ABSTRACT

The Hindu mythology is predominantly polytheistic. Gods are numerous and each god or goddess shows very often mutually irreconcilable traits within him or her. This is equally true of Sarasvatī, too. She is one of female deities of the Rgvedic times. She has got many peculiarities of her own resulting in complexity of her various conceptions through the ages. In the Rgvedic pantheon, among female deities, Usas, the daughter of the heaven is (dīvō duhītā)/given an exalted place and has been highly extolled as a symbol of poetic beauty. Sarasvatī comes next to her in comparison to other Rgvedic goddesses. But in the later period, Uṣas has lost her superiority and Sarasvatī has excelled her. The superiority of Sarasvatī is also obvious from another instance. In the Vedic pantheon, many deities arose and later on merged into others. If any one of them survived, was mostly in an stereotyped form. But with Sarasvatī, there has been a gradual process of change and development. In her earliest stage, she was a spacious stream having rythmic flow and congenial waters. It was, therefore, but natural that it arrested the attention of seers dwelling along with its banks. They showed their heart-felt reverence to her. As a result, it was thought to be a living and active entity capable of listening to their prayers and in the fine, was identified with river-goddess, speech, goddess of speech. Since then, she has undergone many changes through many transitory periods of the
different epochs of the Sanskrit literature; as: completely identified with speech (vāg vai sarasvatī); fully anthropomorphised and in the classical period, has unanimously been accepted as the goddess of speech, learning and eloquence, etc. Her place has not been confined to Indian deities only. She has travelled virtually as far as Greek and Roman mythical horizon and, thus, has established her place among many deities there parallel in conception as well as in function.

Taking all these into account, the present study, 'Evolution of Sarasvatī In Sanskrit Literature' has been divided into seven chapters with an Appendix added towards the end.

The first chapter deals with the physical aspect of Sarasvatī, i.e., 'The Earliest Notion of Sarasvatī As a River'. The earliest scripture, the Rgveda mentions several rivers in ancient India. Among them, the Sarasvatī is highly extolled. Besides several stray accounts, it has been mentioned in the complete three Suktas and in comparison to other rivers, the personification of the Sarasvatī has reached its climax. It originally stood for a primitive; but for a mighty stream. It was of a river of divine nature and hence is reckoned to be a celestial river. This river along with the Drṣadvatī once had formed the boundary of Brahmāvarta. But this river could not maintain its flow down to the present time. It disappeared long ago owing to a certain geographical change which has naturally arrested the attention of scholars, many among them have investigated into the matter and have thrown light on its whereabouts. Roth, Zimmer, etc., try to identify this river with the Indus. But their views are untenable. K.C. Coṭṭopādhyāya maintains that in the earliest portion of the Rgveda, particularly in
Mandālas VI and VII, Sarasvatī means Indus, and in the other passages, the little stream now known by that name. According to him, the Indus itself was called by the name of Sarasvatī and occasionally by Sindhu; but when the little stream in the Madhyadesa also came to be known as the Sarasvatī, the distinction between these two became necessary, and the latter was, therefore, called the eastern Sarasvatī. But this assumption is quite untenable. If the Sarasvatī and the Sindhu were the same, the terms used for them ought to have been exchanged at least once, if not often. To Max Müller, the Ṛgvedic Sarasvatī is the same as the later Sarasvatī. Here the later Sarasvatī stands for the modern Sarsūti, which, in popular belief and folk-lore, stands for old Ṛgvedic Sarasvatī. Divaprasad Das Gupta, who also touches upon the problem on the basis of the two theories, propounded by two eminent geologists Pilgrim and Pascoe, who give the Sarasvatī the name of the Siwalik River and the Indo-Brahm River. He takes the matter elaborately. According to him, the route of the Sarasvatī was from Assam down to the south-eastern part of Punjab and Rajasthan. But due to river capture, the Sarasvatī turned into pieces. The lower course of the Sarasvatī merged into the Yamunā. But in Bengal, there is Daksīna Prayāga, which is called the redivision of the Bhāgīrathī, Sarasvatī and Yamunā. But during the 16th century, a river capture took place in the Gāndhā with the result that the Sarasvatī and the Yamunā dried up. The lower course of Sarasvatī was occupied by the Bhāgīrathī, which at present is identified with the Hooghly river standing for Ṛgvedic Sarasvatī. This identification is untenable.

The geographical and historical data also help us in locating the route of the Sarasvatī. In the geographical data, the place of mountain and oceans is of great significance. It is unquestioned that the Sarasvatī got
down from the Siwalik range. So far as the seas are concerned, it was the
Rajasthan sea where the Sarasvati at first fell and, therefore, was called
easterly. But owing to the upheaval of the earth, this sea disappeared.
The decomposition of the Aravalli range is also said to have played its
own role in raising the level of the sea higher. As a result, the Sarasvati
changed its route to westwards and fell into the Arabian sea, and hence
was called westerly. Among the historical data, the place of the tribes
especially of the Bharatas, the Kurus and the Pūrus is of paramount
importance. The Bharatas lived along the banks of the Sarasvati, and
worshipped a female goddess, called Bhāratī, who had close affinity with
the Sarasvati river. This tribe was among the Ṛgvedic Aryans, who during
the Brahmaical period divided into two groups, the Easterners and the
Westerners. The association of the Bharatas with the Sarasvati shows that
the river assuredly flowed through western part of the country. So does
the Kurus whose land was Kurukṣetra. The Pūrus, too, are said dwelling
along the banks of the Sarasvati, who merged into the Kurus by the process
of intertribe marriage.

