CHAPTER II

SARASVATI IN THE RGVEDA
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1. Physical aspect of Sarasvatī:

Much has been said about Sarasvatī as a river, which in the post-Vedic period, is regarded as the personified form of the goddess of speech, learning and eloquence; but it is to be seen how seers and Vedic bards, in remote age, conceived it in different forms and colours. Possibly, Vedic seers took Sarasvatī as a goddess at first and later on projected their concepts into a solid and physical form, i.e., a terrestrial river. For this, they created a basic idea in their mind, which was equally applicable to other things. There are, for instance, the rays of the sun, which stand for light and light symbolises knowledge.1 Similarly, light and darkness have been understood for life and death, freedom and bondage, good and evil, virtue and sin.2 The night (rātrī) or darkness generally is supposed for 'tamas', which is denotative of illusion (ajñāna).3 This was not always so on the part of the seers; for, gradually, they were rising above the ethical and psychological view of Nature. Thus, they translated their ideas into physical form.4

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1 Sri Aurobindo, op.cit., p. 106.
3 Cf. the perspective meaning of SK., 1; see also Dr. Ādyāprasāda Miśra, Sāṅkhvatattvavakamudī-Prabhā (Prayāga, 1956), pp. 1-2.
4 Sri Aurobindo, op.cit., pp. 104-105.
have many cases of the sort. 'Asva' symbolises the dynamic force of life and 'Uṣas' the most beautiful poetical figure.¹

The case of perception may be otherwise. It is possible that they (Vedic seers) proceeded from Sarasvatī's physical account to subtler notion. The following will suffice this aptly.

According to J. Muir, Sarasvatī was taken at first merely as an earthly river. Owing to excessive reverence of seers, it was deified. The saintly beings, who were residing by its banks and performed their daily sacrifices, took Sarasvatī as the patroness of their sacrifices. Later on, they began to associate Sarasvatī with the mantras, chanted at the time of the sacrificial performance. They had firm belief that it was the pleasure of Sarasvatī alone, which could give them an incentive for the free flow of mantras at the occurrence of the sacrifices. Her grace was, thus, basically necessary. Such was the process through which Sarasvatī was later on identified with Vāk or was conceived as the goddess of speech.²

There were many rivers in the country; but the Sarasvatī was best among them.³ It was, therefore, natural that it might have arrested the attention of the Vedic Aryans. The seers, dwelling along its banks, might have been immensely impressed by its mighty streams, rhythmic flow,

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1 Ibid., p. 106.
4 RV., II. 41.16.
congenial waters and the like. This might have evoked much praise for it. It was, probably, for such reasons that the Sarasvatī occupied a very pious place even in the sacrifice. When somehow or other, its name was associated with the sacrifice, the previous notion of it as a river would have gained a wider perspective. It would have been regarded as the mother and subsequently as a goddess. This godhead would have been ascribed to it in the same way as we find in the case of the Ganges, which is regarded as a mother-goddess in later literature as well as in popular belief.

Whatever the case might have been, it is beyond doubt true that Sarasvatī, in the Rgveda, has been described both as a river and as a river-goddess. So far as her anthropomorphic feature in this Veda is concerned, it is only possible in its capacity of a river rather than in that of a goddess or the like. Her anthropomorphism has been virtually carried out in the epics and the Purāṇas.

(i) The description of the limbs of Sarasvatī:

In the Rgveda, we do not find such a clear picture of the various limbs as hands, mouth, legs, breasts, etc., of Sarasvatī as in the post-Vedic literature in the case of many of gods and goddesses; but the ascription of limbs had begun even in the times of this Veda. The waves of Sarasvatī are a river at first and is later on conceived as a goddess. The latter stage is higher than the previous one. It seems that Vedic seers were not satisfied with the river-form of Sarasvatī, and in order to make the river living and active entity that alone could hear them, they regarded it as a river-goddess. This concept of Sarasvatī as a river-goddess is also endorsed by Yāska who says:

"tatra sarasvaty ēkasya naḍīvad devatāvac ca mignā bhavantī".

(Nirukta, II.23).
(ūrmayah) of the Sarasvatī river are poetically conceived as its hands. It digs up its banks with its hands of waves as a man digs up lotus-roots (bisākha iva). With its hands of waves, it is described as tearing down the peaks of mountains. ¹

In one of the Rgvedic mantras, we come across the description of Sarasvatī's breasts. They are described as invoking pleasure; as giving superior wealth; and as possessing wealth.² The ascription of breasts to Sarasvatī is significant and implies various aspects of her personality.³ If we take Sarasvatī as a river, the breasts will imply its healthsome waters endowed with fructification. Waters may also stand for Sarasvatī residing in the clouds,⁴ or for cloud itself. The cloud, then, would be the physical form of Sarasvatī and the breasts would, thus, symbolise the storehouse of waters, she possesses. While shedding it to the earth, she brings happiness and wealth to the world. The similar notion seems to underlie the conceiving of the breasts of Sarasvatī.⁵

(ii) The description of the beauty of Sarasvatī:

This aspect, too, does not find an elaborate description. Some attributes assigned to her, however, give us some vague idea. Such

¹ RV., VI. 61.2.
² Ibid., I. 164.49.
³ See infra., p. 63.
⁴ AV., VII. 12.1; see also Śrīpāda Dāmodara Sātavalekara, Ataravaveda Subodha Bhāṣya, Part III (Sūrata, 1958), p. 45 on AV., VII. 12.1.
⁵ RV., VII. 96.6, "pīpivāmsaṁ sarasvataḥ stanaṁ yo visvadarṣataḥ."
attributes are 'suyamā', 'subhrā', 'supesas', etc.

(a) Suyamā:

This word has been used only once for Sarasvatī. It is interpreted variously. Griffith takes it as 'tractable' and explains it as: "Tractable: Suyamā easily led (by prayer)." Wilson makes out of it the meaning of 'beautiful', while Sayana explains it as: "yamyate niyamyata iti yamo vigrahaḥ. suvigrahaḥ..."

'Vigraha' implies different meanings, e.g., shape, form, figure, the body, etc., and 'su' means good, well, excellent, excellently, beautiful, etc. This evidently shows that Sayana, explaining the word 'suyamā' as 'suvigrahā', means Sarasvatī as having a beautiful body. Wilson seems to follow him in rendering the word as 'beautiful'. In supporting such a view, we will accept Sarasvatī as endowed with a beauteous form. This beautiful form has been bestowed on her in her capacity as a goddess mentioned in the mantra with other gods. But we are not sure of the above meaning, as none of gods mentioned with her are anthropomorphised. The word 'suyamā' admits of various other interpretations.

It is derived from the word 'yama', meaning one of a pair or couple, a fellow, by adding the prefix 'su' and the suffix 'tāp'. Sarasvatī is

1 Ibid., IX. 81.4.
2 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 912.
3 Ibid., p. 1118.
called 'sugamā' probably because she is the consort of one of the gods, mentioned in the mantra.

'Yama' also means restraining, controlling, restraint and the like. According to this derivation, 'sugamā' is the one, who is either self-restraint or is easily accessible.

(b) Subhrā:

This word occurs several times in the Rgveda. In one of the mantras, it is used in plural as an adjective of Sarasvātī, Bṛhaddevā and Rākā. Elsewhere, it comes exclusively as an adjective of Sarasvātī in the vocative case. In the first mantra, Sāyana takes Sarasvātī as a river or the goddess of speech; in the second as a goddess only; and in the third, as both speech (Vāk) and a river. For these various notions, he translates 'subhrā' as 'dīptāh' in the first mantra; 'subhre' as 'subhravarṇa' both in the second and third mantras as referred to above.

'Subhrā' is a very suggestive epithet of Sarasvātī. In the Rgveda (V.42.12), the occurrence of 'Rākā' representing the full moon night, with Sarasvātī is very significant. Generally, beauty is compared with the bright moon. This brightness consists of pure whiteness and because of brightness and purity, also lying in waters of the Sarasvātī, it is comparable to Rākā. Waters of the Sarasvātī are so

1 Ibid., p. 889.
2 RV., V. 42.12.
3 Ibid., VII. 95.6, 96.2.
clean and so pious that they are called 'subhra'. The cleanliness and purity of its waters stand for its pure beauty. If Sarasvatī is taken to be the goddess of Vāk or Vāk herself, the varṇa, pada, vākya may be taken as her limbs and meaning as her soul. Through them one gains knowledge. Knowledge is symbolised by light (prakāśa), the colour of which is white. Darkness is nothing positive; but implies the absence of light. Sarasvatī lies bodily in varṇa, pada and vākya. All these stand for her body white in colour and she is, thus, aptly called 'subhā'. It is probably for this reason that in later classical literature, she is conceived as of white complexion and as bearing white cloth 'subhrāvastruvi'.

The Rgveda (VII.95.6) not expressly referring to any specific form of Sarasvatī, seems to point to her as a river-goddess. Vasistha is described as performing a sacrifice on the bank of the Sarasvatī river. He invokes Sarasvatī to come over and grant him food. The mantra suggests that she is conceived here as a river-goddess, presiding over the sacrifice held in her honour, and is invoked to receive oblations. She seems to be of the same character referred to in another mantra (VII.96.2) of the Rgveda.

(c) Supesas:

'Supesas' is used in plural as 'supesasah' collectively as an adjective of Bhāratī, Sarasvatī and Iśā. Sayana understands it as 'surupāh', Wilson as 'beautiful', and Griffith as 'beauteous'. In singular, it would convey the same sense for Sarasvatī alone.

1 RV., IX. 5.8.
As shown later on, these three goddesses are ultimately one and this oneness lies in a deity who is the goddess of speech. The formation of this word would certainly run as prefix 'su' meaning well and √pis', meaning to decorate. Accordingly 'supesas' is the one who is well decorated. Sarasvatī's occurrence with the other two goddesses Bhārati and Iḷā shows that she is a goddess, more evidently the goddess of speech, or speech itself as Iḷā and Bhārati are also described as representing the two varieties of speech of terrestrial and heavenly character.

2. The mental aspect of Sarasvatī:

There are some attributes, which throw some light on the mental aspect of Sarasvatī. Of them, 'dhiyāvasuh', 'codayitrī suntānām' and 'cetāṇī samatānām' deserve special attention.

(i) Dhiyāvasuh:

This word has been used for Sarasvatī only once in one of the Rgvedic mantras. Sāyana explains it as: "dhiyāvasuh karma prāpya dhananmittabhūta. vāgdevatāyas tathāvidham dhananmittvatvam āranyakakānde śrutiḥ vyākhyātam-yajām vastu dhiyāvasur iti vāg vai dhiyāvasuh" (ĀĀ., I.1.4). Here he takes Sarasvatī as Vāgdevatā and according to the Āranyaka, Vāgdevatā is the means of wealth. With this idea, he interprets 'dhiyāvasuh' as: "karma prāpya dhananmittabhūta". By 'karma' probably he

1 Vide infra., p. 89-94.
2 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p.1126.
3 Ibid., p. 703.
4 See infra., pp. 89-94.
5 RV., I.3.10.
means sacrifice. By performing the sacrifice in which mantras are
chanted, Vāgādevatā is pleased and gives wealth to devotees in return.
This may be endorsed by Wilson when he renders the word as: 'the recom-
penser of worship with wealth'. Śrī Nādhava, the son of Śrī Venkatārya,
in the Agartha-dīpikā, maintains the word as: "prajñāyā sarvesām vāsā-
yitrī", which means one who enlightens all by her very wisdom.

