Sarasvati. This view

---

1. Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya, Sarasvati, (Calcutta, 1983), pp. 142-143, pl. XLIX.
2. W.E. Clark, Two Lamaistic pantheons, p. 203, pl. 6A51.
is however, corroborated by the iconographical features of Buddhist Sarasvati as found in the Sadhanamala.

Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya also refers to another interesting specimen of Buddhist Sarasvati. This image has also been found in Tibet. She is shown as having one face. But, curiously enough, she appears to possess six hands having the same attributes of Rakta-Sarasvati.

Considering all these facts, it is emphasised that in Tibet the goddess of learning and wisdom is known to have secured a high position with great respect. Indeed her significant role in Tibet displays another curious fact that the goddess of learning and fine arts in Buddhism was not only worshipped in Tibet, but also the goddess is said to have been widely adored with a reverential frame of mind in the country of the Himalayan plateau.

(v) The Buddhist Sarasvati in Java

It is said that Buddhism was introduced into Java after the fourth century A.D. The famous Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien is known to have visited the island in the fifth century A.D. Even, prince Gunabhiramana of Kashmir who became a Buddhist monk visited the island. He is known to have converted the king and his mother and the people to Buddhism there.

As a consequence of this fact

---

1. Sadhanas, Nos. 161, 163, 167
3. H.A. Giles, The Travels of Fa-hsien or Record of Buddhist Kingdoms, Cambridge, 1923, p. 78.
Buddhism spread throughout the kingdom and became well-established there. We are however, told that while the Pālas of Eastern India came to establish a regular connection between them and the Sailendras ofJava and Sumatra, the Tantric Buddhism, which flourished in Eastern India is said to have been responsible for the introduction of the Tantric Buddhist images to the South-East Asia by the sea route. In consequence of this fact we find a good number of the Tantric Buddhist images which have been discovered from this island of Java. This fact is, of course, testified by the discoveries of certain Tantric Buddhist images. Whatever might have been the fact, it is natural that Sarasvati in her Buddhist version was also introduced in this country along with different Tantric Buddhist images.

While describing the iconographical features the Buddhist Sarasvati in the island of Java, it is emphasized that the goddess of learning and fine-arts appears to show a more plentiful iconographical depiction in the island of Java than in other countries of South eastern Asia.

However, the image of Buddhist Sarasvati is very scarce in the island of Java. She is described as having two or four-armed, but her attributes are irrecognisable. Professor Krom describes her as riding on a peacock. This island of Java however, provides us several images of Buddhist Sarasvati having the Vipā (lyre) in hands. A.C. Vidyabhushan

---

1. A.C. Banerjee, Buddhism in India and Abroad, p. 212.
3. A.C. Vidyabhushan, Sarasvati (Bengali), P. 127, fig. 42.
refers to an image of sarasvati, which has been found in the island of Java. She is shown as sitting on lotus-seat, holding with her two hands a seven-stringed lyre (saptatantrivina). The goddess wears a Karanda-mukta over her head along with her usual ornaments. The peculiarity of the image is that her seven stringed lyre (saptatantrivina) is not of usual type, but a boat-shaped one.

Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya also describes another image of Buddhist sarasvati. She is shown as sitting on a full-bloomed lotus-seat, holding and playing on a vina (lyre) by her two hands. She wears a high bejewelled crown and is bedecked with various ornaments like necklace, ear-rings, armlets and bracelets. This image of sarasvati in Buddhism appears to be deposited without her vehicle like swan or peacock.

Besides these image of sarasvati, we have to mention here two bronze images of Buddhist sarasvati having the vina (lyre) in her two hands as an attribute. These two images of the goddess are now preserved in the Leiden Museum of Java.

As regards the Chief characteristics of the Javanese sarasvati, it is necessary to note here that the Javanese sarasvati is, by all means, a prototype of the Nalanda sarasvati. Many them are generally made of bronze. It is however, to be noted that Buddhist sarasvati was worshipped by the Buddhists in the island of Java and extended her influences over the countries of South-east Asia.