It is generally believed that the Sarasvati disappeared long ago and
is now flowing underground and manifests itself at Prayāga at the confluence
of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā. This mystic confluence of the Gaṅgā, Yamunā
and Sarasvati is supposed to be a kind of superstition; it is left far
behind near Hanumangarh and Suratgarh. It is no more in existence. It is
completely lost, and the locality where it ceased its flow, is called
Vinasana or disappearance situated in the territory in Patiala district.
There is divergence of opinion about the real situation of the Vinasana
The Tāndya-Mahābrāhma measures out the distance between the Vinasāna and the Plakṣa Prāsvravāna, a place situated somewhere on the Himalayas at forty four āsvīnas, one 'āsvīna' being the distance traversed by a horse constantly moving one complete day and night. But this step, too, does not serve our purpose, because 'āsvīna' has not been accepted unanimously to be a specific measurement of length.

Modern investigations brush the doubt aside and let us believe that the modern Sarsūti was once virtually occupied by the old Vedic Sarasvatī, which flows near Pehoa or modern Prthūdaka fourteen miles away from the west of Thanesar. At Hanumangarh, this river joins Ghaggar, an old remnant of the river, which also originates from the same origin of the Sarasvatī. When the Sarsūti joins the Ghaggar, it loses its previous name and is known as either Sarsūti-Ghaggar or Ghaggar alone. But the name Ghaggar alone purports both the Sarsūti and the Ghaggar. This stream goes ahead through Patiala State, Hissar district, Bikaner, Bahawalpur and, at the end, it enters the area of Pakistan bearing the name of Hakra.

Chapter II 'Sarasvatī In the Rgveda' deals with the various aspects of the personality of Sarasvatī. The river form itself is a physical account of Sarasvatī; but how Sarasvatī came to assume subtler form or notion is viewed here from the psychological as well as naturalistic viewpoints. In the poetic mode, the waves are its hands and its (her) breasts are conceived either the store of waters or the store of knowledge. Besides, there are certain epithets like 'suyamā', 'śubhrā' and 'supesās' used in the sense of beautiful body, fair complexioned and beautiful respectively. These epithets used for Sarasvatī seem to be a step towards
her anthropomorphism.

The mental aspect of Sarasvatī has been brought out in clear terms with special reference to dhiyāvasuh, codayitrī sūṃrtānām, cetantī sumatīnām and the like.

In the Rgveda, we come across various allusions to the social aspect of Sarasvatī. She is delineated as a mother, sister, wife, daughter and friend.

By the epithet ambitama, we deduce that she is the best of mothers. The other epithet 'sindhumātā' apparently a compound word with 'sindhu' and 'mātā' means that Sarasvatī is either the mother of sindhus (rivers) or sindhu (waters). Saptasvasā, saptadhātuh, saptathī, triṣadhastrā, svār ṛṇā ṛtāvarī delineate the social aspect of Sarasvatī as a sister. The epithet saptasvasā assigns her to be one of the seven sister rivers namely Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Sūtudrī, Prauṣṇī, Marudvṛdhā and Ārjikīyā. The seven sisters also symbolise the stream of bliss, the stream of existence, the stream of consciousness, the stream of truth, the stream of Manu, the stream of breath and the stream of gross body. Saptadhātuh, saptathī and svār ṛṇā ṛtāvarī delineate the same aspect of Sarasvatī as saptasvasā.

By 'vīrapatnī' we come to know that Sarasvatī is a wife. She is a wife either of hero (in general) or Prajāpati or Brahmā or she is the protectress of heroes. By vṛṣṇāḥ patnīḥ, it is reckoned to be one of the wives of Vṛṣabhā meaning Indra. Sarasvatī is also called marutvati, which has a varied meanings. Marutvat means attended by the Maruts (said of Indra, Vāyu, Viṣṇu, Sarasvatī, Agni and Somal). These varied meanings lead us to believe that Sarasvatī is either the wife of the Maruts or is one of
the wives of the gods mentioned above. The epithet pāvīravī suggests Sarasvatī to be the daughter of pāvīru-, thunderbolt or lightning. Owing to the possession of 'pavi', Indra is called pāvīravān. The epithet 'pāvīravī' for Sarasvatī probably denotes her to be either the wife of Indra or generated by his weapon 'pavi' as mādhyamikā vāk. There are few attributes such as marutsakhā, sakhyā and uttarā sakhibhyā, which present Sarasvatī as a friend.

The Ṛgveda assigns to Sarasvatī many activities. Sarasvatī as river has been worshipped variously by devouts and has been asked for various cherished boons. Wealth is one of the most desired objects. Sarasvatī is possessed of the precious wealth as her breasts are expressly called as sāsayah, possessed of wealth; ratnadā, container of wealth, and vasuvīd, possessed of precious wealth. Rāyas cetantī, āpo revatīḥ, etc., refer to this very nature of Sarasvatī. Sarasvatī gives not only wealth; but along with it, she brings pleasure also. This idea has been clearly hinted at in the term mayobhuvah commonly applicable to Iḷā, Sarasvatī and Mahī (Bhārati).

