Chapter-III

Sarasvatī as a Concept in the Puranic Literature

Sarasvatī, originally a Vedic goddess of learning and speech, occupies a place of formidable importance also in the Purāṇas and the Upapurāṇas. According to the Purāṇas Sarasvatī is primarily a river, as her name 'the watery' (saras) clearly denotes. She is said to have surpassed all other ancient rivers from which pure water used to flow from mountains to the sea. It is by an almost imperceptible process that the river had transformed into a female deity and became the directress of ceremonies during the period depicted by the Puranic literature.

Out of the eighteen Purāṇas only ten contain references to Sarasvatī, either as a river or as a deity or both. The Puranic myths and legends relating to Sarasvatī are, however, of confused character and it is extremely difficult to arrange them systematically in view of obtaining some clear ideas regarding her. This is because the chapters of a particular Purāṇa were composed at different times and by distinct personages too. Nevertheless, here an attempt will be made to trace the development of conceptual and iconographic ideas about Sarasvatī by comparing and contrasting the information found in the various Puranic texts.

In the Markandeya Purāṇa (Ch.IV), there is a story that Maharsī Jaimini while going through the Vindya forest was surprised to see that some birds were reading the Vedas distinctly
and without any fault. This was possible owing to the fact that some Brāhmaṇas being cursed were born there as inferior creatures, and had earned the favour of goddess Sarasvati who did not abandon them in spite of their condemned birth. In Chapter XXIII of the said Purāṇa, it is also stated that Naga king Asvatara and his brother Kambala propitiated the resplendent goddess Jagadhātrī Sarasvatī to gain proficiency in music. The goddess Jagadhātrī Sarasvatī was praised as imperishable and supreme and as comprising everything. The three prosodial time (mātrā-trayam), the three worlds (loka-trayam), the Vedas (devastraividvām), the three fires (pāvākā-trayam), the three lights (trinī-jyoitīmesi), the three colours (Varnā), the three law-books (dharmastraisthā) the three qualities (gunastravo), the three sounds (sabdāstrava), the three āśramas, the three times (traya kālā), the three states of life (stathāvasthān) the nitris, the day, night and the rest are possessed by her. Nobody can explain her form and appearance by mouth, tongue, lips or other organs. Even Indra, the Vasus, Brahmā, the Moon and the Sun cannot explain her form. She is the supreme ruler of the Universe, the and the power (śaktis) inherent in gods, men and beasts are manifested through her. All things visible and non-visible, permanent and perishable, gross and subtle derive their perceptibility from her. The things that are in heaven, on the surface of the earth, in the sky or elsewhere are known and explained by her. Being so praised, the goddess, who is also addressed as Viṇṇujīhvā Sarasvatī,
offered a boon to the Nāga king Asvatara. As a result the king obtained the musical scales, the seven songs, the same number of modulations, the forty-nine musical tunes, the three octaves, the four kinds of quarter verse (pāda), the three sorts of musical times, the three kinds of musical movements, the three pauses in music, the four-fold cymbals (todva) and whatever was contained within them and dependant thereon. This knowledge of music helped the Nāga king to please Śiva and thereby get back Madālasā. In chapter LXXII of the same Purāṇa, it is further stated that the Brāhmaṇas performed sacrifices to Sarasvatī in order to stimulate the power of speech.

The Devī-mahātva of the Mārkandeya Purāṇa also contains an important and representative characterisation of the goddess Sarasvatī. The various Devī-stutis (Brahmā-stuti, Nāraṇya-stuti etc.) reveal in a striking manner some of the multifarious strands that largely contributed to the formation of a composite concept of the goddess. The Devī is invoked there under different names and it is difficult to determine if the names are synonymous or refer to distinct personages. But the couplet of the Nāraṇa-stuti states that the goddess will incarnate herself and kill the demons (dānavas), who are the enemies of the gods. The emanation of the Devī is known by such names as Mahākāli, Mahālakṣaṇī, Mahāvidvā, Mahāvānī, Pārati, Vāc, Brāhma, Vedogarbha and so on. Accordingly it is assumed that the names are synonymous and designate a single divinity, viz. Sarasvatī.
The above legends of the Markandeya Purāṇa clearly show how Sarasvatī acquires the position of a supreme deity by taking epithets like Jagadhātṛī, Mahālakṣmī, and Mahakāli, representing energetic principle (saktis) of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva, respectively. She is actually conceived as an embodiment of universal energy or Sakti inherent in gods, men and beasts.