Buddhism entered Japan in about the sixth century A.D. We are told that the king of Pakche (of the Kingdoms of Korea) sent a mission with an image of Buddha and many Buddhist sacred texts to the king of Japan. This, of course, aroused keen interest in the minds of the people of Japan for Buddhism. In course of time, they are said to have been profoundly influenced by the introduction of image worship in Buddhism. There is reason to believe that Sarasvati was worshipped in Japan along with other gods and goddesses.

In Japan, the goddess Benten is looked upon as a manifestation of Sarasvati and her full name is Dai-ben-Zai-ten or 'Great Divinity of Reas-ning Faculty'. The goddess is generally represented either sitting or standing on a dragon of huge-smaile. She is believed to confer power, happiness, riches, long-life, fame and reasoning powers. She is also the goddess of music, eloquence, fortune, wealth, progeny and flow of rivers. In consequence of this fact her worshippers are conferred by her with wisdom, eloquence, victory in war and money in abundance.

However, Benzai-ten is one of the most popular Buddhist goddess throughout Japan. She is said to have enjoyed immense popularity in ancient Japan. Benzai-ten is to be conceived in various forms according to the number of hands and attributes she possessed. Though in many cases she was depicted with eight hands, she was often conceived as having two and possibly four or six hands as well. Her image with two arms is worshipped for wisdom, eloquence and musical ability, while 3 armed Benten

1. Alice Getty, Gods of Northern Buddhism, pp. 113-114.
2. HDJBP, p. 109.
worshipped for gaining victory in military action*. Incidentally, it may be noted that the conception of Benzai-ten or Sarasvati with eight arms is based on the Buddhist text Konkô-myô-kyo or Swarna prabhâsa - Sutra². We, of course, find various textual references to Benzai-ten having eight arms, but these eight hands hold somewhat different attributes according to different texts³.

2. AJEB, pp. 28-29.
3. According to the Saisho-o-kyo, Benzai-ten holds in her eight hands -low, sword, axe, string, arrow, halbred, long pestal and iron wheel - eight weapons befitting or goddess of war. The Songo-sho ('Book of Holy Images') and Butsuzo-zuten have also practically the same attributes for Benzaitens eight hands. While the former text replaces 'halbred' with 'trident' the later book replaces 'string' by 'trap or rope' (cf. Mdj., pp. 1979-80 and BZKT, p. 139).

The Abababaku-sho and the Dai-ni-Kyo provide two somewhat different sects of attributes for Benzaitens eight hands. According to the former, she holds in her left four hands trident, halbred with sun-gem, bow and wheel and in her right four hands sword, halbred with moon-gem, arrow and string. The Dai-ni-Kyo which speaks of both two-armed and eight-armed Benzai-ten, has for the latters eight hands bow, vajra (wooden) pestle, (Silk) thread, arrow, axe, sword and (iron), wheel (or cakra). (cf. Mdj., p. 1980 and BSK, pp. 235-40).
It is no wonder that the oldest extant image of Benzaiten is preserved in the Hakke-do of the Todai-ji temple in Nara. This image shows her in esoteric form with eight arms. It was made of clay during the latter half of the 8th century. Now, the image is in broken condition. Most of the eight arms are broken, excepting three which are unfortunately in a dilapidated condition. The image is not a big one, its height being 218.8 CM. This image once held a bow, an arrow, a sword, a spear, an axe, a lasso, a vajra, and a wheel of the law.

In the Heian period (794 A.D. 1185), the belief in Benzaiten was not so popular. We do not come across any image of this period. Therefore, nothing can be said with certainty about her worship in the Heian period. As the reason of which it may be assumed that as a strong independent deity Benzaiten might have lost popularity for

The Dainichi-kyo states that two armed Benzaiten in the Taizokai-Genzu-Mandara holds a Biwa (viṣṇu) in her left hand and plays it with right hand (cf. BZT, p. 139). The same text also says that Benzaiten otherwise holds Biwa (viṣṇu) or lute in the left hand and plays the same with the right hand (cf. BSK, pp. 236-37; see Mi., p. 1979).