Besides, the word has been differently understood by Skandaśvāmin's
Bhāṣya on the Rgveda and Yāska's Nīrūka as: "prajñādhanā. athavā vaser
ēcchēdanā rthasya vasusābdah. prajñāyā chādayitrī sarvārthānāṁ"¹ and as
'karmavasuh'².

The word 'dhiyāvasuh' is evidently from 'dhih' and 'vasuh' formed
from feminine 'dhih' meaning, intellect, understanding, knowledge, etc.³
Similarly, 'vasuh' means wealthy, rich, good, etc.⁴ As the formation
of the word shows, it seems proper to take Sarasvatī as rich in intellect
or knowledge. In the opening mantra on Sarasvatī, she is invoked as
the goddess of speech (vāgādevatā), in the sacrifice, probably with the
intention of the incitement for the chanting of the mantras and for
getting mind brightened by her. If the goddess brightens one's mind,
knowledge will automatically come.

2 Nīrūka, II. 26.
3 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p. 597.
4 Ibid., p. 953.
5 RV., I. 3.10.
(ii) Codayitriṁ sūṇrtānām:

It is used in the same Sūkta as contains the word 'dhyāvasuḥ' discussed above. Though of the Rāṣṭrapīti origin, it is not alien to later literature.

The word 'codayitri' is undoubtedly formed from ācud, meaning to impel, incite or inflame. 'Codayitri' (feminine) will, thus, mean one, who incites or impels. Sayana, Madhava, Wilson and Griffith agree with this sense and explain it as 'prerayitri', 'codayitri', 'inspirer', and 'inciter' respectively.

Sayana explains 'codayitri sūṇrtānām' as: "sūṇrtānām priyānām satyavākyānām codayitri prerayitri", and so is Griffith while he translates it as inciter of all pleasant songs. All ideas either expressed or unexpressed are the product of mind or intellect. To take Sarasvatī as the inciter of such ideas is to take her as the inciter of intellect.

The word 'sūṇrtānām' may also be interpreted differently. It is possible that 'sūnta' in/su/nṛ + rta. 'Nṛ' means a man, a person or mankind. 'Rta' also means bright and luminous in and addition to proper, right, honest and true. Thus, Sarasvatī is also to be accepted as stirring up bright-mind or intellect. The expression "codayitri sūṇrtānām" is, thus, synonymous with "cetanti sūmatānām", explained by Sayana as:

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1 Ibid., 1.3.11.
2 Monier Williams, op.cit., 327.
3 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p. 647.
4 Ibid., p. 348.
5 RV., I.3.11.
"sumatinam sobhanabuddhiyuktanam anusthatram cetanti tadifyam anustheyam jnaapayanti," translated by Wilson as 'instructress of the right-minded', and rendered by Griffith as 'inspirer of all gracious thought'. The word 'matih' is formed from /man, 'to think', by adding the suffix 'ktin' in abstract sense (bhive) and is feminine in gender. It means intellect, understanding, sense and knowledge. 'Sumatinam' will, thus, denote the persons endowed with intellect. Sarasvatī illumines their intellect and widens its horizons. She, thus, appears before us as the goddess of speech (Vāk).

(iii) There are still other references to show that Sarasvatī blesses knowledge (prajñā) or intelligence to others. One of the mantras says: "sarasvatī sūdhayanti dhiyam", which purports that Sarasvatī gives intelligence (dhih). Another allusion to this aspect of Sarasvatī reads: "maho arnah sarasvatī pra cetayati ketuna dhiyo visvā vi rājati". Here 'maho arnah' stands for the stock of knowledge or learning accumulated in Sarasvatī. In other words, she may be taken as the embodiment of knowledge. She does not confine knowledge to herself alone; but also gives away to others. It is why there is the use of 'ketuna' which is the means to direct others by intelligence (pra cetayati ketuna). Yāśka explains 'ketuna' as 'by action' or 'by intellect': "mahad arnah Sarasvatī pra cetayati prajñā-payati ketuna karmanā prajñāyā." The second half of

1 Pāṇini, Aṣṭādhyāyī, II.3.94, "striyām ktin".
2 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p. 834.
3 RV., II.3.8.
5 Cf. for 'ketu', Nirukta, II.27.
the verse (dhiyo visvā vi rājati), explicitly says, according to Sāyana’s 
Bhūṣya that Sarasvatī manifests her prowess of intelligence by making 
all enlightened: "svakīyena devatārūpaṇa visvāh dhiyāh sarvāṃ anusthā-
trāpjānumāni vī rājati vīśēṣṇa dīpayati. anusthānavīssyā buddhiḥ sarvā
dīpayati 'trīsya arthāḥ". She, thus, illumines all and makes 
them know what they ought to do. She is implored for intelligence: 
"sarasvatī vīrāpatiṇī dhiyām dhāt"; and is described as the protectress 
of intellect and intellectuals: "dhīnām avitrī".

3. Social aspect of Sarasvatī:

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

   (1) Sarasvatī as a mother:

   Like other goddesses, Sarasvatī is also portrayed as an affectionate 
mother, though only in a few mantras. Motherhood has been attached to 
her (it) conceiving her as a source of fertility,3 as a milch-cow; and 
even as a goddess. The fundamental function of a mother is to nourish 
and look after her child. As a river, the Sarasvatī does good to the 
worshippers, as if its own progeny, living along the banks. As a goddess, 
she is more capable of granting her devotees precious presents and is, 
therefore, figuratively conceived as a milch-cow4 bringing rich and

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1 RV., VI. 49.7.
2 Ibid., VI.61.4.
3 Cf. ibid., VII. 36.6.
4 See infra., pp. 110-112.
healthsome food. Sarasvatī is regarded as 'ambitamā', 'sindhumātā', and 'mātā'. The connotation of each of them is as under:

(a) Ambitamā:

One of the Ṛgvedic mantras describes Sarasvatī as 'ambitamā', 'the best of mothers', addressing her in the vocative case as 'ambitame'. It also suggests that several mother goddesses had emerged in the Ṛgvedic period.

(b) Sindhumātā:

This epithet of Sarasvatī is apparently a compound word with 'sindhu' and 'mātā' as its members. Sindhu admits of various explanations. The word 'sindhumātā' is, therefore, variously interpreted. Sāyana understands it as: "apām mātrabhūtā", Mādhava as: "sindhunām mātā", Griffith, as 'Mother of Floods', and Geldner, as the one whose mother is Sindhu, and Wilson translates the word as: 'The Mother of the Sindhu - Sindhu mātri may mean, according to the Scholiast, apam matri-bhuta, being the mother of the waters'.

The word 'sindhumātā' may more properly be explained as: "sindhunām jalānām vā mātā", the mother of rivers of waters. A mighty stream that the Sarasvatī river was, it would have been a perennial source for various rivers. If 'sindhu' stands for 'waters' only, one may also think that the Sarasvatī supplied the Vedic Aryans enough of waters for irrigating their fields.

1 Vide infra.. pp., 69-71.
2 RV., II.41.16.
3 Ibid., VII. 36.6.
In a mantra, Sarasvatī is said descending from the mountain (parvata) to ocean. It means that the Sarasvatī river had its source in the mountain and ran to ocean. It is the physical description of the river. But 'parvata' also means 'cloud' and 'samudra' denotes 'welkin'. Sarasvatī, according to the naturalistic interpretation, is also understood to reside in the sky and is called 'mādhyanikā'. The cloud is, thus, Sarasvatī's original abode or source. When it comes down to the ocean (samudra) - the ocean on the earth, not the welkin - provides profuse waters to the rivers to flow and to the people for different purposes. Sarasvatī is, thus, according to the naturalistic interpretation, the mother of rivers and waters.

Besides, the ever-flowing of the Sarasvatī river is taken to imply inspiration. It is, thus, inspiring. This sense also emerges from 'sindhu' in the epithet 'sindhumātā'. 'Sindhu' is derived from śyand, 'to flow'. It, thus, denotes 'the progressing life'. Sarasvatī is, therefore, the mother of the ever-progressing or ever-flowing life.

(c) Mātā: One of theṚgvedic mantras, portrays the dual character of

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1 Ibid., VII.95.2.
2 Max Müller, Sacred Books of the East., Vol. XXXII, p.57.
3 Ibid., p.58.
4 Vide infra., pp. 89-90.
5 Cf. Pt. Śrīpāda Dāmodara Sātavalekara, op.cit., p.45.
7 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 1115.
8 RV., X.64.9.
Sarasvatī very nicely, both as a river as well as a goddess along with the Sarayū and the Sindhu. It suggests that at first rivers were understood simply as rivers and afterwards, they were invoked to come to the sacrifices for protection. Their arrival to the sacrifice adds singularity to their character. This singularity is on account of their waters, which are essential for our life. Since waters protect and nourish one as one's mother, they are called "ūpah mātarah". The divinity of the Sarasvatī river may, therefore, lie in the extraordinary character of its waters, which are the storehouse of fertility and purification. It is due to these characteristics that they are addressed as 'mātarah'.

(ii) Sarasvatī as a sister:

The following epithets present Sarasvatī as a sister:

(a) Septasvasā:

This word occurs for Sarasvatī only once and has been interpreted variously. Sāyana explains it as: "gāyatrīdīnī sapta chandōmi svasūro yasyās tāḍrī. nadirūpāyas tu gāṅgādyāḥ sapta nadyah svasārah". Wilson takes it to mean the same as Sāyana. Mādhava takes it in the sense of rivers only: "gāṅgādyāḥ yasyāḥ svasārah."

Although there were a number of rivers in ancient India; but great importance was assigned only to the seven rivers of the north,

1 Cf. John Dowson, op.cit, p. 284.
2 RV., VI. 61.10.
which are as follows:

"(1.) Gângâ (Ganges);
(2.) Yamuna (Jumna);
(3.) Saraswâti (Sarsuti);
(4.) Sutudri (Satlej);
(5.) Parushni;
(6.) Marud-vridhâ;
(7.) Ārjîkîyâ (the Vîpâsâ, Hyphasis Byâs)."\(^1\)

It is also probable that these seven rivers were the five rivers of Punjab and the Sarasvâti and the Sindhu.\(^2\)

According to one view,\(^3\) the seven sisters symbolise:

(1) Stream of bliss;
(2) Stream of existence;
(3) Stream of consciousness;
(4) Stream of truth;
(5) Stream of Manu;
(6) Stream of breath; and
(7) Stream of gross body.

Sri Aurobindo\(^4\) takes the seven rivers as the sevenfold waters of life; and defines them as follows:

"The sevenfold waters thus rise upward and become the pure mental activity, the Mighty ones of Heaven. They there reveal themselves as the first eternal and ever-young energies, separate streams but of one

\(^1\) Cf. John Dowson, op.cit., p. 281.
\(^2\) Cf. A.C. Das, op.cit., p. 9.
\(^4\) Sri Aurobindo, op.cit., p. 138.
origin — for they have all flowed from the one womb of the super-
conscious Truth — the seven Words or fundamental creative expressions
of the divine Mind. Sapta vānīḥ ...

