

CHAPTER V  
SARASVATĪ IN THE BRĀHMAṆĀS

## Chapter - V

### SARASVATĪ IN THE BRĀHMANAS

#### 1. Vāk and her introduction:

The conception of speech has been put forward in the post-Vedic period on scientific basis. Syllable (akṣara), word (śabda), sentence (vākya) and literature (sāhitya) and even nāda (dhvani), these all come under the scope of speech. Speech is known as Vāk, vānī and girā. In the Rgveda, Vāk denotes speech, while in later period, Vāk, vānī and girā are the words for it. There is divergence of opinion regarding its origin. According to one view, its origin is human and right from its origin, has been coming down from generation to generation. Contrary to it, one view regards it as a divine workmanship.<sup>1</sup> Speech evolves in the form of language. Linguists offer various theories about the origin of language, and according to one<sup>2</sup> of these, language has been classified mainly into two groups: (i) Language as created ready-made by God; and (ii) Language as the result of evolution. The first view regards language as descended to human mind from the heaven as God's grace to human beings as distinguished from animals; but the second view refutes it and accepts the existence of language by

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1 Max Müller, Science of Language (Varanasi, 1961), p. 4.

2 Irach Jehangir Sarabji Taraporewala, Elements of the Science of Language (Calcutta Univ., 1951), pp. 10-11.

way of evolution. The viewpoint of our religious scriptures favours  
as  
the first view, we will see it in the Rgveda and the Brāhmaṇas.

(1) The Rgvedic account:

Various aspects of Sarasvatī, as portrayed in the Rgveda, the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda, have been discussed in the previous chapters. In the Rgveda (X.71), Vāk herself comes forward to disclose her identity. In the first four of the eleven mantras of this Sūkta, there is the description of the creation of Vāk. In one of the mantras, it is said that Brhaspati is the first speech, and from him, there took origin other words for other objects, and these words, which are speech, are impelled by Sarasvatī herself:

"brhaspate prathamam vāco agram yat prai"rat nāmadheyam dadhānāh |  
yad esām śrestham yad aripram āsīt prenā tad esām nihitam guhāvih ||"<sup>1</sup>

The obvious meaning here is that Brhaspati was the first to create Vāk; and Sarasvatī who is also Vāk is, thus, the creation of Brhaspati. In the second mantra, Vāk is said to have been created by wisemen: "yatra dhīrā manasā vācam akrat".<sup>2</sup> Another mantra reveals to us how speech was acquired for worldly use. There, it is mentioned that wisemen secured speech by dint of sacrifice. But the credit for her procurement does not go only to wisemen. It were the ṛṣis, who first procured speech and later on, transferred it to wisemen for its wide use:

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1 RV., X.71.1; see also Sāyaṇa's com. thereon.

2 Ibid., X.71.2.

"yajñena vācaḥ padavīyam āyan tām anv avindan ṛṣisu pravistām |  
tām ābhṛtyā vy adadhuh purutrā tām sapta rebhā abhi sam navante ||"<sup>1</sup>

By this Rgvedic account, it is evident that Vāk is divine, i.e., she has a divine origin. The ṛṣis brought her to wisemen and the latter, then, studied her in the form of knowledge, or Veda, and she, was, thus, made for common man.<sup>2</sup> In the following mantra, there is the revealing of Vāk:

"uta tvah pasyan na dadarsā vācam uta tvah śṛṇvan na śṛṇoty enām |  
uto tv asmai tanvam ? vi sasre jāye 'va patya usatī suvāsāh ||"<sup>3</sup>

(ii) The Brāhmanical account:

The Brāhmanas often speak of the divinity of Vāk. Her divinity is obvious enough as she is associated with gods. She gave birth to the Vedas and contains the entire universe within herself:

"vācā vai vedāḥ sandhīyante vācā chandāmsī ... vācā sarvāni"<sup>4</sup>

Vāk is also described as mother and breath as her son:

"... vāg vai mātā prāṇaḥ putrah"<sup>5</sup>

From this, we can deduce that Vāk is so powerful that she has all things within her and she is capable of producing the universe. But this universe cannot be taken as directly evolved from Vāk. In this respect, she is closely related to Prajāpati, who creates the universe.

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1 Ibid., X. 71.3.

2 Cf., Wilson's note on ibid., X. 71.3.

3 Ibid., X. 71.4.

4 AA., III.1.6.

5 Ibid., III.1.6.

Brhaspati is the first to create Vāk and is also the lord of Vāk. From the following evidences, it is clear that Brhaspati and Prajāpati are identical in the capacity of her lords in connection with creation.

Brhaspati is supposed to be the lord of verses; and in the Upanisads, he is generally called Brahman as presiding over the verses. Vācaspati,<sup>1</sup> is the lord of Vāk, or speech / <sup>and</sup> is widely used in the Brāhmanas. This term is also a synonymous with Brhaspati, Brahmanaspati and Brahman.