The Vedic people desired brave progeny and like other deities Sarasvatī was also prayed for that. In the Ṛgveda, Sinīvālī has predomi-nantly been taken to be the presiding deity of fertility and growth. In one of the Ṛgvedic mantras, Sarasvatī is invoked along with Sinīvālī and the Maruts to sustain the embryo. A devotee of Sarasvatī is encouraged by the case of Vadhryaśva recorded in the Ṛgveda, who was blessed by Sarasvatī with a mighty and worthy son.
Among many things granted by Sarasvatī, food is a very important and prominent gift. The terms āyuṃsi explained as annāni, yaśas (food or water), vājinīvatī (annavitī), etc., describe Sarasvatī as a giver of food.

Besides, there are many other striking epithets which throw light on some of the special features of the personality of Sarasvatī. The terms vājinīvatī, pāvakā, ghṛtācī, pārāvataghnī, citrāyuḥ, hiraṇyavartmīh, asuryā, dharunamāyasī pūḥ, akavārī, etc., are worth noticing.

The term vājinīvatī is explained as abounding in food, food conferring, possessed of food and the like. This is derived obviously from Vedic √vaj, which has various meanings as strength, food, sacrificial food, etc. Thus, being excessively eager for accepting the sacrificial oblations, she is called 'possessed of the sacrificial food'. The other sense declaring Sarasvatī as 'possessed of food and water' appears to allude to Sarasvatī as a river. While descending from the mountain to the plain, the Sarasvatī might have rendered grain-field abundantly fertile resulting in profuse yield of harvest. It was called vājinīvatī as its waters grew rich crops.

Pāvakā has been explained as 'śodhayitrī', 'pāpānām apanetri', 'wealthy in spoil' and 'shining'. In masculine we have 'pāvaka' from √pū + ṅvul, meaning purifying. Pāvakā is the feminine form of pāvaka, and, therefore, it will have the same meaning. Pāvaka also means agni. Pāvakī, which is synonymous with pāvakā means the wife of Agni, and is also the Vedic name of Agni. It is probably for establishing the relationship of husband and wife between Agni and Sarasvatī that the terms pāvaka
and pāvakā have been used for them.

The term ghṛtaci has been explained variously such as: "ghṛtam udakam ancaṭi", Balmy, showerer of water and one who goes into the melted butter. This alludes various characteristics of Sarasvatī such as one of the three kinds of speech, goddess or the goddess of sacrifice.

The epithet pāravataghnī is a compound word from pāravata + ghnī. This attribute alludes Sarasvatī to be a river. It is called as such because it bursts either the both of its banks or bursts the ridges of the hills or effects the tribe called Parāvatas.

Citrayuh has been explained as: "citragamanā citrānnā vā", brisk with rare life, graceful, the girl with wonderful life-energy, etc. By this epithet Sarasvatī seems to have been depicted either as speech or the goddess of speech or the goddess of poetry standing for everything striking (citra or ramanīya) in poetry.

The epithet hiranyavartniḥ portrays Sarasvatī as a river. Through its waters, the Sarasvatī brings prosperity to the mankind, hence is called hiranyavartniḥ akin to hiranyavatī meaning abounding in gold.

The term asuryā portrays Sarasvatī both as a river and as a goddess. Among rivers, the Sarasvatī is the most lively river, hence is called 'asuryā' or she is called asuryā; because she is a balavatī (full of might, life and vitality) goddess.

Dharunamāyasī pūḥ assigns Sarasvatī to be a river of mighty and spacious streams, hence unconquerable like a fort of iron or it was called so because it supported its tributaries like the houses are supported by
a city.

The attribute akavārī to Sarasvātī presents her as a munificent goddess, who is either rich in spoil, or faultless moving or giving liberally.

Besides, the relationship of Sarasvātī with the galaxy of gods and goddesses has been brought out in clear terms. Her name occurs with many gods; but it does not speak of a particular relationship with them. There are, however, some attributes like marutsu bhārati, marutsakhā, marutvatī and vrṣṇāḥ patnī, which speak of her to be the wife of the Maruts or Indra. Among the female divinities, irrespective of any relationship with them, she forms a trio of goddesses with Iḷā and Bhārati. It is astonishing to note that in the Rgveda, these goddesses have their independent personality while in the classical period, their position undergoes an important change. They are identified with each other and form only one goddess, their names being synonymous with each other. Commentator Sāyana mentions Iḷā, Sarasvātī and Bhārati as the three kinds of speech. Among them, Bhārati is dyusthānā vāk, Sarasvātī as mādhyamikā vāk and Iḷā is the speech on the earth (pārthivī praisādirūpā). Thus, these goddesses are taken to be the three goddesses of Bhūḥ, Bhuvah and Svāḥ. Another, interpretation assigns Bhārati, Sarasvātī and Iḷā the names of pasyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī with the same connotations as above. According to Sri Aurobindo, Iḍā, Sarasvātī and Bhārati represent drṣṭi, śruti and the largeness of the truth-consciousness.