While glorifying Kurukṣetra and the adjoining places, the Vāmana Purāṇa states that Sarasvatī is a great river that rises from the holy fig tree (plasksa Vṛksa), and passes through Kurukṣetra. The sacred land between the Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī is known as Brahmavarta where the vedic gods and sages had their early settlements. It is further stated that here on the bank of the Sarasvatī, the sage Markandeya worshipped Sarasvatī as a river goddess and explained the sacredness of her character. Several distinguished hermitages were set up along its bank; Vedic hymns were chanted and sacrifices were performed there by the sages. Markandeya, while seeking the welfare of the whole universe, praised the Devi Sarasvatī as the mother of all creations and the Vedas. All things, good or bad, all works that lead to salvation are within her. The eternal speech, knowledge, the fire and the earth are originated from her. The three worlds, the three Vedas, the three fires, the three lights, the three colours, the three metals, the three times, the pitris, the siddhis and the rest are nothing but her creations.

It may be noted that in the above passages of the Vāmana Purāṇa, Markandeya praised Sarasvatī as a river-
goddess and speak highly of her eternal power which is beyond creation and destruction. In a parallel language the Naga king Asvatara also praised Jagadhatri Sarasvati in the Markandeya Purana (Ch.XXIII). Thus it is assumable that the Vāmana Purāṇa follows the tradition of the Markandeya and the goddess Sarasvati and Jagadhatri, referred to the said Puranas, may be identified as a single divinity. It may further be noted that the sage Markandeya plays a significant role in popularising the worship of the river goddess Sarasvati, who till then was chiefly known as a supreme deity and associated with Vedic gods.

In this connection, a question arises in respect of the chronological sequence of the Vāmana Purāṇa. According to R.C. Hazra, the Vāmana Purāṇa is a minor Purāṇa and was composed after the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. But from the conceptual position of Sarasvatī in the Vāmana Purāṇa, it seems that she is Markandeya Purana, which happens to be the earliest Purana, as also in the Vāmana Purāṇa the presiding sage is Markandeya. Hence, notwithstanding its date of composition, we find that the Vāmana Purāṇa retains an older tradition.

The Matsya Purana, however, presents a separate and distinct Sarasvatī. In its Chapters III & IV, Sarasvatī is narrated under different names like Satarūpā, Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī and Brahmāni. Brahmā who created Satarūpā out of his own body, became enamoured of her lovely appearance and looked at her anorously. But Satarūpā in order to get
rid of such a distressing situation turned to the right side from his gaze. Still Brahmā wished to look at her and a second head immediately appeared. As she passed to his left and his rear, in order to avoid his lustful glances, two other heads of the god successively appeared. At length she sprang to the sky, and following her, a fifth head of Brahmā was also formed. At last Brahmā espoused her and withdrew into a secluded spot. They spent there for one hundred divine years and at the expiration of that period Manu, who was called Svayambhuva as well as Virāja was born. Brahmā thus becomes the principal power behind the creation of all gods and men and as noted above, Satarūpā or Gāyatri was formed from his body.

This myth of Brahmā's incestuousness towards his own creation may be traced to the Rgveda (X.61.4) and the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (I.7.4.1). Some of the Purāṇas take advantage of this vaguely allegorical but depreciatory myth and censures Brahmā for this shameful conduct. This is no doubt detrimental to the reputation of the Vedic god, and the prevalence of the legend could have lower down his position as a supreme deity. But it would not be out of place to mention here that this is one of the necessary stages in the cosmic process and finds its near parallel in the Book of Genesis.¹