Vāk is sometimes identified with waters, the primeval principle for the creation of the universe. While desirous of creation, Prajāpati first of all created waters wherefrom other things were created. Vāk, thus, represents waters and is also the will of the Creator, as his will is considered as expressed in speech (Vāk).<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes Vāk is identified with Prajāpati, Viśvakarman, the whole world, and Indra.<sup>3</sup> According to a legend about creation recorded in the Satapatha-Brahmana, Prajāpati, desirous of creation, created Vāk (speech) out of his mind and from her, he created waters. In this connection, a sexual association between them is maintained.<sup>4</sup> In the Kāthaka-Upanisad, this point has been expressed as follows:

"Prajāpati was this universe. Vāch was a second to him. He associated sexually with her; she became pregnant; she departed from

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1 AB., V.25; SB., IV.1.1.9; V.1.1.16; TB., 1.3.5.1; III.12.5.1, TĀ., III.1.1., etc.

2 Cf. A.B.Keith, op.cit., p.438.

3 Ibid., p. 438.

4 Cf. John Dowson, op.cit., pp. 329-330.

him; she produced these creatures; she again entered into Prajāpati.”<sup>1</sup>

Prajāpati is the source of creation and Vāk, as one of the five elements for creation, stands for the greatness of Prajāpati.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The legend of Vāk and the Gandharvas:

In the Brāhmanas, we have an interesting legend of Vāk and the Gandharvas. Before entering into the details of the legend, let us see what the Gandharvas stand for.

It is difficult to ascertain the nature and the character of the Gandharvas. They appear not only in the Brāhmanas/<sup>but</sup> as early as the Rgveda, where they are mentioned both in singular<sup>3</sup> and plural.<sup>4</sup> They were deprived of the draught of the Soma as a punishment; for since they had allowed Visvāvasu to steal it.<sup>5</sup> They seem to stand parallel to the Apsarases. The Apsarases are associated with waters of divine character (divyāh āpah). They are identified with the spirit of waters. Water is held to be their original abode. The "dominant trait in the character of the Apsarases, the original water-spirits, is their significant relation with āpah, the aerial waters, and consequently their sway over human mind, a later development to link mind with the deities connected with waters."<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Gandharvas are also associated with waters, who reside in the sky and know all the secret of the firmament

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1 Cf. ibid., p. 330.

2 V.S. Agarwala, 'Ka' Prajāpati', JOI, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (Baroda, 1958), pp. 1-4.

3 RV., I.163.2; IX.83.4; 8512; X.10.4;85.40-41;123.4,7;139.5-6; 177.2.

4 Ibid., IX.113.3.

5 Sharma, B.R. "Some Aspects of Vedic Gandharvas and Apsarases", PO, Vol. XIII, No. 1 & 2 (Poona, 1948), p. 68.

6 Ibid., p. 66.

and heaven. Because of their association with the sky, they are thought capable of generating waters from there.<sup>1</sup> The association of the Gandharvas with divine waters brings them nearer to Vāk, wherefrom Prajāpati, being desirous of creation, generated waters.<sup>2</sup> Thus, both Vāk and the Gandharvas generate waters and, therefore, are at this point similar in nature. Vāk, the Gandharvas and the Apsarases are related to each other. Vāk is held to be the mother of emotions, symbolised by the Gandharvas. She is also the creator of the Apsarases. "She is", as Danielou rightly observes, "the mother of the emotions, pictured as the Fragrances or the celestial musicians (gandharva). She gives birth to the uncreated potentialities, represented as celestial dancers, the water-nymphs (apsaras)."<sup>3</sup>

Gandharvas are described as having a great liking for fragrance. They are also said to guard the Soma and, sometimes, to have a monopoly over it. The Brāhmanas point to their affiliation with the human embryo as well as to their ardent love for unmarried girls.<sup>4</sup> In the post-Brāhmanic mythology, they have a differed position. They are represented as the excellent celestial musicians, playing on lute (vīnā). To them, the secrets of music are opened.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Sarasvatī is also represented, particularly in the mythology to hold vīnā in one of her hands and to produce song thereby.<sup>6</sup> Through his musical instrument, a musician

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1 Alain Danielou, op.cit., p. 305.

2 Cf. John Dowson, op.cit., pp. 329-330.

3 Alain Danielou, op.cit., p. 260.

4 Ibid., p. 306.

5 Ibid., p. 306.

6 See infra., p. 176.

expresses his emotions and arouses the emotions of his audience. Sarasvatī, too, while playing on Vīnā, manifests emotions and, therefore, she is aptly held to be the mother of emotions. Music and emotions, thus, have close association. Emotions are represented by the Gandharvas, as they are devoted to music and are pictured as playing on Vīnā. Thus, Vāk (Sarasvatī) and the Gandharvas are closely related to each other.