At the end of this chapter, the relationship between Sarasvātī and Sarasvān has been established with full connotations. Sarasvān stands for a
male river, ocean, cloud, sun, river-god and god and whichever connotation we choose for Sarasvatī, he, thus, comes in all the cases as the husband of Sarasvatī. Roth takes him as the protector of divine waters, while Hellebrandt identifies him with Apām Nāpār, the Soma or the moon.

Chapter III is on 'Sarasvatī In The Yajurveda'. It deals first of all with the physical aspect of Sarasvatī that being a river. In this connection, a striking reference is made to paṇcadhā for the Sarasvatī meaning thereby having five distinct sheets or pools of waters.

In comparison to theṚṣveda, the Yajurveda uses only a few significant epithets for Sarasvatī namely yaśobhagī, havīṃsati, sudughā, jāgrvi, etc. Yaśobhagī means either the sister of the fame of living being or enriched with glory. What it all purports is that Sarasvatī in the form of speech is the source of fame. By means of havīṃsati, scholars like Uvācārya, Mahīdhara, Griffith, etc., accept Sarasvatī as full of oblation or with oblation. This term refers to Sarasvatī açhō to be a sacrificial goddess, who without fail listens to all. This also implies the simple nature of Sarasvatī, who accepts every one's offerings. By sudughā one comes to know the benevolent nature of Sarasvatī. She is easily drainable: because she is rich in cherished wealth and milk. This purports that she is a will-fulfilling deity and if approached properly, one is blessed by the same. Jāgrvi interprets Sarasvatī as vigilant, e.g., always alert in bringing out her work to a success as a physician.

The Yajurveda predominantly presents Sarasvatī as a physician in the light of the Sautrāṃsi and Bheṣej sacrifices. Here two versions run concurrently. According to one of them, Indra (Sutraśman) is suffering
from being over-indulgent upon the Soma; hence the application of the Sautrāmaṇī. According to another, Indra is deprived of his favourite beverage being stolen away by his own friend called Namuci, who proved to be a traitor towards him. When Indra lost his strength, he resorted to the Āśvins and Sarasvatī and narrated to them the misery that had befallen him. The Āśvins and Sarasvatī gave him a thunderbolt of foam with which he smote the head of Asura and regained his strength. The period, which kept him deprived of his strength was a span of hardship for him, because during that period, he suffered many ways. As physicians Sarasvatī and the Āśvins kept him survived.

In this chapter it has also been shown that the term Sarasvata has been used in a different sense. Sarasvata as adjective of graha stands for a set of oblation or a cup of the Soma made of waters of the Sarasvatī river. Waters of the Sarasvatī are, thus, to be conceived as a unique source of strength like the Soma. Another interpretation presents 'sarasvatau' as the two fountains of Sarasvatī meaning mind and speech. Still according to another view, two Sarasvatas mean the Rgveda and the Sāmaveda as the two sons of the parents Sarasvatī and Sarasvān. Here Sarasvatī stands for the goddess of speech and Sarasvān as the god of speech.

Lastly, this chapter deals with Sarasvatī as a milch-cow. Sarasvatī actually is not a cow (dhenu); but figuratively has been called a milch-cow, for she is easily yeilding and accessible.

Chapter IV ascertains the place of Sarasvatī in the Atharvaveda. First of all, it deals Sarasvatī with medical science. This Veda mentions
many herbs useful to cure body and restore the lost bodily vigour. Various properties have also been ascribed to many of these herbs. In the contexts of the herbs, Sarasvatī has been entreated along with Agni, Savitr and Brahmaṇaspati to bring back the exhausted power of man and make his slackened limbs tightened as the bow. Sarasvatī along with her sister deities Iīā and Bhāratī is said to have provided remedy for poisoning. In the human body, there are many detrimental elements and germs causing great harm incessantly. Sarasvatī along with deities has been invoked to crush such elements of our body.

Wealth brings various miseries and evils to human beings. It loosens moral values and the bond of righteousness. A wealthy man grows ambitious and his desires are unlimited. He becomes miser and harsh towards others. So as to be free from the evils of niggardliness and turning harsh to others owing to the vanity caused by wealth, one has to resort to Sarasvatī, the truthful speech. It is by this speech that one can make his heart sublime filled it with reverence.

The Atharvaveda also assigns Sarasvatī the work of protection. She protects man against ignorance and barbarism. The sins caused by speech, are wiped out by sweet and pleasing speech. The pious waters of the Sarasvatī also free one from his sins. She is also associated with the work of protection of embryo.

Deities of the various regions reside in our body in their subtler form, while outside the body, they live in their gross form. But man does not realise this divine power in his own body, unless the veil of ignorance is cast away. In a mantra, Sarasvatī has, therefore, been asked to provide
a man with mind, intellect, thought, purpose, intelligence, hearing, sight, etc.

The Atharveda also relates Sarasvatī with marriage. Here she has not been directly seen playing an important role in marriage, however, a newly wed-bride receives instruction as to how she should offer prayer to Sarasvatī daily in the morning at her husband's home.