Another interpretation takes 'saptasvasā' to refer to the seven
metres. It is obvious that there are seven metres used in the Ṛgveda.
The Ṛgveda is the stock of knowledge and these metres contain in them all
knowledge. Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech and learning¹ may be taken
as implying the Ṛgveda and all knowledge derived from it. Seven metres,
expressive as they are of this stock of knowledge, may be regarded as
her sisters. We have shown discussing the kinds of vānī, that Sarvāvatī
is closely associated with the sun (sūrya); and, therefore, she is called
Bhūratī in the form of rays (rasmirūpā). The rays of the sun have seven
colours and so does Bhūratī. The seven-coloured rays have, thus, been
conceived as the seven sisters of Bhūratī or Sarvāvatī. These rays
shine not only in the heavens; but also in the mid-region and the
earth. It points to Sarvāvatī as 'madhyamā' as well as 'vaikharī'.³

(b) Saptadhātuh:

One of the Ṛgvedic mantras describes Sarvāvatī as 'Saptadhātuh'.⁴
The word has been explained by Sāyana as: "saptadhātuh sapta dhātavo
'vayavā gāyatrīyādyā gaṅgāyā vā yasyāḥ sā tatho 'ktā". Wilson understands
it as: 'comprising seven elements'. 'Saptadhātuh' is a compound with

1 John Dowson, op.cit., p. 284.
2 See infra, p. 57, f.n. 5.
3 Vide infra, pp. 89-90.
4 RV., VI. 61.12.
'sapta' and 'dhātu' as its members. The word 'dhātu' is formed from √dhā (ādhāre), by adding the suffix tun, and denotes the fundamental principles (tammātrās) constitutive elements of the creation of the universe. But the fundamental principles are five\(^1\) not seven in number, a fact which does not permit one to accept 'saptadhātuh' as denoting with 'seven elements'. But if we include the 'mahat' and 'ahankāra' in the 'tammātrās' the sense becomes meaningful. The more convincing interpretation has been offered by Mādhava\(^2\), who takes 'satadhātuh' to imply one with seven metres or sisters. Griffith admits similar sense in translating the word as 'seven sisters'.

(c) **Saptathī**

At one place in the Ṛgveda, Sarasvatī is called 'saptathī',\(^3\) which evidently means 'one out of the seven'. Sāyaṇa, Geldner, Griffith, and Wilson all agree on its meaning. Mādhava explains it as: "sannām nādaṁ svārōm satapāṁ." It, undoubtedly, refers to the seven rivers treated as sisterly with each other.

(d) **Trisadhasthāḥ**

This epithet,\(^4\) according to Sāyaṇa, means: "trisū lokeṣu sahā vatiṣṭhamānā trilokāvāpīni". Griffith explains the term as: "Sprung from threefold source: 'abiding in the three worlds', that is, pervading heaven, earth, and hell, according to Sāyaṇa, like Gāṅgā in later times."

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2 "saptadhātuh saptabhīṣ chandobhīḥ sahitā, saptabhīr vā svasbhīḥ".
3 RV., VII. 36.6.
4 Ibid., VI. 61.12.
The very mantra in which the epithet occurs seems to refer to Sarasvatī simultaneously in two capacities, as a river as well as the goddess of speech. If we correlate her with the trinity of the Rigvedic goddesses, viz., Sarasvatī (herself), Iśā and Bhūratī, we may take Sarasvatī as three sistered goddess. It is possible, because the three goddesses are said to represent separately the threefold divisions of the Veda (Brāhmaṇa), Āranyakas and Upaniṣads. The sequence of the goddesses representing Veda, Āranyakas and Upaniṣads accepts Iśā as first, Sarasvatī as second and Bhūratī as last.

(e) Svasīr anyā rtavārī:

The word 'rtavārī' has been used twice in connection with Sarasvatī as well as with other rivers. At one place, it occurs independently for Sarasvatī in the vocative case as 'rtavari'. At another place, it comes with 'svasīranyāh'. Both the words have more or less the same meaning.

Sayana explains 'svasīranyā rtavārī' as: "svasīr bhavyam sārinīh saho ’tpannā vā rtavārīḥ. rtam ity udakānām. tadyuktāḥ anyāh ca nadīr asmān atinayatu. yadvā ... udakavatyah svasāro bhaginyo 'nyā gangūdyā nadyas'."

Wilson takes the words as: 'her other water-laden sisters' and Mādhava as: "svayam sāraniḥ. anyāś ca prajāḥ". Mādhava probably holds

2 RV., II. 41.18.
3 Ibid., VI. 61.9.
by 'prajāh' other rivers as offsprings of the Sarasvatī. This sense is possible in both ways. First, they may be taken as having been originated from it or the tributaries of it. Second, all rivers may be understood as its offsprings; for Sarasvatī residing in the cloud makes all the rivers flow.¹ 'Svasti' means sister. 'Svasti anyā rājvarī' points to rivers associated with the Sarasvatī.

(i) **Sarasvatī as wife:**

This aspect of Sarasvatī is brought out by the following epithets:

(a) **Virapatni:**

'Virapatni'² has been variously explained by scholars. Wilson translates it as: 'the bride of the hero' and accepting Sayana's interpretation, explains it as: "the wife of the hero, Prajapati or Brahma; or it might mean the protectress of heroes or of men.' Sayana expresses his view on the word, as: "vīrapatnī. vīrah prajāpatih patir yasyās tāṃśi. yadvā. vīrānām pālayitrī." Griffith also takes it to mean the 'hero's consort' and states that "the River-god Sarasvān or Sarasvata is more usually considered to be the consort of Sarasvati ..."

It is difficult to derive any specific meaning from 'vīra'; for the word has a very wide meaning. So far as the consortship of Sarasvatī is concerned, it is accepted not only in the Vedas, but also in the later literature. In the Vedas, the idea is vague and incomplete, yet the seed lies there. In the Purāṇas, she is clearly mentioned as the wife

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¹ See supra., p. 48.
² RV., VI. 49.7.
of such gods as Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Sarasvāti, etc. Sāyaṇa takes 'vīra' to mean Prajāpati. In the later literature, Prajāpati has been replaced by Brahmā. Prajāpati is assuredly from 'prajāpan' meaning to beget, to generate and the like. Prajāpati is the one, who is the lord of the creatures (prajas). But this word is equally applicable to Indra and Agni. Sarasvāti in the Rgveda, helps Indra, who endeavours to kill Vṛtra. It is possible that the epithet 'vīrapatnī' refers to her as the wife of Indra. Besides, Prajāpati is Agni; and in the Rgveda, we find Agni as identical with Sarasvāti. It seems that Sarasvāti here is a sacrifice and Agni as fire presiding over it. Their union may be taken as that of wife and husband. The word 'vīra' itself implies the sense of fire, sacrificial fire, which endorses the above view. 'Vīra' is also one of the names of Viṣṇu and accordingly, she may be taken as his wife, too.

(b) Vṛṣṇah patnī:

The use of 'vṛṣṇah patnī' occurs, in one of the Rgvedic mantras, in plural (vṛṣṇah patnīḥ) in the context of rivers in general, where no mention has been made of the names of specific rivers. Sarasvāti has

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1 Vide infra., pp. 188-192.
2 Monier Williams, op. cit., p. 607.
3 Ibid., p. 608.
4 See infra., pp. 79-80; 85; f.n.3.
5 RV., II. 1.11.
6 Vaman Shivram Apte, op. cit., p. 1004.
7 Ibid., p. 1004.
8 RV., V.42.12.
been mentioned in this mantra in the last line along with Bhūddivā and Rākā. It seems that in this mantra, Sarasvatī is at first reckoned as one of the rivers and then as a goddess. Sayana’s explanation runs as: “sarasvatī ātannāmikā nadi vāgdevī vā”. An elaborate description need not be given here except to take her as one of the rivers collectively referred to as 'nadyāh' in the mantra, to which Sayana interprets as: "nadyah nadminīlā gāgādyāh". By 'gāgādyāh', he obviously includes the Sarasvatī. Sarasvatī also comes before us as one of the wives of 'vṛṣṇah' as is clear from the expression 'vṛṣṇah patnīh' explained by Sayana as: "vṛṣṇah vṛṣṇakasye 'adrasya patnīh, patnyah pālayitrīyah. nadyah. nadminīlā gāgādyāh". Geldner translates 'vṛṣṇah patnīh' as the wives of vṛṣṇa (means Indra); Griffith as 'Steer’s wives' and Wilson as 'the wives of the Showerer (Indra)'.

Indra is the god of rain. With his weapon, he kills Vṛtra and releases waters to rain on the earth. He fills rivers with waters and makes them flow. It is he, who makes their barren life fructuous with waters by infusing fertility into them as a husband into his wife.

Rivers are, thus, aptly called Vṛṇas wives. As the Sarasvatī is also one of them, 'vṛṣṇah patnī' is an appropriate epithet for it.

(c) Marutvatī:

In one of the Ṛgvedic mantras, Sarasvatī is called 'marutvatī'. It associates Sarasvatī with the Maruts or presents her as accompanied

1 Ibid., II. 30.6.
by them. Geldner, Griffith and Wilson all take her in the same sense. Sāyāna explains it as: "marutvati marudbhīr yuktā. madhyamāsthānā hi vāk sarasvatī marutas ca madhyamāsthānasaḥḥāḥ. etat tadvati satī."

The Maruts are mid-regional. 'Marutvati' is the feminine form of masculine 'marutva', meaning a cloud, Indra, and Hanumāt. Since the Maruts belong to the mid-region, they possess lusture, a quality indicated by the root of the word, 'mṛi' or 'mar', meaning to shine. Monier Williams gives an appropriate explanation of 'marutvat', when he writes: 'Maru-tvat, ān, atī, at, (Ved.) attended by the Maruts (said of Indra, Vāyu, Viṣṇu, Sarasvatī, Agni, Soma'. Then he takes 'marutvati' as the name of Indra and as a cloud.

Sarasvatī is called 'marutvati' for the obvious reason that she is the wife of Indra or Vāyu, or Viṣṇu, or Agni, or Soma, or cloud. Owing to her association with the cloud, she may be taken as its consort in the form of lightning or the flash of lightning. Lightning or the flash of lightning is a symbol of 'tejas' and cloud may be thought to have derived it from the sun, Ādityas with which Sarasvatī as Bhāratī is intimately connected. Sarasvatī as Bhāratī is perhaps taken as the wife of the Maruts and is spoken of as 'marutsu bhāratī'.
(iv) **Sarasvatī as a daughter:**

This aspect of Sarasvatī is also not worked out in detail. This personality of hers is implied by the following epithet:

(a) **Pavīravī:**

In two of the Ṛgvedic mantras, Sarasvatī is called 'pavīravī'. The term is very vague, and hence, difficult to explain. The ambiguity of the word is further enhanced by 'kanyā' and 'tanyatuh', which follow it. Scholars explain the words variously. Sometimes, they construe it with 'kanyā' and 'tanyatuh' and sometimes, take it independently.