¹ Book of Genesis states that the creation of man in the divine 'image and likeness' was followed by the primordial sabbath on the seventh day. Man (Adam) was created out of dust and made into a living thing by God blowing the breadth of life into him. Woman (Eve) was created out of his own rib and put into a paradisal garden (Eden), by God especially created for them to till and to tend and to sustain life. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th Edn., vol.2, 1943-1973, p.899.
In chapter LXVI, of the Matsya Purana, Matsya narrates to Manu the necessary formalities to be observed at the time of performing the Sarasvata-Vrata and the results obtained thereof. The deity, holding in her four hands a lyre (Vina), a rosary of beads (aksmālā), a water vessel (kamandalu) and a manuscript (pustaka), is to be worshipped on every Pañchahāmi day, with white garlands (suklamālā), a plant named (akasata), clarified butter (ghrta), unboiled rice (tandula), thickened milk ( Kesā), gold (hiranya) and sandal paste (sandana). On this occasion milch cow, clothes and gold should be donated to the priests and the Brāhmaṇas. The goddess possesses all learnings of the Vedas and scriptures, dancing and musical power, fortune (Laksmī), intelligence (medhā), the earth (dharā), nourishment (pusti), brilliance (gourī), contemplation (tustī), splendour (pravā) and devotion (mati). The persons who worship the deity with reverence obtain knowledge, riches, musical power and finally go to heaven.

In the Matsya Purana, Sarasvatī is not mentioned as a supreme deity; she is rather important as a goddess of intelligence and wisdom. In this Purāna we witness for the first time, a complete visual form of the goddess with characteristic iconographical features. Again, here we learn that originating from Brahmā, she becomes his consort and is endowed with the power of offering knowledge, riches and music to the worshippers. But in the Jagadhātrī-Sarasvatī conception of the Markandeya Purana, the same goddess is

1. Matsya Purana, Ch. LXVI, verse 10.
said to be the originator of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, and possesses the attributes of creation by herself. Thus in the Matsya Purāṇa, Sarasvatī is found to have lost much of her position as a supreme deity that she enjoyed by observing the concept of Vāc in the Rgveda (X.125), and later on being worshipped as Jagadhātṛi Sarasvatī.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa raises Sarasvatī again to an elevated position. In Chapter III, of the said Purana Mahadeva narrates to Nārada how the goddess Jagadambikā created Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahēśvara and espoused herself to them in the form of Sāvitrī, Laksī and Sarasvatī, and Jājā, respectively. The goddess Jagadambikā is described as of a soft dark complexion with beautiful blossoming lotus like face, four arms, red eyes, exposed hair and developed and pointed breasts. She wears no cloth and seats on the back of a lion and shows fierce appearance. The same goddess further manifests herself in five different forms, viz., Gaṅgā, Sāvitrī, Durgā, Laksī and Sarasvatī. She appeared before Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Mahēśvara and advised them to take up the work of creation, preservation and destruction; herself being the consorts of them.

The Jagadambikā conception of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa appears to have been already explained in the Rgveda (X.125), and the Markandeya Purāṇa (Ch.XXIII), where the goddess is represented as Vāc and Jagadhātṛi Sarasvatī respectively. While Vāc is associated with Rudras, the Vasus, the Ādityas and Visvadevas and upholds Mitra and Varuṇa and both the Āśvins, Jagadhātṛi Sarasvatī is endowed with the power of
creation, sustentation and destruction. It is further to note that in the Bhārat Purāṇa, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are mentioned as the wives of Visṇu, the former as representing fortune, and the latter knowledge and intellect.

The Liṅga Purāṇa is a manual of the liṅga worshippers and inculcates the worship of the phallic emblem of Śiva. But in Chapter XVI of the said Purāṇa, Sarasvatī is mentioned as the daughter of Brahmā representing Viśvanātha. She is of white complexion and is bedecked with ornaments (Sarvābharaṇabhūṣita) including a white headcross (Usūsca). Again, Chapter XXIII, while praising the virtues of Gāyatrī, Maheśvara narrated to Brahmā that he is Viśvarupa and Gāyatrī is Viśvarūpā and Vedānātha. She is also the daughter of Rudra (Rudrasuta) and of black complexion (Kṛṣṇacī Kṛṣṇa-lohita and Kṛṣṇa-rūpā).

The persons who get favour of Gāyatrī can go to Viśvaloka, a place of eternal peace and happiness. They are not subjected to the cycle of creation and destruction.