The legend of Vāk and the Gandharvas, opens with the mention of the Soma. The same legend occurs, with a slight difference, in the Yajurveda, with particular reference to the Soma, Indra, Namuci, Sarasvatī and the Asvins.<sup>1</sup> The Brāhmaṇas appear to have borrowed the theme therefrom, as is obvious from the statement that Indra's Soma was stolen and concealed in waters by the Gandharvas: "gandharvā ha vā indrasya somam apsu pratyāyitā gopāyanti ta uha strīkāmās te hā'su manāmsi kurvate".<sup>2</sup> But they are otherwise portrayed as guarding the Soma.<sup>3</sup> There is much confusion about the theft of the Soma. Somehow it fell into the sole possession of the Gandharvas; and gods could get it back only through purchase. It is termed 'Somakraya', 'the purchase of the Soma'.<sup>4</sup> The elaborate description of this legend occurs in the Āitareya and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas.

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1 Cf. YV., X.33-34; RV., X.131.4-5; see also Max Müller, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XLII, p. 328; J. Muir, op.cit., p. 94.

2 Sān. B., XII.3.

3 B.R. Sharma, op.cit., p. 68.

4 See infra., pp. 135-138.



(i) The legend in the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa:

In the Brāhmaṇas, Vāk turns into a woman of her own accord. It is evident by the following observation. The Gandharvas are described as having a great longing for women. Vāk is the wife of gods. The Soma was with the Gandharvas, which added immensely to the anxiety of gods. Consequently, they along with seers thought out a plan to get the Soma back from the Gandharvas. Meanwhile, Vāk intervened and revealed that the Gandharvas were the lovers of women. She offered herself for assuming the form of a woman, and approached them for purchasing the Soma. The gods declined to accept it; for without her, they could not sustain themselves. Vāk promised them to come to them again after the end was accomplished. Gods accepted it. The Soma was, thus, purchased from the Gandharvas by Vāk:

"soma vai rājā gandharveṣv āsīt tam devās ca ṛṣayaś ca  
'bhyadhyāyan katham ayam asmān somo rājā "gacched iti sā  
vāg abravīt strīkāmā vai gandharvā mayai "va striyā  
bhūtayā paṇadhvam iti ne 'ti devā abruvan katham vayan  
tvad ṛte syāme 'ti sā 'bravit kṛnītai "va yarhi vāva vo  
mayā 'rtho bhavitā tarhy eva vo 'haṃ punar āgantā 'smī 'ti tathe  
'ti tayā mahānagnyā bhūtayā somam rājānam akrīnam".<sup>1</sup>

The Soma was stolen by the Gandharva Viśvāvasu and guarded by  
the Gandharvas Svān and Bhrājī.<sup>2</sup>

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1 AB., I.27.

2 Cf. ibid., I.27; and also com. of Sāyana thereon.

(ii) The legend in the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa:

In this Brāhmaṇa, the above legend has been put forth elaborately. The legend runs thus: The Soma was in the heaven. The gods are desirous of performing the Soma sacrifice on the earth. But it was not possible in the absence of the Soma. They, therefore, created two illusions, Suparnī and Kadrū for bringing the Soma. Suparnī and Kadrū quarrelled with each other, and the latter defeated the former. Consequently, Suparnī had to fetch the Soma. For this purpose, she turned herself into metres; and of them, Gāyatrī, the goddess of metres, brought the Soma.<sup>1</sup>

Gāyatrī, assuming the form of bird, flew to the heaven in order to bring the Soma.<sup>2</sup> While on her way back, the Gandharva Visvāvasu interrupted her and the Gandharvas robbed her of the Soma. The unexpected delay in Gāyatrī's bringing the Soma caused anxiety to the gods. They themselves thought that the sole reason of it should lie in the snatching away of the Soma by the Gandharvas.<sup>3</sup> With no hopes for getting it, they thought it better to send someone again for fetching it. As the Gandharvas were fond of women, they decided to send Vāk to them in order to take the Soma back.<sup>4</sup>

There is a difference in the above two versions of the legend.

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1 ŚB., III.2.4.1; and Sāyana's com. thereon.

2 Sāyana's com. on ibid., III.2.4.2; "suparnyā nirmitā 'gāyatrī' - chando-devatā paksirūpena".

3 Ibid., III. 2.4.2.

4 Ibid., III. 2.4.3.

According to the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa<sup>1</sup>, it is Vāk who took initiative. She revealed to gods the fact that the Gandharvas were fond of women and, therefore, offered herself for bringing the Soma from them. She assured gods to come back to them with the Soma. According to the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, gods already knew the nature of the Gandharvas that they were fond of women and they, therefore, sent her to them. She succeeds in getting the Soma from the Gandharvas; but, according to the version of the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, while she was returning with it, they pursued her and asked gods to offer her to them in exchange of the Soma. The gods agreed on it with the condition that if Vāk wanted to come back to them, the Gandharvas should not force her to rejoin themselves against her will.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, both gods and the Gandharvas began to woo her. The Gandharvas recited the Veda<sup>3</sup> and gods played on a lute in order to win over her. Gods were victorious, and consequently, the Gandharvas had to lose the Soma as well as Vāk.<sup>4</sup> In the classical literature, Vāk (as Sarasvatī) is held to be the patroness of arts and sciences,<sup>5</sup> and is invoked as a Muse.<sup>6</sup> Her association with arts and sciences goes back to the Brāhmaṇas, where she is described to have been pleased by gods by playing on a lute, which shows that she had a great liking for music.