Sāyana takes 'pavīravī' in the first mantra as 'sodhayitrī' and 'kanyā' as 'kamanīyā'. In the second mantra, he takes 'pavīravī' as 'āyudhavatī' and 'tanyatuh' as 'stanayitrī'. Similarly Wilson renders 'pavīravī' in the first mantra as 'purifying' and in the second as 'armed'. He renders 'kanyā' as 'amiable' and writes: "Amiable-Kanya, literally a maiden, is here explained Kamanīya, to be desired or loved..." According to him 'tanyatuh' means 'thundering'. But Griffith makes out a different sense. He takes the words 'pavīravī' and 'kanyā' together to mean 'lightning's child'. In the second mantra, he seems to derive the above sense from 'pavīravī' only and leaves out 'tanyatuh' as a verb. Geldner, too, takes the words 'pavīravī' and 'kanyā' together to mean 'the daughter of pavīru(?). Sure that he is not above the real meaning of the word 'pavīru', he quotes Grassman and Ludwig, who render 'parīru' as 'lightning'.

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So far as the word 'kanyā' is concerned, it is generally taken in the sense of daughter, who has not reached the age of puberty. 'Kanyā' is, therefore, popularly defined as kumārī, dasavarsīyā.1

The term 'pāvīravi' for Sarasvatī is undoubtedly unique. There are many possibilities with regard to the formation of the word. It seems the feminine form of the masculine word 'pāvīrava'. The explanation of this word in Monier Williams–Dictionary runs as: "pāvīrava, as, ī, am. (fr. pavīru). Ved. proceeding from or belonging to the thunderbolt."2 'Pāvīrava', thus, seems to be from 'pavīru', meaning both a flash of lightning, a thunderbolt.3 The word 'pāvīravi' may also have some relation with 'pāvana', from /pū, meaning 'sanctifying' and, thus, capable of destroying sin and making one free from it.4 Sayana and Madhava understand 'pāvīravi' as 'sodhayitri' and Wilson translates it as 'purifying'.

Again, 'pāvīravi' seems to have been formed either from 'pavīra', probably same as 'pavīru' as referred to by Geldner, or from 'pavih'. 'Pavīra' means a spear or a lance5 and 'pavih' means the thunderbolt of Indra; the tire of a wheel; the point of a spear or arrow; an arrow; speech; fire.6 Thus, there is much similarity between 'pavīra' and 'pavih' and both the words seem to be identical. 'Rava' denotes sound. 'Pavih' and 'rava' will, thus, jointly stand to denote 'the sound created

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2 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 571.
3 Ibid., p. 558.
4 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p. 699.
5 Ibid., p. 668.
6 Ibid., p. 688.
or belonging to 'pavīḥ', i.e., Indra's thunderbolt with which he destroys his enemies. When the thunderbolt moves, it creates sound. This sound belongs to the mid-region and represents Sarasvatī, associated with the firmament as 'mādhyamikā vāk'.

1 It was further considered the sound on the earth as speech itself called 'vaikhāri'.

If this is borne in mind, one should suppose Sarasvatī as the daughter of lightning and the sound of the firmament created by Indra's 'pavīḥ' for the possession of which he is called 'pavīravān'.

2 The above discussion leaves us to the conclusion that 'pavīravān' probably stands for 'mādhyamikā vāk', the abode of which is firmament where it is closely associated with Indra.

(v) Sarasvatī as a friend:

There are few attributes such as 'marutsakhā', 'sakhyā' and 'uttarā sakhibhyaḥ', which present Sarasvatī as a friend.

(a) Marutsakhā:

In some of the Rgvedic mantras, Sarasvatī comes with the Maruts. In such instances, she is not directly associated with them. There, her name occurs independently. But 'marutsakhā', an uncommon address for her, shows that she is closely associated with the Maruts and is their friend. The Maruts are the gods of the mid-region. Their association with the aerial region is, therefore, natural. Sarasvatī, too, as

1 See infra., pp. 89-90.
2 infra., p.89.
3 Cf. Anand Swarup Gupta, opcit., p. 59, f.n. 7.
4 Cf. ibid., p. 59, f.n. 8; also cf. AB.,III.57, which reads for Sarasvatī as: vāg vai sarasvatī pavīravī vācyā eva tad vācam dadhāti tade "hur yāmin pūrvāṃ samse."
5 RV., VII, 96.2.
'mādhyamikā vaṁk' has the same region for her inhabitation. Residing there, she very often comes across the Maruts. It is for this reason that she is called 'marutsakā', 'the friend of the Maruts'. It is corroborated by Sāyana who explains 'marutsakā' as: "maruto mādhyamikā devaganāh. te sakhāyo yasyā mādhyamikāyā vācas tādrśi." (b) Sakhya: 

It has been used for Sarasvatī in one of the Vedic mantras.¹ The context, here, is of a prayer for shelter. It is dubious whether 'sakhyā' is an adjective for Sarasvatī or is simply an equivalent for 'sakhyāni'. As 'viśvā' in the Vedic literature, stands for 'viśvāni', similarly, 'sakhyā' may stand for 'sakhyāni'. Sāyana accepts the latter case and explains it as: 'sakhyā sakhyāni sakhibhāmāni'. Thus, taking 'sakhyā' to mean friendship. Mādhava, Wilson and Griffith also take it in the same sense.

'Sakhyā' may also be the instrumental form of 'sakhi' (a male friend), or of 'sakhi' (a female friend). Probably, the word indicates the friendly notion, which Sarasvatī possesses. The verse in which 'sakhyā' occurs, purports that the worshippers who live along the banks of the Sarasvatī think of themselves as its friends: 'O Sarasvatī! we are living by you; we are friendly bound with you or we are in your shelter. Take us as your friends and do not make us frightened with your impetuous shore-cutting waters'. Thus 'sakhyā' implies the sense of friendship.

¹ Ibid., VI. 61.14.
(c) **Uttarā sakhibhyah**:

In the expression 'uttarā sakhibhyah', sakhibhyah' may be the plural of the dative and ablative cases. 'Uttarā sakhibhyah' paints Sarasvatī as a river and as Nādhava rightly understands it, presents it as superior to other rivers: "anyābhya nadībhyaḥ sakhibhyah. utkṛṣṭo stotṛbhyaḥ vā suprasaste 'ti". The term 'sakhibhyah' used for rivers presents them as the friends of Sarasvatī. Keeping this in mind, Wilson translates 'uttarā sakhibhyah' as: 'most liberal to her friends'.

4. **Main activities of Sarasvatī**:  

Various functions of Sarasvatī have been described in the Rgveda.

(i) **Sarasvatī as the giver of wealth**:

The Sarasvatī occupies a very important place among rivers. It is, perhaps, the seven rivers which underlie the conception of 'the seven precious objects' and it is, perhaps, they which are indirectly associated with Agni, Soma and Rudra. It is, perhaps, they which are reckoned as the seven jewels or the seven glories (śrīyas). As the rivers were the sources of fertility for the people residing on their banks, they deified and worshipped them variously. Particularly, in the case of the Sarasvatī, this process has met considerable development. It has been variously worshipped by devout and has been asked for various cherished

1 Ibid., VII. 95.4.  
2 Ibid., V. 1.5; VI. 74.1.  
3 Ibid., VIII. 28.5.
booms. Wealth is one of the foremost desires.

(a) Sarasvatī's breasts as 'sāśayāḥ', 'ratnadā' and 'vasuvid':

In one mantra of the Rgveda, Sarasvatī's breasts are called 'sāśayāḥ', possessed of wealth; 'ratnadā', container of wealth, and 'vasuvid', possessed of previous wealth. The worshipper implores her to make such breasts sucked by him. He obviously requests her for what her breasts contain within them. These breasts of Sarasvatī are either the waters, full of fertility, or her wordy wealth, the reservoir of knowledge. We have the popular saying:

"vidyā dadāti vinayām vinayād yātī pātratām!
pātratād dhanām āpnoti dhanād dharmaḥ tataḥ sukham!"

Accordingly, a man ardently desirous of knowledge, gets wealth also. As a river, the Sarasvati may be thought to possess great potentiality in its waters nourishing the crops of the cultivators.

(b) Rāyaś cetantī:

The Sarasvati brings wealth to the world. On its way to the sea, it does a lot of work. In the mantra, while flowing down through its course to sea: "rāyaś cetantī bhuvanasya bhūreḥ". Sayana's explanation runs as: "bhuvanasya bhūta-jātasya bhūreḥ bahulasya rāyaḥ. dhanānī cetantī prajñā-payantī praecchantī".

(c) Āpo revathīḥ:

In the Veda, waters are often regarded as rivers. They are
described as possessed of opulence (revatīḥ); controlling over the wealth (kṣayathā hi vasvāḥ); and the protectresses of wealth (rāyas ca patnāḥ). Sarasvati is the patron deity of rivers: "sarasvatī tad abhimānīṇī devatā", and is, therefore, asked to give wealth (vayo dhāt).

There are many instances which speak of her munificence with regard to wealth. It gave sufficient wealth to Nāhuṣa. Similarly, it gave wealth to the priest of King Citra described in the two Ṛgvedic mantras. Owing to her close relation to wealth, Sarasvati is called 'rāya yujā' containing wealth, and 'subhaṅgā' of auspicious wealth. One who is favoured by her, gets boundless wealth: "na tasya rāyah pryeta āsti." Since it gives immense wealth, it is also called 'saptadhātuḥ', is repeatedly implored for wealth: "coda rādho maghonām", "dhātā rayū", "varivasyantu subhrāḥ", "abhi no nesi vasyo", and "rāyah... yajamāneṣu dhehi". She offers cherished wealth like Pūṣan, the god of

1 Ibid., X.30.12.
2 Sayana's com. on Ibid., X.30.12.
3 Ibid., X.30.12.
4 Ibid., VII. 95.2.
6 Ibid., VII. 95.4.
7 Ibid., I.89.3; VII. 95.4,6; VIII.21.17.
8 Ibid., VII. 40.3.
9 Ibid., VI. 61.12.
10 Ibid., VII. 96.2.
11 Ibid., III. 54.13.
12 Ibid., V. 42.12 (collectively Sarasvatī, Brhaddīvā and Rākā have been implored for wealth).
13 Ibid., VI. 61.14.
14 Ibid., X. 17.9.
prosperity: "rada puṣe'va nah sanim". In a prayer, Agni is asked to bring Sarasvatī along with the Maruts, the Asvins and waters to bestow treasures upon worshippers:

"agni yāhi dūtyam | mā riṣanyo devān acchē brahmaṅkaṇē ganena | sarasvatīṃ maruto asvīnē 'po yakṣī devān ratnadheyāya viśvān "

(ii) Sarasvatī as the giver of pleasure:

The following speak of her as the giver of pleasure:

(a) Mayobhūḥ (in plural 'mayobhuvah'):

One of the multifarious functions of Sarasvatī is to bestow pleasure. This idea has been clearly hinted at in the term 'mayobhuvah', commonly applied to Ilā, Sarasvatī and Mahī (Bhāratī). Sāyana explains the words as 'sukhotpādikāh' and "sukhasya bhāvayitryah". Mādhava takes it the same as Sāyana. Griffith translates it as 'they who bring delight or wealth, and Wilson as 'givers of delight', 'sources of happiness'. The three goddesses seem to be conceived as the goddesses of speech, duly representing the three regions, earth, firmament and heaven. It is supported by Sāyana who writes: "atha vai tāh kṣityantarikṣadyusthānā vṛgdevyāh." They are invoked at a sacrifice, which may have many a purpose. It may be performed to kill or ward off evils or bad omens; or to drive away calamities. They are appeased with oblations offered at the sacrifice in order to bestow fortunes and prosperity, and, thus, pleasure, upon their devotees.