We do not find any specific reference to Benzaiten with four hands. The manner in which Benzaiten is described in the Kakuzen-sho appears to suggest a form of that goddess with six hands, since she is provided with 'three swords in her left hands' (BZT, p. 139).

1. D.H. Bakshi, HDJBP (1979), pl. L11, Fig. 1.
The time being, since she was being worshipped as one of the divinities depicted in the Mandara brought to Japan from China during this period.

From the middle of the Kamakura period (1185 A.D. 1333 A.D.), image of Benzai-ten with two hands began to be made. In this period, we find even a naked image of Benzai-ten. The famous image of naked Benzai-ten with two arms has no lute or Biwa, but she is merely posing to play on Biwa or some musical instrument. She is the goddess of music. This image was originally placed in the hall of dance and music of the Tsurugaoka Hachiman-ku, a famous shinto shrine of Kamakura. Now, it is preserved in the Kamakura Museum and displayed with attire on. This image is in the sitting posture and its height is 96 CM. It was made of wood in 1266 A.D. and the wood is coated with a white substance and the body is slightly coloured for the purpose of expressing the beauty of flesh or skin. In fact, this image was dedicated to the shrine by a musician named Nakahara in 1266 A.D. Like many other images of the period, this Benzai-ten is also entirely Japanese. This image is also dressed up and the musical instrument Biwa is placed in the left hand and a plectrum in the right hand. The production of nude figures of Buddhist and Shinto

1. D.N. Bakshi, HDJBF (1979), pl. XLIII, Fig.1.
2. Ibid., pl. XLIII, Fig. 2.
3. Cf. HJA, p. 128.
Deities is a unique convention of the Kamakura period. But such images were not left nude. They were dressed up like the human beings. People of Kamakura period were inclined to attribute human aspects to gods, and therefore, it was necessary to change the dresses of the deities like those of the living men. This may be regarded as a tendency towards realistic representation in the art of the Kamakura period. Similar type of unattired image playing on Biwa is also found carved during the Kamakura period.

Dr. D. N. Bakshi also illustrated another naked Benzai-ten known as Hiho Myoon Benzai-ten, preserved in the Enoshima Jinja. The temple authorities say that the image was made of wood during the middle of the Kamakura period, and it was presented to the Jinja by Minamoto Yoritomo, the first shogun of the period. The image is 54 CM. in height. This beautiful image is found as seated on a rock-pedestal while her left leg is pendant. She is playing on a Biwa or lute. Her body is coated with white substance and it has a slight reddish tinge. Unlike the unattired Benzai-ten of the Kamakura Museum, the Myoon Benzai-ten's ears are longish. Her top-knot is beautifully decorated.

1. EGA, p. 128.
2. D. N. Bakshi, HDJBP, pl. XLIII, Fig. 4.
D. N. Bakshi also refers to another interesting image of eight armed Benzai-ten. It is also found in the Enoshima Jinja. In opinion of the temple authorities this image was made during the early Kamakura period. The goddess is seated on a lotus. She holds in her hands various attributes, such as a sword, arrow, a crescent(?) stick, a rope, a wheel, a pomegranate, a spear-like object etc. Her body is coloured and the greenish and reddish tinge can still be found. Artistic design appears around the halo. Height of the image is 57 CM. and it is generally known as Happi Benzai-ten.

It is stated that from the Kamakura period, making of Benzai-ten's image with eight arms was restored. After the Muromachi period (1336 A.D. - 1573 A.D.), the image of Benzai-ten in sitting posture with eight arms seemed to be worshipped by the Shingon sect. There are various representation of the eight-armed Benzai-ten existing from the Muromachi period.