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1 AB., I.27.

2 SB., III. 2.4.4.

3 Ibid., III. 2.4.5.

4 Ibid., III. 2.4.6-7.

5 John Dowson, op.cit., p. 284.

6 James Hastings, op.cit., p. 605.

3. Some important epithets of Sarasvatī:

In the Brāhmanas, there are only a few epithets ascribed to Sarasvatī. Of them, the following are worth noticing:

(1) Vaisāmbhalyā:

Of the Brāhmanas and the Āranyakas, only the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa uses this epithet only once.<sup>1</sup> Sāyana in his Bhāṣya, explains it as: "visvām prajānām bharaṇam poṣaṇam visambhalaṃ tatkartum kṣamā vaisāmbhalyā tādrśī ..."<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, 'vaisāmbhalyā' is one, who brings up the whole prajā. This is obviously a compound word from vaisām + bhalyā. 'Vaisām' seems to be from √vis, which has various meanings: "a man, who settles down on or occupies the soil, an agriculturist, a merchant, a man of the third or agricultural caste (= vaiśya, q.v.); a man in general; people."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, 'bhalyā' seems to be the cognate of 'bhara' from/bhr 'to bear' or 'to support'.<sup>4</sup> Vaisāmbhalyā, in this context, seems to be a popular epithet of Sarasvatī ascribed in accordance to her nature. It points to Sarasvatī as a river. The Sarasvatī is so called; because it brings up through its nourishing waters the persons living upon agriculture or living in its neighbourhood. It is also called giver of food (vājinīvatī).<sup>5</sup>

Before using these epithets, the passage speaks very highly of

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1 TB., II. 5.8.6.

2 Cf. his com. on ibid., II. 5.8.6.

3 Cf. Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 941.

4 Cf. Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p. 809.

5 TB., II.5.8.6 (used in the vocative as 'vājinīvatī'); see also supra., pp. 69-71.

waters for their being medicine, as they were, for the world (visva-bhesjñh).<sup>1</sup> Then, the epithets 'vājinīvatī' and 'vaisāmbhalyā', occur which present the Sarasvatī as possessed of (and, thus, providing) food and nourishment to the world.<sup>2</sup> The honey-like sweet waters of the Sarasvatī river cause abundant milk in cows<sup>3</sup> and vigour in horses.<sup>4</sup> Sarasvatī in the capacity of Vāk is also the giver of nourishment or strength (puṣṭi), which includes cattle, etc.<sup>5</sup> Sarasvatī, the river or the goddess, may be called 'vaisāmbhalyā' on account of bringing up or nourishing people through the nourishment or strength provided to the cattle.

(ii) Satyavāk:

In the Rgveda, Sarasvatī is described as 'codayitrī sūnrtānām'<sup>6</sup> 'impelling excellent (i.e., sweet and pleasing) and true speeches. Similarly, in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa, she is called 'satyavāk', 'possessed of true speech'.<sup>7</sup>

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1 TB., II. 5.8.6.

2 Cf. Sāyaṇa's com. on ibid., II. 5.8.6, "he sarasvatī. nadfrūpe. te tvadiyāsv apsu yan madhu mādhyam vidyate tathā goṣv asveṣu madhuram ksīram samicīnam vahanasāmarthyam ca yad vidyate he vājinīvatī. annasamṛddhyukte. sarasvatī. ten sarveṇa me mukham aṅgḍhī vaktram alankṛtam kuru".

3 See supra. pp. 110-112.

4 Cf. the sense of 'vājinīvatī' as derived by Geldner from RV., VII. 96.3.

5 SB., III. 1.4.14. "... vvāg vai sarasvatī vvāgyajñāḥ sā 'syai "sā "tmāndevatā "dhītā bhavati vvākpasavo vai pūṣā puṣṭir vai pūṣā puṣṭih pasavaḥ pasavo hi yajñas te ..."

6 RV., I.3.11.

7 TB., II. 5.4.6., "... pra te mahe sarasvatī subhage vājinīvatī satyavāce bhare matim. idam te havyam ghṛtavat sarasvatī. satyavāce prabharenā havīṃsi ..."