1 Ibid., VI. 61.6.
2 Ibid., VII. 9.5.
3 Ibid., I. 13.9 (V.5.8).
4 His com. on Ibid., V.5.6.
As the goddesses of speech, they may also be thought to have been invoked for knowledge, which once might have been the highest goal of seer, resulting in the ultimate happiness of mind.

Elsewhere, too, Sarasvati is asked for pleasure (sarasvatī nah subhaṅgā mayas karat),¹ and felicity (sarma).² Sarasvati along with Rudra, Viṣṇu and Vāyu, is entreated to grant happiness: "te no rudrāḥ sarasvati sajosā mālāhāṣāmanto viṣṇur mrīantu vāyuḥ."³

The breasts of Sarasvati called 'mayobhūḥ',⁴ are explained by Sayana as: "yah ca stanah mayobhūḥ rasāsvādīṁ sukhasya bhāvyātā." (iii) *Sarasvatī as the bestower of offsprings:*

The vedic people desired brave progeny and like other deities Sarasvati was also prayed therefor.

Sinivalī is the presiding deity of fertility and growth.⁵ She is, thus, the goddess bestowing progeny. She is mentioned only in a few mantras,⁶ and two of them invoke her for the grant of offsprings.⁷

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¹ Ibid., I. 89.3.
² Ibid., VI. 49.7.
³ Ibid., VI. 50.12.
⁴ Ibid., I. 164.49.
⁵ Macdonell and Keilt, op.cit., p. 449.
⁶ RV., II. 32. 6-8; X. 184.2.
⁷ Ibid., II.32.6; X.184.2.
Like Sīnīvālī, Sarasvatī is also requested to grant progeny.

In one mantra, she is invoked, along with Sīnīvālī and the divine Asvins, to sustain the embryo:

"garbham dhehi sīnīvālī garbham dhehi sarasvatī
garbham te asvināu devāv ā dhattēm puskarasraja āḥ"

The devout had a firm belief that by offering worship to Sarasvatī with utmost devotion, he would be blessed with offsprings. He is encouraged by the case of a celebrated rṣi Vadhryāvā, recorded in the Rgveda, who was blessed by Sarasvatī with a mighty and worthy son, who relieved his father from debt. The Sunhotras had firm hopes that goddess Sarasvatī would graciously grant their desire for progeny.

(iv) Sarasvatī as the giver of food:

Among many things granted by Sarasvatī, food is a very important and prominent gift. The epithets 'vājinīvātī' and 'vājinī' speak of her as granting food. We will discuss these forms under her special characteristic features. Besides, there are many other allusions, which portray her as the giver of food. Only a couple of them would suffice.

1 Ibid., X. 184. 2
2 Ibid., VI. 61. 3
3 Ibid., II. 41. 17.
4 Ibid., I. 3. 10; VI. 61. 4; VII. 96-3.
5 Ibid., V. 61. 61.
6 See infra., pp. 69-71.
(a) Āyūṃśi:

The word 'āyūṃśi' \(^{1}\) admits of several interpretations. Sayana and Madhava explain it as 'annānī'. The Nighantu's \(^{2}\) interpretation runs as: "āyuh. sūrta. brahma. ity annasya...nāmāni". Griffith and Wilson render it as 'generations' and 'existences' respectively. The word 'āyūṃśi' appears to have been derived from \(\sqrt{āyuh}\), which means life, vital power, \(^{3}\) etc. Its rendering by 'generations' and 'existences' also purports almost the same.

Vitality is life and vitality is gained through food. Sarasvatī is, thus, described as giving such vital powers.

(b) Yasas:

In one of the Rgvedic mantras, \(^{4}\) rivers including the Sarasvatī have been invoked to come together and in such an invocation, they are eulogised variously with such addresses as 'suṣvayenta', 'sudughāh', 'sudhārā', 'abhi svena payasā pīpyānāh' and 'yasaso vāvesānāh'.

'Yasasah' is from \(\sqrt{yasas}\), which means water, food, \(^{5}\) etc. Since they cause and bestow plenty of food, they are spoken of as: "yasaso vāvesānāh". Sayana explains 'yasaso' as 'annavatyah'. Owing to this particular characteristic that Sarasvatī is earnestly entreated to confer

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1 RV., II. 41.17.
2 Nigh., II. 7.
3 Monier Williams, opcit., p.127.
4 RV., VII. 36.6.
5 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 812.
abundance of food: "vṛddha subhre stuvate rāsi vājān", 1 "śrṣadyā śmin barhisi mādayasva "namāvā īṣa ā dhehy asmē", 2 and "sahasrāṛgham īdo atra bhāgam rāyas poṣam yajamāneṣu dhehi". 3

5. Special characteristics of Sarasvatī:

The following terms bring to light some of the special features of the personality of Sarasvatī.

(1) Vājiniṅvatī:

The word 'vājiniṅvatī', 'vājiniṅватī' and 'vājini' occur as adjectives of Sarasvatī. Sayana explains 'vājiniṅvatī' used three times in nominative case as: "vājiniṅvatī annavat kriyavatī", "vājo 'namā yasyām kriyāyām sā vājiniṅ. tadyuktē", and 'annavatī'. This word has also been used two times in the vocative case as 'vājiniṅvatī' 5 and has been explained by Sayana as 'annavatī'. The last word 'vājini' 6 is interpreted by him as: "vājo balam annam vā. tadyukte". Wilson translates 'vājiniṅvatī' occurring three times in the nominative case as 'the bestower of food', 'the acceptress of (sacrificial) food', and 'the food conferring' respectively; and 'vājiniṅvatī' used two times in the vocative case, as

1 RV., VII. 95.6.
2 Ibid., X. 17.8.
3 Ibid., X. 17.9.
4 Ibid., 1.3.10; VI. 61.4; VII. 96.3.
5 Ibid., II. 41.18; VI. 61.3.
6 Ibid., VI. 61.6.
'abounding in food', and 'giver of sustenance', and 'vājini' as 'abounding in food'. Griffith renders 'vājinīvatī' as 'enriched', 'rich in her wealth', and 'never niggardly in thought' respectively and 'vājini' as 'strong'. Geldner has rendered 'vājinīvatī' at the first two places as 'rich in prize or remuneration', and at the third place as 'rich in mare'. In the Skandasmīn's Rgveda-bhasya, 'vājinīvatī' (1.3.10), is explained as: "vājo bālam vego vā tadvatī vājinīvatī ... svabhūtā senā tadvatī ... athavā vājo havir lakṣanam annam tad yasyā asti sā ... yēgasantatiḥ".1

Originally, in 'vājinīvatī', we come across 'vāja' from Vedic ṣvaj, which has various meanings as strength, vigour, energy, food, sacrificial food, wealth, speech, battle, conflict, context, etc. Owing to this variety of meanings, one is tempted for various implications of this word.

'Vājini' in 'vājinīvatī' is obviously from ṣvaj, and if we take into account all the meanings of this word referred to above, 'vājinīvatī' will stand for the one who is possessed of the above qualities. Monier Williams - Dictionary3 runs on this word as: "Vājini-vat, ān, antī, at, Ved. possessed of Vājini, i.e., of food, &c. (the adj. being used for the substantive), yielding nutriment; possessed of sacrifices; abounding in worship or prayers (which are offered at dawn, highly honoured", etc.

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1 Quoted in B.D., op.cit., p. 17, f.n.19.
2 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 901.
3 Ibid., p. 901.
Sarasvati is called so for various reasons. Being excessively eager for accepting the sacrificial oblations, she is called 'possessed of the sacrificial food', and being the presiding deity of the sacrifice, she is spoken of as 'possessed of the sacrifices'. Sarasvati abounds in prayers and is called 'suyamā', rendered by Griffith 'tractable meaning easily led by prayer'. Sarasvati is often invoked by seers to come to sacrifice and to provide them with an effective speech. The word 'vājah' itself being derived as /vaj + ghan/, it denotes clarified butter, food in general, water, prayer or mantra, with which a sacrifice is concluded, sacrifice, strength, power, wealth, speech, etc. Taking 'vājah' for a prayer or mantra, 'vājinīvatī' will denote the one who is possessed of a prayer or mantra.

Sarasvati as 'vājinīvatī' is either the one who eagerly accepts the prayers of her devotees or the one who is the inciter of prayers in them.

But the other sense declaring Sarasvati as 'possessed of food and water' appears to allude to Sarasvati as a river. While descending from the mountain to the plain, the Sarasvati river might have rendered grain-fields abundantly fertile resulting in profuse yield of harvest. It was called 'vājinīvatī', as its waters grew rich crops. Afterwards, it became a general appellation for Sarasvati.

1 RV., IX. 81.4.
2 Vaman Shivram Apte, op. cit., p. 957.
3 Ibid., p. 957.
(ii) **Pāvakā:**

This epithet\(^1\) occurs in the very beginning mantra on Sarasvatī and has been interpreted differently. Śāyana explains it as 'sodhayitrī', and Skandasvāmin as: "sāhasām pāpām apanetrī athavā pavatiḥ kṣāraŋa-rthah ... kṣārayītry udakănām".\(^2\) Griffith translates it as 'wealthy in spoil', and Geldner as 'shining'.

In masculine, we have 'pāvaka' from /pā + nūl/, which means 'purifying'.\(^3\) It also denotes fire, the god of fire, the fire of lightning,\(^4\) etc. In the feminine gender, it becomes 'pāvakī' which means the wife of Agni, and is also the Vedic name of Sarasvatī.\(^5\) Both 'pāvakī' and 'pāvakā' are in the feminine gender and mean the same.

'Pāvaka' denotes Agni, who symbolises heat, which purifies everything burning impurity. In one of the Rgvedic mantras,\(^6\) Agni is identified with Sarasvatī, which speaks of a close relationship between Agni and Sarasvatī. In the sacrifices where fire is kindled and oblations are poured in the sacrificial fire, Agni becomes the presiding deity. But Sarasvatī is also very often invoked to come to the sacrifice and accept whatever is offered.\(^7\) On such occasions, the sacrificer, obviously, takes

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1 RV., I. 3.10.
2 Quoted in RD., *op.cit.*, p. 17, f.n.16.
4 Ibid., p. 699.
5 Ibid., p. 699.
6 RV., II. 1.11.
7 Cf., *ibid.*, I.3.10-11, 13.9 (V.5.8), 142.8; III. 4.8 (VII. 2.8); V.43.11; VII. 95.4; X.17.6, 110.8.
Sarasvatī as the presiding deity of the sacrifice. When both Agni and Sarasvatī are invited together to the sacrifice and taken to be the presiding deities of that sacrifice, it appears that they are accepted as husband and wife. It is probably for being the wife of Agni that Sarasvatī is called 'pāvakī'.

