Eminent scholars in the field of iconography had taken up the study of the principal deities of the Brahmanical Hindus, the Jainas and the Buddhists. But only a few scholars have so far attempted on objective study of the minor deities on the basis of literary and archaeological evidences. The study of these deities, therefore, still provides an open field for researches. It was decided that I would make an extensive as well as intensive investigation on the conceptual and iconographical developments of Sarasvatī, a minor deity of the Brahmanical pantheon, in all her aspects. Since the conceptual development of the deity is found to have started from the Rgveda and still continuing, the scope of the study is thus enormous; and to do justice to it I have endeavoured my best. It is a matter of great satisfaction that I have found out facts and information which escaped the attention of the previous scholars in the field. Besides, I have succeeded in presenting a critical survey of the myths and legends relating to Sarasvatī from a historical viewpoint consistent with the study of iconography. The present work may, therefore, be said to have contained the results of earlier researches and have presented new facts by way of interpretation.

As regards the scheme, the entire study has been divided into three broad sections - the Vedic and Brahmanical, the Jaina and the Buddhist. In the first four chapters I have
dealt with materials containing elaborate discussion about the origin, antiquity, transformation and representation of Sarasvatī as a river and a deity from the Brahmanical perspective. In them I have tried to appraise critically the views of the previous scholars and have thereafter given my own based on literary and archaeological data. The fifth chapter shows how the Vedic concept of the goddess of learning had influenced the Jaina of both the Digambara and Śvetāmbara sects in regard to the formation of the concept of Śrutadevata and Sarasvatī in the Jaina pantheon. The sixth chapter deals elaborately with the various factors that contributed to the development of Sarasvatī as a deity of the Buddhists. It has further been analysed how the latter concept had crossed the geographical borders of India and taking modified forms influenced the spiritual life of the people of neighbouring countries.

I may submit here that my method of study is all through objective, and I have approached the subject from the standpoint of history and archaeology. However, considering the nature of my source of materials, I would not claim that all my conclusions are final; but I would simply demand that the present dissertation offers for the first time a comprehensive and systematic study on Sarasvatī from historical viewpoint. I may hasten to acknowledge that it has been possible for me to give it such a complete form only being able to utilise properly the results of the previous researches in the field.
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