Srī Mādhava explains its dative form 'satyavāce' as 'anṛtavākya-  
śhitāyai'.<sup>1</sup> This indicates that Sarasvatī in the capacity of Vāk is  
all truth. Being free from falsehood, she is described in the Rgveda  
itself as illuminating holy thoughts: "cetantī sumatīnām".<sup>2</sup>

(iii) Sumṛḍikā:

The epithet 'sumṛḍikā' occurring in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa and  
the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka, has the same implication as 'mayobhūh'<sup>3</sup> used for  
Sarasvatī in the Rgveda and interpreted by Sāyana as 'sukhotpādikā'<sup>4</sup> and  
'sukhasya bhāvayitrī'.<sup>5</sup>

This word occurs in dative form in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa as an  
adjective of Aditi: "adityai svāhā 'ḍityai mahyai svāhā 'ḍityai  
sumṛḍikāyai svāhe 'ty āha."<sup>6</sup> Here, 'sumṛḍikā' means, 'liberal'. Aditi the  
mother of gods, is naturally liberal towards her progeny. The term  
occurs several times in the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka.<sup>7</sup> Sāyana explains it as:  
'susthu sukhatetuh'<sup>8</sup> and 'susthu sukhakarī'.<sup>9</sup> Sarasvatī as Idā provides  
peace and prosperity and gives rich gifts to the people. Thus, she brings

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1 Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa, with the commentary of Bhaṭṭa Bhāskara Mīra,  
supplemented with Sāyana's Aṣṭaka II (Mysore, 1921), p. 246.

2 RV., I.3.11.

3 Ibid., I. 13.9; V.5.8.

4 His com. on ibid., I. 13.9.

5 His com. on ibid., V.5.8.

6 TB., III.8.11.2.

7 TĀ., I. 1.3, 21.3, 31.6; IV.42.1.

8 His com. on ibid., I.1.3.

9 His com. on ibid., IV. 42.1.

comfort and happiness to the people. It is this nature of Sarasvatī, which has been pointed out by Sāyana in his interpretation of the word 'sumrdikā' in the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka. 'Sumrdikā' may also mean 'having good soil (sumrd)', i.e., the land having good (fertile) soil. It should be borne in mind that the Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka describes Sarasvatī as the land with water: "sarasvatī saroyuktabhūmirūpa istake".<sup>1</sup> Sarasvatī as 'sumrdikā' would, thus, be the land with good (fertile) soil. As the fertile land yields rich harvest and, thus, prosperity, Sarasvatī also provides prosperity. She has been requested to be 'sivā', providing wealth and 'śantamā', 'providing peace or subduing troubles and calamities'.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the above epithets, there are still others, 'subhagā',<sup>3</sup> 'vājinīvatī',<sup>4</sup> 'pāvakā',<sup>5</sup> etc., which we have already discussed.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. Sarasvatī and Sarasvān:

Much has been said about Sarasvān earlier<sup>7</sup> and his relationship with Sarasvatī has been pointed out. His relationship with Sarasvatī is brought out by the terms Sarasvatīvān and Bhāratīvān used for him.

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1 Cf. ibid., I.1.3, and Sāyana's com. thereon.

2 Cf. ibid., IV.42.1, and Sāyana's com. thereon, "... he sarasvatī tvam no 'smān prati sīvā 'nukūlā śantamā 'tisayena sarvopadrasamāni sumrdikā suṣṭhu sukhakarī ca bhava".

3 TB., II. 5.4.6.

4 Ibid., II. 5.4.6; 8.6.

5 Ibid., II. 4.3.1.

6 Vide supra., pp. 64, 69-73.

7 Vide supra., pp. 91-94, 107-110.

According to the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, Sarasvān represents manas (mano vai sarasvān) and Sarasvatī, Vāk (vāk sarasvatī). It also speaks of two Sārasvatas as two fountains (sārasvatau tva 'tsau).<sup>1</sup> The identification of Sarasvān and Sarasvatī with manas and Vāk respectively has been asserted in another Kāṇḍa in clear terms: "... manas' cai 'vā 'sya vvāk ca 'ghārau sarasvāms' ca sarasvatī ca savidyān manas' cai 'va me vvāk ca 'ghārau sarasvāms' ca sarasvatī ce 'ti".<sup>2</sup>

Thus, manas and Vāk are brought into close relation with each other. To quote Sāyaṇa: "manas' cai 've 'tyādi. 'asya' yajñasarīrasya imau 'āghārau' manovāgrūpau jñātavyau. tau kramena 'sarasvāms' ca sarasvatī ca' etad dvayātmakau bhavataḥ. adhyātmakam tayoḥ upāsanam āha. savidyād iti. mana manas' ca vāk ca sarasvatsarasvatīrūpāv āghārāv iti jāniyād ity arthaḥ."<sup>3</sup>

The identification and relation of manas and Vāk may be understood differently. Mind (manas) is supposed to be equally filled with 'rasa' and 'bala' (rasabalasamanātrāvacchinnā). During this state of equilibrium, everything is in tranquil state and hence no effect; but when there is any stress such as the desire for expression an idea, it turns into breath and when the stress is acute, it turns into Vāk. Thus, even on this psychological ground, there is a close relationship between manas and Vāk, i.e., mind and speech,<sup>4</sup> symbolically represented by Sarasvān and Sarasvatī.

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1 SB., VII. 5.1.31.

2 Ibid., XI. 2.6.3.

3 His com. on ibid., XI. 2.6.3.

4 Cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa with Hindi-Vijñānabhāṣya, Part II (Rājasthāna-Vedic Tattvasōdha-Samsthāna, Jaipur, 1956), p. 1353.