The Varāha Purāṇa, Chapter II, records the conversation between Nārada and Śaṅkara who is stated to be the mother of the Vedas. According to it, Nārada once went to Śvetadvīpa and saw a lady of exquisite beauty sitting by the side of a lake. When Nārada enquired of her whereabouts, she simply gazed at him. As a result Nārada immediately lost all the knowledge he had so far acquired. Being perplexed Nārada sought her protection and in the next moment saw on her three transient forms of Brahmā, Nārāyan and Rudra. Within a few seconds these forms vanished and there remained the woman only. When Nārada insisted upon an explanation of the event,
she replied she was the mother of the Vedas and the śāstras. She asked Nārada to bathe in the Veda-lake (veda-saras), and as a result, the latter was able to regain his previous knowledge.

The motive behind the story seems to be to connect the Vedas with the triad of gods, and thereby to attract the people to the study of the Vedas during the domination of the triads, and also to bestow more regard to Sāvitrī, also known as Gayatri and Sarasvatī.

In a single sloka of the Agni Purāṇa (Ch. L, 16), Sarasvatī is described as a deity having book (pustaka), rosary (akṣamālā) and lyre (vīnā) in her hands (Pustakā-kaśmālī ka-hastā vīnā-hastā Sarasvatī). These attributes of the deity show that her iconic concept took a definite shape at the time of the composition of the Agni Purāṇa.

In the srīṣṭi-khanda of the Padma Purāṇa (sloka 306-12) Rudraśeva praised Gāyatrī as the mother of the Vedas in a striking manner and declared her also as a durgā-taraṇī and Vānī santavidhā. She is the personification of all scriptures, ballads, alphabets and rules of conduct. The goddess is white complexioned having a face of morn-like beauty. Her hands - soft and large - hold horn of a deer and a white lotus. She wears white dress, red scarf and ornaments of different varieties. In Chapter CCXVI, 111-250, of the said Purāṇa, it is also stated that at Puskara, the Sarasvatī was of five streams, viz., Supravā, Kāncana, Prācī, Nandā and Visālakā and the places around the banks of the river were regarded as the places of pilgrimages. The places were so sacred
that the persons who would bathe in the waters of the Sarasvati would get the result of the aśvamedha sacrifice. It is further stated that Viṣṇu along with other gods asked Sarasvati to carry fire (anala) from Puṣkara and to drop it into the sea (lavanasagara). Sarasvati advised the gods to seek permission from Brahmā, her father in that respect, as she was unmarried and was unable to move anywhere without her father's consent. Accordingly, the gods went to Brahmā and requested him to advise Sarasvati to do so. Thereafter, Brahmā took his daughter on his lap and told her tenderly to honour the request of the gods. Sarasvati wept bitterly as she was unwilling to leave Puṣkara. But ultimately she agreed to proceed on. She appeared before the gods with her white dress; she was decorated with white sandal paste and was sitting on a lotus. The gods praised her highly at that auspicious moment. She took leave of her associates, viz., Gāyatrī, Śāvitrī, Gaṅgā and Yamunā, and then changing herself from a river form to that of a lady went to the hermitage of sage Utaṅka. Thereafter she climbed up a plakṣa tree before the gods, and therefrom started again to flow as a river. It is to be noted that during the historical period several attractive pilgrimages had grown up along the courses in which the river had passed through.

The underlying truth of this myth appears to be that the Sarasvati as a river originated from the mountain and started flowing. But she met the desert at Puṣkara, identified with the famous pilgrimage of that name near Ajmere.
As the desert was extending day by day, she was afraid that her waters would not stop it, rather she would be lost in the sands. This allegorical legend refers to the fact that at the time of composing the *Padma Purāṇa*, Sarasvatī was already lost in the desert.