Even the Sarasvatī river would be supposed to be 'pāvakī' or 'pāvakā', 'purifying', for its waters would have been so pure and sacred as to make everything pure with them.

'Pāvakā' also means 'the fire of lightning', a meaning which 'pāvakī' or 'pāvakā' would also embrace. In this regard, 'pāvakī' or 'pāvakā' will have the same implications as 'pāvīravī', used for Sarasvatī.

(iii) Ghṛtācī:

The use of the word 'ghṛtācī' has been made several times in the Rgveda; but Sarasvatī as 'ghṛtācī has been mentioned only once and it has been interpreted variously. Sayana explains it as: "ghṛtam udakam ancati." To Griffith it means: "Balmy: literally, filled with, or sprinkling ghṛta, oil, fatness, or fertilizing fluid", and to Wilson and Geldner 'showerer of water', and 'one who goes into melted butter' respectively.

1 See [Indra... pp. 58-60.](#)
2 [RV., I.2.7, 167.3; III.6.1, 19.2, 30.7; IV.6.3; V.20.1. VI.63.4; VII.1.6, 5.5, 43.2, 60.3, 84.1; VIII. 44.5; IX. 70.1, etc.](#)
3 [Ibid., V. 43.11.](#)
Apte takes 'ghṛtācī' to mean greasy, abounding in ghee, containing water, shining, night, and Sarasvatī. 'Ghṛtācī' also occurs several times in the Ṛgveda, without having any association with Sarasvatī. At one place, it comes as an adjective of the 'golden coloured lightning', described as 'showering waters'. Sāyana understands this word appearing in another mantra as "ghṛtenā "ktā sruk" and explains it more explicitly when it occurs in another mantra as an adjective of Indra: "he puruḥūt bahubhir āhūte 'adra ghṛtācī. ghṛtasūbdo havir mātram upalakṣayati. tathā ca somaṃjyapurodāśādilakṣanam havir ancāti. prāṇnotī 'ti ghṛtācī".

For this explanation, we may deduce that 'ghṛtācī' is the one:

(a) who showers waters;
(b) who takes oblations mixed up chiefly with ghṛta, soma, purodāsa, etc.

But so far we have not understood 'ghṛtācī' as throwing any light on any specific characteristic of Sarasvatī. The mantra using 'ghṛtācī' for Sarasvatī alludes to her various characteristics. By 'ā no divo', she apparently appears to be described as Bhāratī (pasyantī), whose abode is heaven and as such, she is one of the varieties of speech (vānī). It is doubtful to which aspect of hers τρήτα parvatād ā' refers. 'Parvata' literally means 'mountain', but as a Vedic word, it also implies

1 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p. 478.
2 RV., I.167.3., see also Sāyana’s com. thereon.
3 Ibid., III. 6.1.
4 Ibid., III.30.7.
5 Ibid., V. 43.11.
welkin or cloud;¹ and this shows Sarasvatī to be mid-regional in the capacity of one of the kinds of speech, viz., 'madhyamā vāk'.² But one cannot be sure that Sarasvatī is described here as Vāgdevī, pasyanti and madhyamā respectively. Sāyāna doubts it and that is why he says:

"santi hi dyulokasya triṇi parvāni 'tisro divah prthivih' ityādi śruteh".³

If we take this for granted, it would mean that Sarasvatī is purely heavenly and on account of being 'pasyanti', she has been invoked to descend from the heaven down to the sacrifice in order to receive oblations (havam devī jujusānā),⁴ and to listen to the speech of her worshippers (no vācam usātī śrōtā).⁵ Here 'ghṛtāci' obviously points to Sarasvatī as receiving oblations offered to her at the sacrifice; and in such circumstances, she is the goddess of speech or speech itself.

Though originally used with above connotation, 'ghṛtāci' afterwards became a general term for Sarasvatī and was, therefore, used for the Sarasvatī river, too; it alluded to the latter as the one that showered (i.e., provided) waters. This word has been understood in this sense by Wilson (Ṛgveda, V.43.11).

The use of the word 'ghṛtāci' presents Sarasvatī as the goddess of sacrifice and as entreated to come down to the sacrifice from the heaven. Since, she receives oblations, she is called 'ghṛtāci'. Oblations,

¹ Cf. Sāyāna's comm. on Ṛgveda, V.43.11 (parvatāt ... vā 'ntariksāt meghād ā).
² Sāyāna's comm. on Ṛgveda, V.43.11 (anena mādhyaṃkī vāg meyate).
³ His comm. on Ṛgveda, V.43.11.
⁴ Ṛgveda, V.43.11.
⁵ Ṛgveda, V.43.11.
offered at the sacrifice, may be of ghṛta, waters or other things; but ghṛta is the main oblation in a sacrifice. When it is offered to her, she gladly accepts it. Hence the word 'ghṛtācī' should demote Sarasvatī as the one who receives ghṛta. The Halāyudhakosa explains 'ghṛtācī' as: "ghṛtena amṛtena aṁcati trptiṁ gacchati 'ti ghṛtācī."¹ This points to Sarasvatī as the one who is fed with ghṛta, or ambrosia.

(iv) Pārāvata-ghni:

This word² is obviously a compound from pārāvata-ghni. There is much speculation about the definite meaning of 'pārāvata', while 'ghni' is equivalent to 'ghatini' in feminine from āhan meaning striking, killing.³ This very word is wrongly taken as 'pāravadaghni' the corrupt form of 'pārāvata-ghni'.⁴

Again, 'pārāvata' is taken from 'parā-vat' which means remote, coming or brought from a distance, of foreign extraction, and is also the name of a tribe on the Yamunā.⁵ It also means 'with both banks'. Keeping it in mind, Mādhava explains 'pārāvata-ghni' as: "pārāvāraghātinī pārāvata-ghni'ti... kūlayer ubhayor bhāsātrīṁ ity arthaḥ". Sāyana takes 'pārāvata' to mean 'present at a distant place' as well as 'both the banks': "sarasvatīṁ pārāvata-ghniṁ parāvati dūradese vidyamānasyaṣṭi vrksāder haṁtrīṁ .... yadvā. pārāvata-ghniṁ pārāvare parāvācī tilre.tayor

1 Halāyudhakosa., p. 291.
2 RV., VI. 61.2.
3 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p. 477.
4 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 567.
5 Ibid., p. 567.
The epithet "ghātinīṃ". Wilson translates 'pāravataghnī' as 'the underminer of both banks'.

'Pāravata' may, thus, be thought to be formed from 'para' and 'avara', meaning 'remote'\(^1\) and 'nearer'.\(^2\) 'Pāravataghnī' would, therefore, present the Sarasvatī river as causing destroying its banks. It is also possible that it effected the tribe called Parāvatas, living alongside the river Yamunā, which, at that time, was not far from it and destroyed their settlements. In this way, the sense of 'para' and 'avara' befits according to the context.

Thus, 'pāravataghnī' speaks of Sarasvatī as a river. Griffith translates 'pāravataghnī' as 'who bursts the ridges of the hills' and, thus, gives us to understand that the Sarasvatī river while descending from the mountain destroyed the ridges of hills on its way. He appears to have confused 'pāravata' in 'pāravataghnī' for 'parvata' in making out such a meaning. Monier Williams thinks 'hitting the remote (demon), slaying from afar',\(^3\) the right meaning of 'pāravataghnī', which would describe Sarasvatī as a goddess slaying the remote demon Vṛtra.

(V) Citrāvuh:

This epithet\(^4\) is apparently from citra + āyuḥ. 'Citre' has been explained by Apte as: "\(^1\) Bright, clear. -\(2\) Variegated, spotted, diver-

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1 Ibid., p. 533.
2 Ibid., p. 92.
3 Ibid., p. 567.
4 RV., VI. 49.7.
sified. -3 amusing, interesting, agreeable; ... 5 surprising, wonderful, strange; ... 7 conspicuous, excellent, distinguished; ... tram ... 5 Heaven, sky; ... 6 (In Rhet.). The last of the three main divisions of Kāvyā (Poetry). ¹

Similarly, 'āyuh' is used in a multiple sense. It embraces the sense of life, virtues and other characteristics of mortals and immortals. That is why it has been explained variously. Sāyana explains 'citrāyuh' as "citragamanā citrānā vā", Griffith renders the word as 'brisk with rare life', and Wilson as 'graceful'. Geldner thinks it to mean 'the girl with wonderful life-energy'.

Among these explanations, the explanation offered by Griffith and Geldner is striking and presents Sarasvatī as having a singularity in her life. This singularity in life is obvious from the fact that in the same mantra she is described as 'pāvīravī kanyā', 'vīrapatnī' as has been noted earlier,² and has been closely associated with the consorts of gods. As the daughter of 'pavīru', and the wife of Prajāpati or Viṣṇu and with her association of the wives of gods, she comes before us with an unique vitality. It is, probably, because of such a uniqueness that she is called 'citrāyuh'.

But 'citrāyuh' may also be interpreted differently. It is probable

¹ Vanam Shivram Apte, op. cit., p. 493.
² Vide supra, pp. 54-55, 58-60.
that Sarasvatī has been depicted by means of this epithet as speech or
goddess of speech.¹

Sarasvatī is the goddess of poetry² and the use of 'citrāyuḥ'
in this context will portray her as standing for everything striking
(citra or ramanīya) in poetry.

(VI) Hiranyavartanī:

By means of this epithet,³ Sarasvatī is described as a river.
The attributes 'vājinīvati',⁴ 'ghorā, vrtraṅhī',⁵ 'svasāryāyā rtavārī',⁶
eetc., delineate various characteristics of this river with divinity
attached to it. These epithets are not ascribed to any other river.

Because of its furious streams, the Sarasvatī is known as 'ghorā',⁷
possessed of the terrific nature. Sarasvatī's terrific nature is also -
evident from the fact that it (she) helped Indra in constant battle with
Vṛtra, and is, therefore, called 'vrtraṅhī'.⁸ Vṛtra had encircled waters

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¹ From 'pāvīrāvī', we have already deduced this sense; and the same
sense may also be derived from 'gaṅgh' to which Sāyana renders: "gaṁbhīḥ
devapatalbhīḥ sajōsāḥ saṃpryamānāḥ. yadvā. gaṁgh gāyastṛyādīnī chaṅdā-
maśi. "chaḍāmaśi vāi gaṅgh" (Tait. Sa. V.1.7.2) iti śrutēh." It presents
Sarasvatī as the friend of the wives of gods and as Vāk manifested in
the form of metres like Gāyatri.