In the Aitareya-Brāhmana,<sup>1</sup> Sarasvān is described as Sarasvatīvān and Bhāratīvān and has been asked to accept the parivāpa, being poured in the sacrifice. Sarasvatī has been invited repeatedly to the sacrifice<sup>2</sup> and as Vāk has also been identified with it.<sup>3</sup> As having Sarasvatī, i.e., Vāk or speech, Sarasvān is called Sarasvatīvān; and as having Bhāratī, i.e., prāṇa or breath, which sustains the body, he is described as Bhāratīvān.<sup>4</sup>

5. Vāk and the problems concerning her in the Brāhmanas:

(1) The way through which Sarasvatī went to be identified with speech:

Originally a terrestrial river, the Sarasvatī was later on ascribed with divine character on account of the sanctity of its waters and was conceived as Vāk (speech) and then as the goddess of speech (Vāgdevī).<sup>5</sup>

The pious waters of the Sarasvatī river infused life into the views of the people residing along its banks and this fresh life was the cause of the holy speech in the form of sacred hymns, which led them to identify the river with speech or conceive it as the goddess of speech. The identification of the Sarasvatī river with Vāk is endorsed by the fact that Vāk is described to reside in the midst of Kuru-Pāñcālas: "tasmād atro 'ttarā hi vṛg vadati kurupañcālatrā vṛg dhy. esā ..."<sup>6</sup>

1 AB., II.24.

2 Supra., p. 72, f.n.7.

3 Cf. SB., III.1.4.9, 14, etc.

4 Cf. Sāyana's com. on AB., II.24, "... sarasvatī vāk, sā 'syā 'stī 'ti devaviśeṣah 'sarasvatīvān'. sa eva 'bhāratīvān'; - śarīrabharanād bharanah prāṇah, tasya sambandhinī dehe 'vasthitir bhāratī, tadyukto devo 'bhāratīvān'. ayam viśeṣanadvayopeto devah 'parivāpah' parivāpākhyam havir attu ..."

5 Supra., pp.35-37.

6 SB., III. 2.3.15.

The Vāk, thus, described could only be the Sarasvatī river flowing in the Kuru-Pañcāla region. Sarasvatī, or Vāk is also connected with the Soma;<sup>1</sup> and for this reason Sarasvatī is called 'amśumatī', full of the Soma. "... Soma, frightened by Vrtra, fled to the Amśumatī, flowing in the Kuruksetra region. He settled there and gods too settled there along with him. They used Soma, and thereby evolved Soma-sacrifices."<sup>2</sup>

The Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa informs us that waters of the Sarasvatī were used for consecration. It is also said that the consecration was done with speech,<sup>3</sup> i.e., the Sarasvatī river. Sacrifices were performed on the banks of the Sarasvatī river and its blessings were prayed for their success. Then, the river was implored for the holy speech and was conceived as Vāk and furthermore as the goddess of speech.

From the Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa, we come to know that the mantras chanted in the sacrifice are taken to be Vāk and owing to the predominance of the chanting of the mantras, the sacrifice itself has been identified with Vāk.<sup>4</sup> On account of the constant recitation of the mantras in honour of gods associated with the sacrifice, the sacrifice itself was

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1 . Supra., pp.132-138.

2 Sūryakānta, op.cit., p. 115.

3 SB, V.3.4.3, 5.8.

4 Ibid., III. 1.4.9, 14, etc.

identified with gods.<sup>1</sup> There is no distinction and, thus, the full identification is maintained, when consequently, the sacrifice (yajña) has been identified with Vāk.<sup>2</sup>

(ii) The cosmogonical Vāk legend in the Brāhmaṇas:

While discussing the various implications of 'saptasvasā'<sup>3</sup> as an epithet of Sarasvatī, we have pointed out that this word also denotes, according to Sāyana and others, the seven-metres - Gāyatrī, etc. Of the seven metres, Gāyatrī, Trṣṭup and Jagatī have special importance in connection with cosmology. There is a beautiful story about Gāyatrī. Gāyatrī is said to have eight syllables (akṣaras), which are the result of the kṣarana vyāpāra done in eight times by Prajāpati, while he was desirous of creation. In the beginning, Prajāpati was alone. So he had a desire to reproduce himself. For this purpose, he practised penance; and by dint of it, waters were produced.<sup>4</sup> Waters asked him about their use. He said, "you should be heated"; and as a result, they were heated and foam was produced out of them.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the foam was heated and the clay was produced.<sup>6</sup> When clay was heated, sand was

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1 Cf. Gop. B., II.1.12, "sarvā devatā viṣṇur yajño devatās caiva yajñam ..."; TB., I. 3.4.5, "... atho prajāpatāv eva yajñam pratiṣṭhāpayati. prajāpatir hi vāk".