In an interesting myth found in the *Skanda Purāṇa* we find how Gāyatrī became the second wife of Brahmā. There Sāvitrī, who is usually identified with Sarasvatī, is regarded as his first wife. Śiva tells Parvati that Sāvitrī forsook Brahmā and he in consequence expounded Gāyatrī. Brahmā decided to perform a great sacrifice and for that purpose he and his wife Sāvitrī along with other gods, goddesses and the sages repaired to Puskara. When all the preparations were made with due rites and ceremonies for performing the sacrifice, Sāvitrī, detained by some household affairs, was not in attendance. A priest was immediately advised to call her. But she replied that she had not yet completed her dress, nor arranged several affairs. Laksīmī, Bhavānī and Gāṅgā and Svāhā and Indrānī and the wives of the gods and the sages had not yet arrived, and, therefore, she could not enter the assembly alone. The priest returned to the place of sacrifice and reported to Brahmā that Sāvitrī was engaged elsewhere and would not come at that moment. But without a wife no advantage could be derived by performing a sacrifice. So Brahmā advised Indra to bring a wife from wherever he could find one. Indra proceeded accordingly and, as he was passing hastily alone, he saw a milkmaid, who was young, beautiful and of smiling countenance, and carr-
ying a jar of butter. Indra seized her and brought to the assembly. Then Brahmā told that he would espouse the milkmaid named Gāyatrī and she would be regarded as the mother of the Vedas. Thus Brahmā was united with Gāyatrī, who was led into the bower of the bride, arrayed in silken garments and adorned with costliest ornaments.

At that time Sāvitrī, accompanied by the wives of Viṣṇu, Rudra and other gods, came to the place of sacrifice. Seeing the milkmaid in the bride's bower, and the priest engaged in the performance of the sacred rites, Sāvitrī became furious and asked Brahmā how he had committed such a sinful act by rejecting his wedded wife. She also blamed him by saying that it was by the influence of love that he had done such a sinful act in spite of the fact that he was the father of the gods and the holy sages. This morally wrong act done by him would excite derision of the three worlds. She also told that she would not be able to show her face to others and call herself a wife as she was deserted by her husband. Then Brahmā replied that the priests had informed that the time for sacrifice was passing away and that it could not be profitably performed unless his wife was present and Indra having brought Gāyatrī, Viṣṇu and Rudra gave her in marriage to him. He then requested Sāvitrī to forgive that act of him and he would never again offend her.

On hearing this Sāvitrī cursed Brahmā and other gods and goddesses, Hereafter Brahmā would never be worshipped.
in temples and sacred places, except one day in each year. And Indra, since he had brought that milkmaid to Brahmā, would be bound in chains by his enemies, and confined in a strange country; and his city and station should be occupied by his enemies. Addressing Viṣṇu she said, since he arranged the marriage of the milkmaid with Brahmā, he, in consequence of Bṛighu's curse, would born amongst men and should endure agony of having his wife ravished from him by his enemy and would wander as a humble keeper of cattle. Rudra also, by the curse of the holy sages, would be deprived of his manhood. Sāvitrī then cursed Agni, who would henceforth be devourer of all things, both clean and unclean. The priest and the Brāhmaṇas were so cursed that they would perform sacrifices solely for the desire of obtaining the usual gifts, and from covetousness alone they should attend temples and holy places; they should be satisfied with the food of others and dissatisfied with that of their own houses and in quest of riches they should unduly perform holy rites and ceremonies. Having pronounced these curses, Sāvitrī left the assembly, and was accompanied for a short distance by Lākṣmī and other goddesses, when they all declared their intention of returning. On hearing this, Sāvitrī was incensed and thus addressed Lākṣmī, 'Since you would forsake me, you would never remain stationary in one place, and would always abide with the vile, the inconsistent, the contemptible, the sinful, the cruel, the foolish and the barbarian. When Indra would incur the guilt of Brahmamicide
by slaying Tvastrī's son, Nāhuṣa would acquire his kingdom and would ask Indrāṇī to wait upon him; otherwise, he would slay all the gods. On learning his wishes Indrāṇī would remain in his own house immersed in grief and borne down by the weight of the curse. Sāvitrī then cursed the wives of all the gods collectively. As a result, they would all remain barren and would fail to enjoy the pleasure of having children. Then Viṣṇu tried to appease her but could not.