³ RV., VI. 61.7.
⁴ Ibid., VI. 61.3-4, 6, etc.
⁵ Ibid., VI. 61.7.
⁶ Ibid., VI., 61.9.
⁷ Ibid., VI. 61.7.
⁸ Cf. Ibid., VI. 61.3,5,7.
in the heaven. Sarasvatī, by her divine powers, loosened his enclosure, and as the result of it, waters rushed towards the earth\(^1\) with all their fructuousness. Thus, she released wealth and prosperity for mankind; and it is, perhaps, also in this capacity that she is called 'hīranyavartāniḥ', akin to 'hīranyavatī' meaning 'abounding in gold'.\(^2\) This is equally applicable to her in the capacity of a river.

Sarasvatī is so rich in wealth and so munificent in distributing it to mankind that she is symbolically supposed as traversing the golden path or possessing a chariot made of gold.\(^3\)

(VII) Asuryā:

Monier Williams\(^4\) takes this word to mean incorporeal, spiritual, divine, demoniacal, belonging to the Asuras, and water of the clouds.

'Asuryā',\(^5\) is a compound of 'asūḥ + yā'. 'Asu' means 'breath, life, spiritual life, and water'; and 'yā' evidently means 'going' (from yā, to go). 'Asuryā' will, thus, mean 'breathing', 'having life', 'having spiritual life', as well as 'going with water'.

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1 Ibid., VI. 61.3.
2 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 1173.
3 Cf. the views of Saṅgaṇa, Wilson, Griffith, Geldner, etc., on RV., VI. 61.7.
4 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 106.
5 RV., VII. 96.1.
6 Monier Williams, op.cit., p. 106.
Now, we are to see how the epithet 'asuryā' can be applied to Sarasvatī. In the first line (pāda) of the mantra in which this word occurs, Sarasvatī is, undoubtedly, referred to as a river; but in the second line, she is mentioned as dwelling in the heaven as goddess (devatārūpā) and on the earth as Vāgrūpā. The Sarasvatī is described as 'asuryā'; for it is the most 'lively' river as well as because, as Geldner rightly understands it, its place among rivers is as important and striking as that of Asuras among gods.

The adjective 'asuryā' can be applied to Sarasvatī even as a goddess; for she is full of might, life and vitality, as is obvious from her deeds. Sāyana is, thus, right in his explanation 'asuryāyai balavatyaî', and so are Griffith and Wilson in their renderings 'mightiest' and 'most mighty' respectively.

(VIII) Dharunamāyasi pūḥ:

Sāyana explains 'dharunamāyasi pūḥ' as: "eṣā dṛṣyaṁmaṁ nādirūpā sarasvatī āyasi ayasā nirmātā pūḥ purī 'va dharaṇam ... dharaṇā dhārayi-trī." Wilson understands it as 'firm as a city made of iron' (though he is doubtful about the implication of the comparison); and Griffith as 'fort of iron'. It describes the Sarasvatī river as mighty and unconquerable as the city or fort of iron. It was unconquerable; for people found it difficult to cross it on account of its wide course and

1 Cf. Sāyana's com. "rodast dyāvaprthivyay sthitām divi devatārūpena bhūmyāṁ vāgrupena" (RV., VII. 96,1.).
2 Cf. his translation of ibid., VII. 96,1.
3 Ibid., VII. 95,1.
unfathomable depth.

'Dharunam' means 'dhārayirī', supporter also. The Sarasvatī supported its tributaries. It supported them as the houses are supported by a city (pūh); and hence the propriety of the expression 'dharunamā-yasī pūh' applied to it.

IX. Akavārī:

Śayana understands 'akavārī'¹ as 'akutsitagamanā', Griffith as 'rich in spoil', Wilson as 'faultless-moving', and Geldner as 'giving liberally'. Apte interprets 'akava-va' as a negative adjective from /kav-ā, meaning: indescribable (avarananiyā); not contemptible, not bad; and then 'akavārī' as "kutsitā aryo yasya sa kavāriḥ; na kavārīḥ ao; or yasya sātravo 'py akutsitā vrtrādyah," or akutsitam iyati aisvaryam prāpnoti".² This interpretation runs in masculine, which will have the same meaning in feminine, too.

The mantra describes the auspicious and bounteous nature of Sarasvatī and mentions her as granting fortune and giving food, i.e., prosperity of every kind: "bhadram id bhadrā krnavat sarasvaty akavārī cetati vājinivatī". Thus, she is the giver of wealth. Apte derives this sense, when he puts: "akutsitam iyati aisvaryam prāpnoti".

In the light of the present discussion, 'akavārī' as an adjective of Sarasvatī, presents her as 'liberal' even to her enemies.

1 Ibid., VII.96.3.
2 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p.3.
In addition to the above, there are many attributes of Sarasvatī, but they are not so important as to deserve elaborate analysis. Sarasvatī as a river is compared to the person: "bisakhā iva". The Sarasvatī digs up its banks as a person delving for the fibrous stalk of a lotus (bisa) digs up the soil. It is, again, described as 'naditama', 'the best of rivers', 'Bṛhat' 'great' (parivṛdhā guñār adhikā - Sāyana), 'ratha iva' 'going swiftly as a chariot irrespective of obstacles' and 'suṣiḥ' 'sacred and purifying'. As goddess, Sarasvatī is described as 'devitama' 'the best of goddesses', 'āpaprasi' 'svejasā pūritavatī - Sāyana) and the like.

6. The relation of Sarasvatī with other gods and goddesses:

(i) Sarasvatī with male deities:

Several times Sarasvatī has been mentioned in the Rgveda with the gods. Mitra, Daksā, Varuṇa, Soma, the Asvins, the Maruts.

1 RV., VI. 61.2.
2 Ibid., II. 41.16.
3 Ibid., VI. 61.13.
4 Ibid., VI. 61.13; VII. 95.1.
5 Ibid., VII. 95.2.
6 Ibid., II. 41.16.
7 Ibid., VI. 61.11.
8 Ibid., I. 89.3; V. 46.2; VII. 39.5; IX. 81.4; X. 65.1.
9 Ibid., I. 89.3.
10 Ibid., V. 46.2; VII. 39.5; IX. 81.4; X. 65.1.
11 Ibid., I. 89.3; X. 65.1.
12 Ibid., I. 89.3; VII. 9.5; IX. 81.4; X. 131.5.
13 Ibid., I. 142.9; II. 30.8; III. 54.13; V. 46.2; VII. 39.5; 40.3, 96.2; IX. 81.4; X. 65.1.
Agni, 1 Indra, 2 Visnu, 3 Rudra, 4 Pusan, 5 Parjanya, 6 Brhaspati, 7

Aryaman, 8 Vayu, 9 Vaja, 10 Vatra, 11 Pavaman, 12 Aja-Ekapada, 13 Visvedevah, 14 Vibhu, 15 Aditya, 16 Apah, 17 etc. The occurrence of her name with these gods does not generally speaks of a particular relationship.

There are, however, some expressions used for Sarasvati which appear to point to some relationship with some of them. For instance, 'marutsakhā', 16 'marutsati', 19 and 'marutsu bharati', 20 declare her as the friend of,
and associated with the Maruts. 1 'Vrsnah patnīh' 2 portrays her (it) as one of the wives of Indra. She helps Indra in killing Vṛtra. 3

Many times, she has been mentioned with the Āsvins; 4 and according to the Vaiṣṇava-Sāṁhitā, she is their wife: "sarasvatī yonyām garbham antar avibhyām patnī ... " 5

The relationship between Sarasvatī and Agni has been indirectly hinted at in the Rgveda. The use of the term 'pāvaka' (masculine) for Agni and 'pāvaka' 6 (feminine) for Sarasvatī, both meaning 'purifying'; and Agni's identification with Sarasvatī 7 tempt us to believe that the latter has been conceived as the wife of the former.

(ii) **Sarasvatī with female divinities:**

Sarasvatī is also mentioned with goddesses; but has close relationship only with some of them. She is mentioned with Aditi, 8 Gungū, 9

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1 See supra., pp. 56-57.
2 Cf. Sāyana on RV., V.42.12, "vrsnah versakasye 'ndrasya patnīh."
3 Cf. Sāyana on ibid., VI.61.3, "visvasya vyāptasya māyāsah māyā- vinah brsasya. brsaya itī tvastrur nāmadheyam. tvastuh prajām putram vrtrāsūram ca nyadvadhī. tvat sāhāyyad eva 'ndro hatavān".
4 Ibid., I.89.3; VII.9.5; IX.81.4; X.131.5, 184.2.
5 IV., XIX.94.
6 See supra., pp. 72-73.
7 RV., II.1.11.
8 Ibid., I.89.3; VII.39.5; X.65.1.
9 Ibid., II.32.8.
Among these divinities, the triad of Vedic goddesses, consisting of Ilā, Sarasvatī and Bhūratī occupies most important place. Before dwelling upon this trinity, let us see other goddesses with whom Sarasvatī has close relationship.

The name of Sarasvatī with Aditi, Guṇḍu, Sinivali, Rākō, Indrāni, Varuṇāni, Prthivi, etc., occurs quite in an independent and disconnected way. She has alliance with Puraṇdhi, Dhiḥ and Gnaḥ. She has been entreated to bring good fortune and listen to the speeches of the worshippers with Dhiḥ: "sām sarasvatī saḥdhiḥbhir astu", and Puraṇdhi: "sravan vacāmsi me sarasvatī saḥdhiḥbhiḥ purandhyā". Thus, Dhiḥ comes twice with Sarasvatī in instrumental form in plural and appears to have close relationship with her. Sayana renders the word 'dhiḥbhīḥ' as: "stutibhiḥ karmabhir vā", Griffith as 'Holy Thoughts' or 'Devotions personified' and Wilson as 'holy rites'. 'Dhiḥ' seems to be a deity of devotion and thought personified and has been associated with Sarasvatī.

1 Ibid., II.32.8; X.184.2.
2 Ibid., II.32.8; V.42.12.
3 Ibid., II.32.8.
4 Ibid., II.32.8.
5 Ibid., V.46.2; VI.49.7.
6 Ibid., VII.54.4.
7 Ibid., X.65.13.
8 Ibid., XI.35.11.
9 Ibid., X.65.13.
like the other female deity Purandhā, entreated similarly to listen to the speeches. With Gnaṁ, Sarasvatī has more affinity as she herself is one of them. In the Ṛgveda (V.46.2), Gnaṁ occurs along with Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, the Maruts, Viṣṇu, Nāsetyas, Rudra, Pūṣan and Bhaga as well as with gods (devāh) in general. Probably, Gnaṁ is used in plural in the sense of wives - the wives of gods in general and the wives of the enumerated gods in particular. But another mantra (VI.49.7) associates Sarasvatī closely with Gnaṁ and implores her to provide the worshipper with shelter and felicity: "gnāṁhin acchidram sāraṇam sajoṣā durādhāraṃ ghrnate sarma yamsat".

(a) The triad of the Ṛgvedic goddesses:

As in the post-Vedic literature, we come across the trinity of gods - Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheṣa - as well as the trinity of goddesses - Sarasvatī, Lākṣmī and Pārvatī. Similarly, there is the Vedic trinity of goddesses - Sarasvatī, Ila and Bhāratī - sprung up from the Ṛgveda.