In "Hindu Divinities in Japanese Buddhist pantheon" we find a description of a colourful image of eight-armed Benzai-ten. It is now painted on the back wall of the Kichijoji-ten Zushi (or a miniature shrine of Kichijoji-ten, i.e. Mahameru or Laksamana). This part of the Zushi containing the painting of Benzai-ten is preserved in the Tokyo University of Arts, while the Zushi with the image of Kichijoji-ten is

2. AJEB, p. 20.
3. Mikkō - 40-Rijutsu, p. 45
4. D.N. Bakshi, HDJBP, pp. 114 ff, pl. XLII, Fig. 4.
preserved in the Joruri-ji temple, Kyoto. The entire painting of Benzaiten with her four attendants measures 102 CM. in height and 62.9 CM. in width. In this painting Benzaiten and her attendants are brightly coloured and gorgeously dressed. The entire robes are full of decorative designs. Benzaiten in standing posture holds the esoteric attributes in her eight arms. The right four arms hold an arrow, a sword, an axe and a wheel (of the law), while the left four arms hold a blow, a vára, a spear and a lasso. Colour of the body of Benzaiten is white with a tinge of light pink colour. This painting of Benzaiten dated 1212 A.D. is considered to be one of the highly representative work of art of the Kamakura period.

An Anderson's catalogue we find mention of a Benten of Enoshima, who is in war-like disposition. He has a sword in her hand. A serpent and a tortoise are to be found at her feet. Two Deva kings are exhibited on her either side.

Dr. D. N. Bakshi also refers to a pretty old image of Benzaiten is exhibited in a separate shrine within the compound of the To-ji temple in Kyoto city. This Benzaiten is one of the deities of the group called 'san-ten', i.e., Three Deities. Other two deities in the group are Daikoku-ten (Mahakala) and Bishamon-ten (Kubera). on the altar.

2. Ibid.
Benzai-ten is in the middle and standing on a lotus. Daikokuten is on her left and Bishamonten is on her right. This image of Benzai-ten, though appears to be a replica of its original which is preserved in a Zushi, is about two feet in height. Her body is white and she wears blue garments. Her eight arms hold various implements including sword, spear, vajra, bow, and arrow. Most interesting feature of the image is that it has a 'Shinto gate' fixed on its crown.

Benten is the principal deity in the Kenji temple at Ueno in Tokyo. The image of Benten in the Kenji is eight armed and it was made of wood sometime during the 17th century A.D. The deity is beautifully decorated and she is in sitting posture. She holds various weapons, such as arrow, sword, axe, rope, bow and iron link. She is popularly worshipped for averting disaster, gaining peace, happiness, wealth, prosperity, good wealth, wisdom and knowledge. The original image is preserved in a Zushi placed on the alter and the Zushi is opened only on a particularly day during the middle of September when the original image is visible to the devotees. A replica of the original image is placed in front of the Zushi on the same altar.

In "Hindu Divinities in Japanese Buddhist pantheon" Dr. D. N. Bakshi also refers to a graceful image of Gikei-ten which is now preserved in the

---

2. Ibid.
Akishino-dera in Nara. This interesting image of Gigei-ten should be regarded as another form of Sarasvati in Japan. In the Japanese esoteric Buddhist text 'Makeishura Dainisai-tenno Jintu-Kasei Gigeiten-yo Nenshojo' it is held that Geigei-ten is a celestial nymph who incarnated herself being born from the hairs of Daijisai-ten (or Mahesvara) and she is the presiding deity of various arts. She also bestows happiness and imparts knowledge of arts to her worshippers. In fact, Gigei-ten is commonly called 'Deva of Arts' or Saravyati in Japan.

It is stated that in ancient times Gigei-ten might have been worshipped in many places in Japan, but no image of Gigei-ten is traced anywhere in the country excepting the one preserved in the Akishino-dera. Therefore, this famous image of Gigei-ten in the Akishino-dera, being the only one of its kind in Japan, draws a good number of worshippers as well as inquisitive visitors.

Whatever might have been the fact, it is beyond doubt true that in Japan Dai-ben-Zai-ten or Benten (or Great Divinity of Reasoning Faculty) is generally looked upon as a manifestation of Indian Saravyati. Even, in Japan Benten has some features similar to those of Indian Lakshmi and Manasa.

1. D. N. Bakshi, HDJBF., pp. 114