After Sāvitrī's angry departure from the assembly, Gāyatrī modified the curses that had been pronounced. She promised all kinds of blessing, including final absorption of all the worshippers of Brahmā into her. Though Indra would be bound, his son would release him; though Viṣṇu would lose his wife, he should regain her. Though Rudra would be deprived of his manhood, the Lingas his representative should be universally worshipped. Men would make gifts to the Brāhmaṇas, because they reversed them as gods. And though goddesses could not have children of their own, this would not cause them regret. But the quarrel between Brahmā and Sāvitrī had a happy termination. Viṣṇu and Lākṣmī induced Sāvitrī to re-enter the assembly where Gāyatrī threw herself at her feet and sought her guidance and advice. Sāvitrī raised her and embracing her said, 'A wife ought to obey the wishes and orders of her husband; therefore, let us both be attached to Brahmā'. Gāyatrī then said, 'So be it, I will always obey your orders and esteem your friendship as precious as my life.
The myth, narrated above, is apparently of signal importance from the viewpoint of recording some radical changes in the post-vedic religious life in India. The Skanda Purāṇa appears to have attempted to reconcile some of these changes noticed in the mode of worship of the followers of Brahmonical system. Moreover, the myth helps us to fix up the phase of this change over. The end of Brahmā and Indra's supremacy marks the beginning of the advent of Puranic cults, whose presiding deities were Visṇu and Śiva. Again, from the curse of Sāvitrī we find the mythical justification of Rāma's agony caused by the abduction of Sītā by Rāvana and also Kṛṣṇa's associations with the cowherds, for both Rama and Kṛṣṇa were the incarnations of Visṇu. Similarly, an attempt has been made to provide a background story of the popularisation of Līṅga worship. Of course, the religious transformation, recorded in the Skanda Purāṇa, took place much earlier than the period of its composition.

In Chapter XLII, of the Mahēśvarakhanda of the Skanda Purāṇa it is stated that while the sage Kaśyapa was bathing in the holy pilgrimage of Sarasvatī, Gāyatrī and Sarasvatī appeared before him and introduced themselves as the two wives of Brahmā. Kaśyapa praised them as the mother of the Vedas and the originators of all creations. Thereafter, Kaśyapa received a boon from the goddesses.

In Chapter XLVI of the Nagarkhanda of the Skanda Purāṇa, it is further stated that Vāsiṣṭha advised the legendary king Balabardhana to perform sacrifice at the pilgrimage of
Sarasvatī in order to regain the power of speech of Ambubici, his only son. After meditation at the hermitage the king made an earthen idol of the goddess and worshipped her. The goddess had four arms having lotus (padma), orasay (aska-mālā), water vessel (kamandalu) and manuscript (pustaka). She was placed on a holy stone and was praised highly of her qualities. Elsewhere, in Chapter CIXXII, of the said Purāṇa, it is recorded that in order to kill Vaśistha, Viśvamitra once asked Sarasvatī, the river goddess, to bring Vaśistha to him by her strong current, when the great sage would be bathing in her holy waters. But Sarasvatī refused to do so. As a result, by the curse of Viśvamitra, Sarasvatī became a blood-carrying stream. But ultimately by the activities of Vaśistha, she got rid of the curse and again became a stream of holy waters.

By comparing and contrasting the various myths associated with Sarasvatī the river and the goddess of the same name found in the Skanda Purāṇa, it appears that Sāvitrī, Gāyatī and Sarasvatī are the names of Brahmā's consort in her three different evolutionary phases, and the change of name has been reconciled by the anecdotes preserved in the Skanda Purāṇa. It is significant to note that the Skanda Purāṇa also refers to an earthen image of the deity along with her iconic attributes.