2 SB., III. 1.4.9, 14, etc.

3 Vide supra., pp. 49-51.

4 SB., VI. 1.3.1.

5 Ibid., VI. 1.3.2.

6 Ibid., VI. 1.3.3.

produced.<sup>1</sup> Similarly from sand, there resulted pebble; from pebble, the stone; from stone, metal ore; and in the last, gold was produced.<sup>2</sup> This is the kṣarana-vyāpāra of Prajāpati and each of his vyāpāras or kṣaranas implies one akṣara or syllable, obtained by Gāyatrī. Thus, his eight kṣarana-vyāpāras imply eight akṣaras or syllables of Gāyatrī. In this way the eight syllabled Gāyatrī came into existence.

Vāk has been held to have produced this universe. Gāyatrī, too, does the same work. She has played a vital role in the creation of the universe in association with Prajāpati.<sup>3</sup> Sarasvatī in her capacity of being 'triśadhasthā', represents the three worlds, earth, firmament and heaven'.<sup>4</sup> Gāyatrī is also called 'tripadā' and the legend of the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa speaks of her as having been produced by Prajāpati. Prajāpati created the three worlds, the earth, space and the heaven, represented by the three padas of Gāyatrī.<sup>5</sup> The metre Gāyatrī represents Sarasvatī, who in her different capacities, represents different regions-Idā represents the earth; Sarasvatī the mid-region; and Bhāratī, the heaven.<sup>6</sup>

In the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa, Vāk is accepted as the progeny of Prajāpati.<sup>7</sup> It is Prajāpati, who, in the later literature, has been

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1 Ibid., VI. 1.3.4.

2 Ibid., VI. 1.3.5.

3 Ibid., VI. 1.3.6.

4 Cf. RV., VI. 61.12; see also supra., p. 52.

5 AB., XX.

6 See supra., pp. 88-90.

7 AB., XX.

identified with Brahmā, the Creator. The seed of this identification is available in the Aitareya-Brahmana,<sup>1</sup> where Gāyatrī is his ksarana and vyāhrtis are bhūh, bhuvah and svah, and these vyāhrtis are identified with the three letters constituting OM, the very symbol of Brahma. The identification of Prajāpati with metres<sup>2</sup> is carried out in this way. The cosmogonical aspect of Vāk is more obvious, when metre has been identified with mind, and mind with Prajāpati. Metre is taken to represent various elements.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, there is a close affinity among Prajāpati, Vāk and metre. Prajāpati is the first unborn; and Vāk, the second after him. He has every control over Vāk for creation and it is probably for this reason that he is called Vācaspati, the Lord of speech.<sup>4</sup> The epithets Iṣaspati, Vācaspati and Brahmaṇaspati<sup>5</sup> speak of his lordship over Vāk. Vāk is a vital force in creation, a fact apparent enough from the acceptance of metres as indriyas.<sup>6</sup>

(iii) The identification of Vāk with Sarasvatī:

It is only in the Brāhmaṇa literature that the identification of Vāk and Sarasvatī is asserted in clear and indubious terms. The following lines will show this identification in the various Brāhmaṇas.

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1 Ibid., XX.

2 SB., VI. 2.1.30.

3 Cf., Satapatha-Brahmana, with the Hindi commentary Ratnadīpikā by Pt. Gaṅgā Prasāda Upādhyāya, Vol. I (New Delhi, 1967), pp. 113-114 (in reference to SB., VIII.5.2.6, and YV., XV.4.5).

4 Cf. SB., III. 1.3.22; V.1.1.16.

5 BD., III. 71.

6 TB., II. 6.18.1, 3, "... gāyatrī chanda indriyam ... usṅik chanda indriyam"; AB., II.6.18.3, "... tristup chanda indriyam ... jagatī chanda the 'ndriyam".

(a) The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa:

This Brāhmaṇa has greater number of references than others in this regard. In the consecration ceremony, the sprinkling of waters of the Sarasvatī is thought as if it were done with speech (Vāk).<sup>1</sup> This Brāhmaṇa further stresses that Sarasvatī is speech and speech itself is sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> Since Sarasvatī is speech, Prajāpati is described to have strengthened himself and also to make her his progeny.<sup>3</sup> In the Rgveda,<sup>4</sup> we find Vāk as proclaiming herself to be the daughter of a ṛṣi, and, thus, she comes into the picture as a lady. We have no mention of the name of Sarasvatī there; but Vāk can be none other than Sarasvatī as Vāk and Vāk as the daughter of the ṛṣi is in all probability the speech sprung from his mouth. The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa,<sup>5</sup> too, presents Sarasvatī as a lady and she is the same as Vāk.

In the Yajurveda,<sup>6</sup> Vāk is taken to be the controlling power of Sarasvatī. In the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa,<sup>7</sup> Sarasvatī is first taken to be Vāk and then Vāk to be her controlling power, probably discretion born of knowledge. Sarasvatī or Vāk is also identified with mind (manas), the abode of all ideas before they are expressed through speech and heard by ears.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in her latent form, speech is mind. Elsewhere:

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1 Cf. SB., V.3.4.3; 5.8.