The Atharvaveda preaches unity and harmony. For unity the feeling of love is an utmost necessity. The feeling of love joins man's head with his heart in friendly bonds, thus, makes them function in unity. In a mantra of the Atharvaveda, Sarasvatī along with Mitra, Varuṇa, the centre of the earth as well as both of its ends is asked to bring unity to us.

Sarasvatī is also associated with agriculture who is taken to be the presiding deity of trees, fruits, rice-fields, etc. As a river, the banks of the Sarasvatī are very much fertile abound in the yield of rich harvest. The fields on its banks were ploughed by Indra, the lord of the plough (sīrpaṭāḥ) and the Maruts as the farmers (kīnasāḥ). Agriculture is more dependent on rains. As we know that Sarasvatī represent cloud, hence is appropriately asked for the rains for kṛṣī so that it may not burnt in the scorching heat of the sun.

Lastly, in this chapter, the notion of the three goddesses Iśā, Sarasvatī and Bhūratī has been brought out by a single expression 'tisraḥ sarasvatīḥ' meaning three Sarasvatīs. This seems to be a step towards the identification of the three goddesses in the Veda itself. The Petersburg Lexicon takes it to suggest "three rivers named Sarasvatī or perhaps three rivers in general. To Griffith, it means the three heavens and the three
earths, while to Śrīpāda Dāmodara Sātavalekara this expression is for mātrabhūmi (Bhāratī), mātrbhāṣā (Īdā) and mātrṣaḥsabhyaṭā (Sarasvatī).

Chapter V is on the Brāhmaṇas. In the Brāhmanic period, Sarasvatī undergoes an important change, she being identified with speech 'vāg vai sarasvatī'. Here, it naturally tempts one to take the picturesque account of Vāk and then see her identification with Sarasvatī.

In the post-Vedic period, the conception of Vāk has been put on a sound philosophical basis. Syllable, word, sentence, literature and even sound came under the scope of Vāk. Linguists offer various theories about the origin of language, which is an evolved form of speech and according to one of such theories, language is a divine workmanship. According to the Rgvedic account, the origin of Vāk is Brhaspati or it were rṣis, who at first procured Vāk and later on transferred to wise-men for her wide use. The Brāhmaṇas, too, speak of the divinity of Vāk. According to them also, Vāk is said to have been created by Brhaspati and is sexually related to Prajāpati in the creation of the universe.

In the Brāhmaṇas, we have an interesting legend of Vāk and the Gandharvas. The character of the Gandharvas is very much vague. They are described as having a great liking for fragrance and are said to guard the Soma and sometimes to have monopoly over it. The Brāhmaṇas speak of their affiliation with the human embryo as well as their ardent love for unmarried girls. The legend of Vāk and the Gandharvas opens with the mention of the Soma recorded in the Brāhmaṇas. According to the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa, Vāk, in accordance to the consent of gods turned as a woman and approached the Gandharvas in order to purchase the Soma. She faces many difficulties
in accomplishing her deeds; but in fine, overcomes them and succeeds in bringing the Soma to gods.

In comparison to the Rgveda and the Yajurveda, in the Brāhmaṇas, there are only a few epithets like vaiśambhalya, satyavāk, sumṛdīkā, ascribed to Sarasvatī. Vaiśambhalya 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. Sarasvatī in the capacity of Vāk is also the giver of nourishment and strength (puṣṭi), which includes cattles, etc. Satyavāk presents Sarasvatī as 'possessed of true speech'. It delineates her to be the personified form of speech (Vāk). By means of the term 'sumṛdīkā' Sarasvatī has been pointed out to be a liberal one, because of bringing comfort and happiness to the people. Sumṛdīkā may also mean 'having good soil (sumṛd), i.e., the land having good (fertile) soil.

In this chapter on the Brāhmaṇas, the relationship between Sarasvatī and Sarasvān has been brought out by the two terms Sarasvatīvān and Bhāratīvān ascribed to the latter. 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 called Bhāratīvān.

In the Brāhmaṇas, the problems concerning Vāk is very much thought-provoking. Sarasvatī originally was merely a terrestrial river. But owing to the sanctity of its waters, which infused life into the views of the people, let them to identify it with speech or the goddess of speech. The Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa tells us that waters of the Sarasvatī were used for consecration. Owing to the sanctity of waters, the consecration done thereby
was thought as being done with speech. Besides, owing to the predominance of the chanting of the mantras in and about the sacrifice and gods, they themselves have got identified with speech.

The Brahmanas speak of the seven metres, Gayatri, Tristun, Jagati with special reference in connection with cosmology. The eight syllabled Gayatri is taken to represent the eight kṣaraṇa-vyāpāras of Prajāpati, when he was desirous of creation. Vāk as a whole is said to have produced this universe. Prajāpati is the first unborn and Vāk, the second after him. He is the lord of speech as the terms Iśaspati, Vācaspati, Brahmanaspati, etc., prove it.

Lastly, it is only in the Brahmana literature that the identification of Vāk and Sarasvatī is carried out in clear and indubious terms. Among the Brahmanas, the Satapatha, Gopatha, Tāndya, Aitareya, Śāŋkhāvana, Taittirīya Brahmanas and the Aitareya-Āranyaka, etc., affirm clearly that Vāk is undoubtedly Sarasvatī 'vāg vai sarasvatī'.