The story associating Sarasvatī with Višnu is of more recent origin. It is indeed found in fully developed form only in the Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa, a work avowed by devoted
to the cult of Kṛṣṇa. Here the older traditions regarding the origin of Sarasvatī and her relationship with Brahmā is altogether passed over and a novel origin is fabricated for her. Kṛṣṇa, according to this Purāṇa, is the lord of the Universe. Once he felt an inclination to create and thus sprang from him Rādhā, his female counterpart. Their union produced the mundane egg, which Rādhā threw into the mundane waters. Kṛṣṇa was incensed at this unmotherly conduct of Rādhā and cursed her as well as other goddesses, who would be her parts and would proceed from her with ever-lasting youth and barrenness. At this stage, suddenly from the lip of Rādhā sprang forth a lovely daughter of white complexion wearing yellow dresses, bedecked with jewels and holding a Vīṇā and a book in her hands, the presiding deity of all the scriptures (Sāstras). Rādhā again parted herself into two and her left half was transformed into Kamalā or Laksāmi. At this, Kṛṣṇa also parted into two and produced the four-armed Viṣṇu from the left half of his body, Kṛṣṇa gave Sarasvatī and Kamalā to Viṣṇu as his wives.

From Chapter VI of the said Purāṇa it further appears that Viṣṇu had obtained another wife, Gaṅgā by name, in the meantime. One day Gaṅgā was looking wistfully at her lord and Viṣṇu was reciprocating the glances. This was too much for the short-tempered Sarasvatī who began to accuse Viṣṇu of partiality. Viṣṇu, in order to give Sarasvatī time to recover from her temper, left the place; but this only served to incense Sarasvatī the more. She advanced threateningly to Gaṅgā, when Laksāmi intervened. Exasperated at the inter-
vention Sarasvatī cursed Laksml with transformation into a tree and a river. Laksml was holding Sarasvatī by force. The curse made her full of grief, but she neither cursed her in return nor let Sarasvatī go. Then Ganga fired up and cursed Sarasvatī with transformation into a river. Sarasvatī who had not yet cooled down, returned the same curse to Ganga.

At this stage Viṣṇu returned and learnt what had happened. He then divorced Sarasvatī and Ganga and decreed that only Laksmī should remain with him, part of her energy descending to the earth to fulfil the curses of Sarasvatī. She should thus be born as the daughter of a king, obtain Viṣṇu as her lover and then be transformed into the sacred tulasi plant. As a river, she would be known as Padmāvatī or the Padma and would be as sacred as the Gaṅgā. Sarasvatī was given over to Brahmā and Gaṅgā to Śiva. At the intervention of Laksmī, however, Viṣṇu relented so far as to permit Sarasvatī and Gaṅgā to remain with him in part, while the rest of their energy would go to fulfil the curses and to attend on their new husbands.

It is further stated in the said Purāṇa (Ch.IV.11) that goddess Sarasvatī would be worshipped on the Śukla-Pańchamī or Jñāna-Pańchamī day, henceforth known as Śrī Pańcamī day in the month of Maģha. But the day of Śrī Pańcamī was originally a day in which Laksml, the goddess of fortune was worshipped. The Bhavisya Purāṇa had finally solved this controversy by stating that goddess Sarasvatī would be worshipped on that day along with Laksml and a vow
(vrata) continuing for six years should be taken up in favour of Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and fortune.

The Chapters between CCVII and CCVIII of the Bhavisvo-ttara Purāṇa which is an Upa-purāṇa describe the various festivals of vow and offerings which are to be observed on different lunar days from pratīpāda and in which, various deities like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Siva, Durgā, Ganesa, Sarasvatī and other gods and goddesses are to be worshipped. It is further to note that these religious vows would be necessary for attaining happiness, power, peace, prosperity and getting rid of sufferings in hell.

In Chapter XVI of the Devī Purāṇa the goddess (Devi) was mentioned under different names like Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī, Satī, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Ambikā and so on. Again in Chapter XXXIX of the said Purāṇa the name of Sarasvatī-tāta, a holy place in which the Devī was worshipped in different forms by different gods, sages and kings, has been mentioned.