2 Ibid., III. 1.4.9, 14.

3 Ibid., III. 9.1.7.

4 RV., X.71.

5 SB., IV.2.5.14, 6.3.3.

6 YV., IX. 30.

7 SB., V. 2.2.13, 14.

8 Cf. ibid., XII. 9.1.13.

Sarasvān is identified with mind and Sarasvatī with Vāk: "sārasvatau tvo 'tsau prāvatām iti mano vai sarasvān vāk sarasvaty etau."<sup>1</sup> Thus, Sarasvatī and Sarasvān combinedly form the complete Vāk.

(b) The Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa:

The identification of Sarasvatī with Vāk is clearly asserted in the Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa in the statement that one who worships Sarasvatī, pleases Vāk; for Vāk is Sarasvatī: "atha yat sarasvatīm yajati, vāg vai sarasvatī, vācam eva tena prīṇāti".<sup>2</sup>

(c) The Tāndya-Mahābrāhmaṇa:

At the outset of this chapter, we have noted that post-Vedic conception of Vāk includes in Sarasvatī, the conception of varṇa, akṣara, pada, vākya and dhvani.<sup>3</sup> Her identification with Vāk and also with dhvani exists in the Brāhmaṇas. Identifying Sarasvatī with Vāk, the Tāndya-Brāhmaṇa states: "vāg vai sarasvatī vāg vairūpaṃ vairūpaṃ eva 'smai tayā yunakti".<sup>4</sup> Here Sarasvatī is taken to be śabdātmikā Vāk, i.e., the speech in the form of sound (śabda or dhvani). The word 'rūpaṃ' suggests the various forms of speech; and 'vairūpaṃ' the object denoted by speech.<sup>5</sup>

(d) The Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa:

In the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa,<sup>6</sup> Sarasvatī is said to be Vāk and then

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1 Ibid., VII.5.1.31; XI.2.4.9, 6.3 .

2 Gop B., II.20.

3 See supra., p. 128.

4 Tā B., XVI. 5.16.

5 Cf. Sāyana on the above, "... vāk śabdātmikā hi sarasvatī. vairūpaṃ ca vāksamstutam".

6 AB., III. 37.

'pāvīravī', a term already used for Sarasvatī in the Rgveda.<sup>1</sup> One who worships 'pāvīravī' invokes Sarasvatī, too, at the same time, because of her sanctifying nature, Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech, is called pāvīravī.<sup>2</sup>

(e) The Aitareya-Āraṇyaka:

In the Rgveda,<sup>3</sup> Sarasvatī is called 'dhiyāvasuh', and 'pāvākā'. The Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa, too, uses these terms; but it boldly presents them as the synonyms for Vāk, thus, confirming the identification of Sarasvatī with Vāk: "pāvākā nah sarasvatī yajñam vastu dhiyāvasur iti vāg vai dhiyāvasuh".<sup>4</sup>

(f) The Śāṅkhāyana-Brāhmaṇa:

This Brāhmaṇa identifies Sarasvatī with speech and says that on the occasion of 'dārsapaurnamāsika', one who worships Sarasvatī, pleases Vāk (speech); because Sarasvatī is Vāk: "yat sarasvatīm yajati vāg vai sarasvatī vācam eva tat prīnāty atha".<sup>5</sup>

(g) The Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa:

This Brāhmaṇa<sup>6</sup> also refers to Sarasvatī. In this Brāhmaṇa, we also find the identification of Prajāpati who is, according to the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, possessed of prāṇas (breaths) and Vāk<sup>7</sup> with the

1 See supra., pp. 58-60.

2 Cf. Śāyana on AB., III.37, "ye 'yam vāgabhimānīni 'sarasvatī' devatā sai 'va 'pāvāsya' śodhanasya hetuvāt 'pāvīravī' tatpāthena 'vāci eva' devatāyām mantrarūpām 'vācam' sthāpayati".

3 RV., I.3.10; see supra., pp. 42-43, 72-73.

4 ĀA., I.14.

5 ŚāB., V. 2.

6 TB., I.3.4.5; III.8.11.2.

7 Cf. Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa with the Hindi-Vijñānabhāṣya, Part II, p.1353.



sacrifice and Vāk.<sup>1</sup> As Vāk is the manifestation of prāṇas, Vāk, i.e., Sarasvatī - is considered superior to the prāṇas: "vāg vai sarasvatī. tasmāt prāṇānāṃ vāg uttamā".<sup>2</sup>

In the classical literature, 'girā' (from 'gir', capable to assume a human voice)<sup>3</sup> is taken to be one of the names of, or synonyms for Sarasvatī, she being understood as the spoken form of Vāk (speech). The identification of Sarasvatī with the human voice can be traced back to the Brāhmaṇas, where she has been expressly called 'jihvā', i.e., tongue,<sup>4</sup> a physical organ of speech, and the word Vāc or Vāk is used for the human speech.<sup>5</sup>

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1 T.B., I.3.4.5.

2 Ibid., I.3.4.5.

3 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 289.

4 Ś.B., XII.9.1.14, "jihvā sarasvatī".

5 Cf. T.B., I.3.4.5.