Chapter VI determines the place occupied by Sarasvatī in the Purānic literature. In the Purānic era, Sarasvatī has undergone remarkable change as in fully anthropomorphised form. This has naturally shaped our culture and religious life.

This chapter deals at first with the Purānic accounts of the origin of Sarasvatī offered to us by the Brahmavaivarta, Matsya, Padma, Vāyu, and Brahmānda Purānas. According to one of the accounts of the Brahmavaivarta-Purāna, Sarasvatī is born from the mouth of Paramātman. The other account presents her to have born from the mouth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of his
Sakti. According to the third view of this Purana, the Atman at the primeval stage remained stationed, but when he was desirous of creation, he took two forms - male and female. The female form later on became of fivefold and Sarasvatī is one of them. According to the Matsya-Purana, Sarasvatī is born out of the half portion of his body as a female form. Elsewhere, both the Matsya and the Padma Puranas tell us that Sarasvatī along with the four other maids - Laks̱āmi, Marutvatī, Sādhyā and Viśvesā was produced by Brahmā. The Vāyu-Purana maintains that when Brahmā was not satisfied with his creation, he began to muse over. In the length, from his anger a Puruṣa having male and female forms took his birth. At the command of Brahmā, he separated these forms. The female form was of peculiar type. Her right part was white and left black. Later on these parts also got separated. Thus, Sarasvatī is maintained to be one of the manifestations of this white part. According to another account of this Purana, Sarasvatī is born out of the meditation of Brahmā. The Brahmanda-Purana holds that there is a conjugal procreation in male and female forms, its origin being Mahālakṣ̱āmi. Mahālakṣ̱āmi at first produced three eggs. Brahmā was produced one of them along with Śrī, Sarasvatī from the second along with Śīva and Viśnu from the third along with Ambikā.

In the Puranas, the complexion of Sarasvatī is worth noticing. There she is asserted to be out and out of white complexion. This colour is obvious from the various epithets used for her. White colour represents the sattva-guṇa of Sarasvatī in her capacity of one of the fine Prakṛtis. Her sattva-guṇa also stands for knowledge, which she possesses. The term 'śyāmā' most probably represents her youth. But 'śyāmā' may be taken for
her tamas-guna, which presents Sarasvatī of black colour (śyāmā) as being one of the forms of Prakṛtis. The Tantras provide Sarasvatī with blue colour, which is undoubtedly a quite new conception of the colour of Brāhmaṇic Sarasvatī there.

The vehicle of the goddess is also a very interesting point. In the Purāṇas, the only thing alluded to her vehicle is the swan. She has inherited her vehicle swan from her father Brahmā (hamsādhirūḍhā). Like Brahmā, Sarasvatī is described as riding a swan. Besides the Purāṇas, elsewhere, Sarasvatī is said to ride a peacock. The vehicle hamsa alludes a philosophical purport. The hamsa connotes the identification of the Jīvātman and Paramātman - 'I' and 'He' (aham sah). The other implication of the swan may be interpreted differently. As has been said above hamsa stands for the identification of 'I' and 'He'. This mode of thinking that 'I' and 'He' are one can sustain all types of knowledge and hence hamsa is aptly taken to be the vehicle of Sarasvatī, who is knowledge conferring. The implication of peacock holds the identification of Sarasvatī with Agni and Sarasvatī (speech) with sacrifice.

In the Purāṇas, Sarasvatī has been described with her iconographical features. The prescription for making her image are well laid down. In this respect, the Agni, Matsya and Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇas furnish a lot of informations as to how the image of Sarasvatī should be made in recognition to the iconic prescription. They also observe that her image should be made either at right or left to that of Brahmā's image. The Purāṇas also affix the number of her faces. Usually like Brahmā, she is mentioned to have one to four or five faces. But the number of her heads differs in
the Tantras and in Buddhism. Her faces, like Brahmā represent Gāyatrī, the four Vedas or the five Vedas including the Nōtyasāstra. In the Purāṇas, the number of her hands differs from place to place. Mostly, she is alluded to as having four hands. But she also holds two hands, which is evident by some of the Purānic epithets used for her. Other references allude to her as having up to six, eight and even ten arms. She is presented to have in her hands mostly the water-vessel (kamandalu), book (pustaka), rosary (akṣamālā) and lute (vīṇā). These objects held in her hands represent the nectar of all the śāstras, śāstra, time and proficiency or achievement respectively.

The physical or material form deals with the river aspect of Sarasvatī. At first it shows its origin. Its origin is himavatpād, i.e., the Himalayas, particularly a place on it called Plakṣa Prāsravana and according to the Skanda-Purāṇa, it belongs to the Sarasvatī-Drśadvatī Group. The Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa puts forth a very interesting mythological interpretation in regard to its coming over the earth as a river. It maintains that Sarasvatī was living in the heaven along with her husband Hari among his co-wives Lakṣmī and Gāṅgā. Once there arose a quarrel between Sarasvatī and Gāṅgā and the latter cursed the former to become a river and go to the earth. As a result, Sarasvatī descended on the earth in the form of a holy river. This mythological interpretation brings the Sarasvatī to be a celestial river like the Gāṅgā. In the Vedic times, it was the mightiest river; but since it has lost its earthly existence, its popularity has considerably suffered. In this way, it is divine and has the same origin as the Gāṅgā in the Purāṇas as well as in the popular
belief. According to another source, the ocean was possessed of a latent fire. God Viṣṇu, therefore, implored her to descend on the earth and subdue the latent fire which she did accordingly.