Almost all the chapters of the Devī-bhāgavata, another important Upa-purāṇa, have been taken from the Prakṛti-Khanda of the Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa. The chapters between II and XV of the said Upa-purāṇa are stored with ample informations relating to the origin of Sarasvatī, the method of worshipping the goddess, the quarrel among Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Gaṅgā and so on. It also alludes to the origin of Sarasvatī from the mouth of Rādhā; but here Sarasvatī desires to unite with Kṛṣṇa instead of Viṣṇu as stated in the Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa. Again, it was Kṛṣṇa who instructed Sarasvatī to go to Narayana for the purpose of fulfilling her desires. From the Devī-
Bhāgavata Purāṇa we get a clear description of the method of worshipping the deity on the Māgha Śuklapaṇcami. Different articles like tila laḍḍuka, sacred food (havisyāṇa) the wood-apple (gṛīpāla) the jujube fruit (padariṇa) and others should be offered to the deity with the chanting of the eight-syllabled mantra 'Śrīṁ hrim sarasvatvai svāhā' and meditation (dhyāna) on Sarasvatī as 'śuklavarna', 'vinā-pustaka-dhārini' and so on. It is said that the worship of Sarasvatī must be preceded by that of Ganeśa performed according to the Vedic or the Tantric system. Further the description of Sarasvatī-kavaca and the eulogy of Sarasvatī by Yājñavalkya who lost his learning due to the curse of his religious preceptor (Guru) are also narrated here. It also retells the story of the Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa relating to the quarrel amongst Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Gangā who were transformed into rivers in the names of the Padmā, the Sarasvatī and the Gaṅgā and finally became consorts of Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva, respectively. In Chapter XXX, the convention of worshipping Sarasvatī on Māgha Śuklapaṇcami along with other deities is also mentioned. In Kālika Purāṇa (Ch. XVIII) the names of Śāvitrī, Gāyatrī, Sarasvatī, Drupada and Bahūtā who gave instructions on chastity are also mentioned in connection with the story of Vasīṣṭha's marriage with Arundhatī. The Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa (Ch.III) describes the origin of the universe as well as of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Prthivi, Durgā, Savitṛī, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. It also narrates (Chapters LXIX-LXX) how Gangā had divided herself into seven streams by following the sound of seven conch-shells blown by seven
sages. She then rushed towards the southeast and met the Yamunā and Sarasvati at Prayaga.

The Brahā-dharma Purāṇa gives an elaborate description of the names of different holy places. In Chapter VI, XIII, of the Purba-khanda of the said Purāṇa the name of Prayaga where Jamunā and Sarasvati fell into the Ganga, Triveni, where the Jamunā and Sarasvati are separated from the Ganga, and Brahmā-tīrtha where the Sarasvati flows towards the east are incidentally mentioned. It also speaks of the method of worshipping Sarasvati (Ch.XV). In Chapter XXV Brahmā's first creation of the words (Vācaḥ), letters and fiftysix languages and his subsequent authorship of grammatical works, philosophical treatises, Purāṇas etc., are related in details.

Sarasvati has been described there as a goddess richly adorned with various kinds of ornaments and to have a white complexion, three eyes, four hands having nectar (suśāhā), book (vidvā), posture (muḍrā) and rosary (ekṣa-guṇa) in them. Brahmā further advised Sarasvati to live in his four mouths as well as in those of poets. Sarasvati thereafter took her residence in the mouth of Vālmikī as soon as the latter was over-powered with grief at the sight of the sad plight of a female bird whose male mate was killed by a Fowler. Vālmikī cursed the Fowler by uttering a śloka and finally obtained the power of composing the epic called the Rāmāyana from Sarasvati. Some other references to Sarasvati are also found in this Purāṇa. For example, in Chapter I, of the Madhya-khanda of the said Purāṇa, Prakṛti assured Brahmā and Viṣṇu that she would born as Ganga, Durgā, Sāvitrī, Lakṣmī and Sarasvati. According to
Chapter XIV, after Siva had gone to Kailāsa with Ganga on his head, Narada went to Vaikuntha and saw Narāyana with Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī at his sides. In Chapter XXX, it is narrated that at the time of birth of Gajānana, Sarasvatī and Brahmā offered him a pen and rosary of beads (japa-mālā) respectively. In Chapter XIX, there is a vivid description of the state of religion and society in the Kali age. There would be serious disagreements among the traditions of the Purāṇas as well as among the different systems of philosophy and Sarasvatī would be weeping out of agony. In order to bring peace to Sarasvatī, Siva and Visṇu would incarnate somewhere on the earth in families having the surname Ācarya. Visṇu being named as Śankara would incarnate as an Ācarya and Sarasvatī would be his wife.