In the Ṛgveda, Ila is the personified oblation of milk and ghee, obtained from the cow. So Ila represents that wealth, which one gets from the cow. She may also be considered the goddess of fertility. There are only a few mantras in the Ṛgveda, where she is mentioned alone, otherwise, she comes with Sarasvatī and Bhāratī. Like Sarasvatī, Ila is also a milch-cow. Ila bears fruits permanently, irrespective of

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1 Ibid., I.65.13.  
2 Donald A. Mackenzie, op.cit., p. 151.  
3 Ibid., p. 150.  
4 RV., III. 55.13.
As a milk-cow, she is the supreme among the cattle and is, therefore, rightly called the mother of the herds of cattle. She is said to have oily hands and the house, where she lives, Agni protects against the enemy and brings there eternal welfare. Like her hands, she has oily legs, too. She has been entreated to flow on the sacrificial grass. She is, probably, the personification of libation.

Like Ilā, Bhārati is also a sacrificial goddess. In the Vedas, she generally stands independently and is, at some places, invoked with Sarasvatī. 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. Even before it, the Atharvaveda itself appears to suggest the identification of these three goddesses - Sarasvatī, Ilā and Bhārati.

According to Sri Aurobindo, Ilā, Sarasvatī and Bhārati represent 'drsti', 'sruti', and 'the largeness of the truth-consciousness'.

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1 Ibid., IV.50.8.
2 Ibid., V.41.19.
3 Ibid., VII.16.8.
4 Ibid., X.70.8.
5 Ibid., X.36.6.
7 Cf. AV, VI.100.1, "tisrah sarasvatiH".
8 Sri Aurobindo, op.cit., p. 110.
These three goddesses appear to represent the three kinds of speech (Vāk). In the Rgveda, the mention of these three goddesses does not specify which goddess represents which kind of speech. To ascertain it, we are to resort to the commentary like Śaṅkara.

Śaṅkara mentions Ila, Sarasvatī, and Bhāratī (Māhi) as the three varieties of speech. He takes Bhāratī as 'dyuṣṭhānā vāk' and accepts her as 'rasāmīrūpā'. He holds Sarasvatī to be 'mādhyamikā vāk'. He accepts Sarasvatī as 'stanītādirūpā' (i.e., dhvani-rūpā), whose abode is the firmament. He further explains Sarasvatī as: "sarasvatī, sarah vāg udakam vā, tadvatīantarikṣadevātā tādṛśī". As the sound (stanita, or dhvani) is communicated by the air, Sarasvatī becomes 'vāyu-rūpā' or the controller of Vāyu. She is repeatedly spoken of as the 'mādhyamikā vāk' elsewhere, too. Ila is the speech on the earth (pārthivā praisādīrūpā). Thus, the three goddesses Bhāratī, Sarasvatī and Ila are the presiding deities of speech of the three regions — heaven (dīya), midregion (i.e., firmament) and earth (pārthivī) respectively: "... etās tisrāḥ tristhānāvāgabhīmāṇidevātāḥ".

1 Cf. his com. on RV., I.142.9, "bhāratī bharaśasya dītyasya sambandhini dyuṣṭhānā vāk".
2 Cf. his com. on ibid., II.1.11; the same idea occurs in ibid., I.188.8.
3 Cf. his com. on ibid., I.142.9.
4 "sarasvatī, sara ity udakāmā, tadvatīstanītādirūpā mādhyamikā ca vāk".
5 His com. on ibid., I.188.8.
6 Com. on ibid., II.1.11, "sarasvatī sarasvān vāyuḥ tatsambandhini etanīyāmikā mādhyamikā".
7 Com. on ibid., II.30.8; V.43.11; VII.96.2; X.17.7, 65.13.
8 Com. on ibid., I.142.9.
9 Ibid., I.148.9.
Ila, Sarasvati and Bharati are identical with Agni (agnimūrtayāḥ), the symbol of tejas (brilliance = intelligence). Agni, on the earth, represents the sun, which is called Āditya in the heaven. Bharati has close association with Āditya as well as with the Maruts (marutsu bhārati). She is, thus, a mid-regional deity, while Sarasvati as the 'madhyamā vāk' is also a mid-regional deity. It suggests that Bharati and Sarasvati are identical. These facts lead us to believe that the above mentioned three goddesses are identical and Agni is their male form.

Ila, Sarasvati and Bharati are the representative deities of Bhūḥ, Bhuvah and Svah, thus, terrestrial, atmospheric and celestial speeches. These goddesses also come under a different set of names. There are three varieties of speeches called 'pasyanti', 'madhyama' and 'vaikhari' among which 'pasyanti' stands for Bharati; 'madhyama' for Sarasvati; and 'vaikhari' for Ila.

2 Ibid., 1.142.9.
3 Ibid., 1.142.9.
4 Ibid., p. 89.
5 Süryakanta, op.cit., 127-128.
6 Cf. Sāyana's com. on RV., I.164.45.

"parā pasyanti madhyama vaikhari 'ti catvāri 'ti. ekai "va nādātmikā vāk mūlādhārād uditā satī pure 'ty ucyate. nādasya ca sūkṣmatvāna durmūrtatvāt sai "va hṛdayaṅginiḥ pasyanti 'ty ucyate yogyibhir draṣṭaṁ sākyatvāt. sai "va buddhiṁ gatā vivakṣāṁ prāpta madhyame 'ty ucyate. madhye hṛdayākhyey udiyaṃsātvāt madhyamāyāh. atha yādā sai "va vaktre sthitā tālvoṣṭhādīvāpārena bahir nirgacchatī tadā vaikhari 'ty ucyate". See also Wilson's com. on "catvāri vakparimītā padāni in ibid., I.164.45"
The same 'nādātmikā' (dhvanirūpā) vāk is known as 'parā', 'pasyanti', 'madhyamā' and 'vaikhari'. When having basic origin that very vāk is 'parā'; when subtle (sūkṣma) and residing in the heart, it is 'pasyanti' perceived only by Yogins; when it is intelligible and manifest, it is 'madhyamā', being arisen in the heart (madhya); and when it comes to the mouth, i.e., when it comes out through the vocal organs like plate, lips, etc., it is known as 'vaikhari'. These four kinds of vāk represent the four stages in the manifestation of vāk in a man.

One view explains the association of Ilā, Sarasvatī and Bhāratī with the three different regions. According to it, Ilā is expressly Irm, which means, in the Vedas, any drinkable fluid, a draught (especially of milk), refreshment, comfort, enjoyment, etc. Ilā as speech (vāk) would, thus, be the terrestrial knowledge, which provides us with food, drink and comfort, the necessities of human life, which assists us in the earning of livelihood. Sarasvatī, the mid-regional speech, represents the knowledge of the rituals, which wins the heaven and its bliss for human beings. Bhāratī is the knowledge of heavenly speech which brings us nirvāna.

7. Sarasvatī and Sarasvān:

Sarasvān is the singular form of the nominative case of the stem Sarasvat. In the Ṛgveda, Sarasvān has for it an equivalent in

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1 Cf. Sāyana's com. on ibid., I,164.45.
2 Cf. Monier Williams, on cit., p. 141.
3 Vide Sūryakānta, on cit., p. 128.
4 The word occurs in RV., I,164.52; III.4.8; VII.2.8, 96.4.6; I,66.5.
Sarasvah\(^1\) (saras + va). The word 'Sarasvat' is formed from 'saras' (from /sr + sa) by adding the suffix 'vatup' (vat). Sayana explains its accusative form as: "sarasvantam udakavantam. sara ity udakanēma. devam sūryam vā."\(^2\)

Apte gives various meanings of the word Sarasvat: having water, watery, juicy, succulent, elegant, sentimental, tasty, sapid, the ocean, a lake, a male river (nada), a buffalo and the name of Vāyu.\(^3\)

The meaning of Sarasvat as 'having water' or 'watery' is prominent. In one mantra, he has been mysteriously described as a celestial bird, the root cause of waters and plants, providing weal through rain:

"divyam suparnam vēyasam bhontam apām gārhghams darsatam 'sadhinēm! vṛṣṭibhis tarpayantam sarasvantam avase johavīmi 11.4\(^4\)

According to Griffith, Sarasvan (or Sarasvat)"is the name of a River-God usually assigned as a consort to Sarasvat. In this place the sun is meant, and Sarasvantam may be taken as a mere epithet, 'rich in water' which he absorbs." Wilson accepts Sarasvan as 'having water' as he explains "abhipato vṛṣṭibhis tarpayantam" meaning "satisfying with rain the reservoirs, saliladharan". The word 'abhipata' appears to him "unusual"; and according to him, it may be differently explained

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1 Ibid., VII. 96.5.
2 His com. on ibid., I.164.52; commenting on ibid., VII.96.4, he explains 'sarasvantam' as: "sarasvantam devam".
3 Vaman Shivram Apte, op.cit., p. 1108.
4 RV., I.164.52.
as "favourably, willingly, anukulyene". Sarasvän as 'having water' or 'watery' is also suggested by the following mantra, which describes his breast (stana):

"pitrivâmsam sarasvatah stanaṃ ye visvadevaśatah | bhaktimaḥi
prajām iṣṭam ||"¹

Sāyana explains "sarasvatah stana" as: "sarasvatah devasya stanaṃ 'subdāyamānāṃ stanevedrasādharām vā megham", thus, also suggesting 'a cloud' as 'the breast of Sarasvän'. Only in one mantra, Sarasvän is described with the three goddesses, Iī, Sarasvatī and Bhārati.² Sarasvän is closely related to Sarasvatī as her husband.³ Like him, Sarasvatī, too, appears as a cloud.⁴ While translating the Rgveda, I.164.52, Griffith takes Sarasvän to be the sun. Even in such a case, the above relationship of Sarasvatī with Sarasvän, the sun, is clearly brought out; for she as Bhārati is closely associated with one of the Ādityas.⁵

While commenting on the Rgveda, III.4.8 (VII.2.8), Sāyana associates Sarasvatī as Bhārati with the sun as his wife. As Bhārati, Sarasvatī is not different from 'pāsāyantī vāk', residing in the heaven and perceptible by Yogins only; and Sarasvän is also, even as the sun, a celestial being. Both takes him as the protector of divine waters; while Hillebrandt identifies him with Apāṃ Nāpāt, Soma, or the moon.⁶

¹ Ibid., VII.96.6
² Ibid., III.4.8 (VII.2.8).
³ Sêprâ.. p. 92 and see also above lines.
⁵ Cf. Sêprâ.. p. 89-90.
⁶ Cf. Griffith's f.n. on RV., I.164.52.
The spouseship of Sarasvān and Sarasvatī is established even in case we take Sarasvān as the ocean and Sarasvatī as a river of this name. In Kāvyā, the ocean is conceived as the husband of rivers. Through their course, they approach it and surrender themselves to it, as a wife, approaching her husband, yields herself to him. The Sarasvatī was the mightiest river of Vedic times and after flowing from the mountain, it approached the ocean, its husband, as it were.

Whichever connotation we choose for Sarasvān, he, thus, comes in all the cases as the husband of Sarasvatī.

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1 Ibid., VII.95.2.