The Purāṇas assign much sanctity to the Sarasvatī. Its waters purify the sins of sinners. The Sarasvatī annihilates the sins by dint of its sacredness, and, therefore, is called puṇyatoṣa, puṇyaśaṭa and the like. Owing to its sacred waters, many tīrthas, like Pītrīrtha, Nīlakunda, Rudrasarovara, Mānasarovara, etc., are situated by its banks and seers like Kardama, etc., reside along with them to practise their austerities.

The Purāṇas use numerous adjectives like śiva, puṇya, śivajala, etc., for rivers in general, which are connotative of their munificence and benevolent nature. We have following with regard to the Sarasvatī in particular. The Purāṇas attribute to numerous adjectives such as pravāha-samyukta, vegayuktā, srotasye 'va, mahānadi, sāgarāgāmini, puṇyadā, puṇyajanani, puṇyatīrthasvarūpinī, puṇyavadhir niśeyā, sthitih puṇya-vatām, śubhā, pāpanirmokā, etc., which are very much striking and suggestive. The epithets prācī and pāscimāmukhī attribute it from being easterly to westerly. The term drṣyādṛṣyagatiḥ states it as having visible and invisible course.

In the Purāṇas, the consortship of Sarasvatī has been referred to at several places. She is associated particularly with Brahmā, Dharmarāja, Śvāyambhuva Manu, Viṣṇu and Āditya. The Matsya-Purāṇa has far more to say on this point than the other Purāṇas. According to it, Sarasvatī was born from half of Brahmā's body as his daughter; but when he was enamoured by her peerless beauty, he married her and enjoyed her company for hundred
years inside the lotus. The Bhāgavata-Purāṇa also refers to this episode. Elsewhere, the Matsya-Purāṇa says that Brahmā created five maids - Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Marutvatī, Śādhyā and Viśvesā, all of whom were married to Dharmatarāja. According to another account, for the enlargement of the creation, Brahmā divided his body into twain, male and female. These forms were Svāyambhuva Manu and Satarūpā that stood in relation of husband and wife. According to the Brahmavaivarta-Purāṇa, Sarasvatī at first was created by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but when the former showed her love for the latter, she was instructed by him to choose Nārāyaṇa as her husband. And she did accordingly. According to another view, Sarasvatī was already one of the co-wives of Viṣṇu, who later on had to transfer Sarasvatī to Brahmā as his wife. Besides, Sarasvatī has also been mentioned as the wife of Āditya and Gaṇapati.

At the end, the Chapter deals with the offsprings of Sarasvatī.

Among her offsprings, prominently dealt with are Sārasvata and Manu. Besides, some cosmic elements are also taken to be her offsprings. The Purāṇas describe Sārasvata to have born from Sarasvatī by Dadhīca. Besides, Sārasvata stands in different connotations. They also furnish that there lived an ancient sect of Hindus called Sārasvatas. They lived by the side of the Sarasvatī river and were Brāhmaṇas by caste. Their inhabitancy was called after their name as Sārasvata nation. Since they persistently resorted to the Sarasvatī, the latter benefited them variously, hence she came to be styled as their mother. The Mahābhārata, too, refers to Sārasvata to be a rṣī and Sarasvatī as a personified river. During the period of drought lasting for twelve years, it was the Sarasvatī, which could save Sārasvata feeding him upon fish. This Sārasvata could alone
the Vedic knowledge during the drought, while other Brähmanaś lost it for want of food. After the drought, Sarvasvata imparted the extinguished Vedic knowledge which went on expanding. This episode appears to point to a climatic change and to the extinction of waters of the Sarasvati river, too. Professor Wilson terms it as revivalism and thinks it the introduction of Hindu rituals.

The Matsya-Purana says that when Brahmā saw the matchless beauty of his daughter, he married her and in course of time, Manu was born to them. Thus, owing to his engagement with Sarasvatī, he lost the virtue of his tapasyā, which he had after long practising the penance. He, therefore, started practising austerities once more and created his wife, out of half of his body and created some Prajāpatīs like Viśveśa also called Dharma, Dakṣa, Marīci, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasiṣṭha, Gautam, Bhṛgu, Anāgiras and Manu. Manu as the son of Sarasvatī implies the principle of manas or buddhi including five tanmātrās. Manas, buddhi and five tanmātrās are sometimes taken as seven sons of Sarasvatī. Āditya has also been taken to be the husband of Sarasvatī. This couple is taken to be the parents of Danu and Diti. Besides, the whole universe and the Vedas are said to have produced from Sarasvatī.

Chapter VII deals with the various allusions made to Sarasvatī by some important classical writers only.

Kālidāsa refers the name of Sarasvatī in different connotations. He takes her as synonymous with speech, as a poetess and river. He also points judiciously to Sarasvatī associated with music.

In both of his works the Buddhacārīta and the Saundarananda,
Asvaghoṣa points to the drought-episode alluded to Sārasvata already mentioned above.

Bhāravi takes both Sarasvatī and Bhāratī as synonymous with speech.

Magha alludes to Sarasvatī at different places in the sense of interior court, speech and river.

Śrī-Varṣa, in his Naiṣadhadacarita, refers to Sarasvatī in different contexts. He uses the word Sarasvatī for river in general and for the river of the name, too. He also assigns to her an important role in the marriage and entrusts the duty of a go-between and match-maker to her in the Svayamvara of Nala and Damayantī at the command of Viṣṇu.

Bhavabhūti takes Vāk as the goddess of speech and Vāk as Sarasvatī, thus, the terms being synonymous with each other.

Dāndin points to Sarasvatī that she lives in the lotus-forest of the mouths of Brahmā and is white in colour. Her residing in the mouth of Brahmā implies her birth from the mouth of Brahmā in the form of speech. He describes Vāk as the light called sabda (sabdāhvyam jyotiḥ) and states that unless this light illuminates the three worlds, it is nothing but all darkness.

Subandhu, in his Vāsamadattā, refers poignantly to a fact that for the poets the blessing of Sarasvatī is indispensable. Without it, the poet cannot penetrate into and present the object of description as actually existing before one's eyes. He takes Sarasvatī as a goddess as well as speech.
In the *Kādambarī* and *Mārṣacarita*, Bāna traces his lineage to **Sarasvatī**. Vatsa, the progenitor of Bāna's family, was the cousin of Sārasvatī, the son of Sarasvatī and Dadhīca. From his Vatsa, there proceeded a great family wherein sage Vātsyāyana took his birth. In the family of Vātsyāyana, Kubera took his birth, who had four sons. Of them, Pāșupata had Arthapati, who had eleven sons. Citrābhānu was one of them, who was Bāna's father. The family of Bāna was highly favoured by Sarasvatī and was devoted to learning since very beginning. Actually Sarasvatī represents the **Vedas**, all type of learning, arts and sciences. As learning was flourishing at the hands of the forefathers of Bāna, he rightly observes that they were especially favoured by Sarasvatī. In propounding such an interesting legend, Bāna seems much indebted to the **Purāṇas** especially to the **Vāyu** and the **Padma** and also to the **Mahābhārata**, which points to the drought-episode alluded to Sārasvatī.

In the *Kavyamīmāṃsā*, Rājasekhara gives a judicious account of the origin of Kāvyā. He at first presents Kāvyā as a Puruṣa and Śāhitya as his vadhū (bride). This legend presented by his fertile imagination and unique method of interpretation is very much interesting. To him, Sārasvatī, the son of Sarasvatī is Puruṣa, who is none else than poetry, with literature (Śāhityavidyā) as his bride (vadhū). He also mentions Sarasvatī as a river, which belongs to the Uttarāpatha and stands undubiously for the Rgvedic Sarasvatī.

In the classical period, Sarasvatī is taken to represent science (vidyā) in general. Vidyā is a real ornament, which truly embellishes a man and does him every good. In his *Nītisātaka*, Bhārtrḥari points to this
truth poignantly in good detail.

In the Vikramāṅkadevacarita, Bilhaṇa alludes to Sarasvatī as speech, the goddess of poetry and eloquence. He mentions Saradā residing at Pravarapura situated by the bank of the Madhumati river on the Mt. of Kailāsa. This Pravarapura is very much favoured by her learning. Besides, Kalhang also mentions Sarasvatī as speech and as residing in Kashmir.

The Appendix deals with a study of Sarasvatī in regard to her corresponding deities in the Roman and the Greek mythologies. This gives us an understanding that there was long before a very laudable policy of give and take between India on the one hand, and Greece and Roma, on the other. The Indian goddess Sarasvatī correlates to the Roman goddess Minerva (both armed and unarmed) and the Greek goddess Athene (Athena). Minerva is the patroness of all arts and is the goddess of memory and warfare. And so is Sarasvatī, too. In a wider perspective, especially to poets, Sarasvatī is understood to be the goddess of poetry, eloquence, wisdom, music, etc. They regard her as the mother of poets, whose blessing is indispensable for real poetic composition. It is for this reason that they invoke her of and on as a Muse. The conception of the Muse goes back as early as to the Rgvedic times, where we come across with countless glimes of real poetry. There Sūryā is regarded to be the goddess of poetry, but later on she goes an important change and she ceases to be the personified form of poetry itself. Sarasvatī arose to level up the vacuum caused by her as a goddess of poetry. Many similarities and dissimilarities run concurrently in regard to the personality between Sarasvatī and the Greek Muses nine in number - Clio, Euterpe, Thalia,
Melphomena, Tersichore, Erato, Polymnia, Urania and Calliope. These have been referred to in the Appendix.

This study may be distinguished from other studies on the following basis:

i) The origin and development of the conception of Sarasvatī has been traced from the Vedic period down to the classical age.

ii) The data collected for the present study have been put in an interpretative perspective.

iii) In comparison to previous studies, the present investigation is much more comprehensive in the sense that light has been thrown on every aspect of the personality of Sarasvatī.