CONCEPT OF SARASWATI IN JAIN TRADITION AND ART

Dr. Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari
Emeritus Professor
History of Art
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi-221005
&
Dr. Shanti Swaroop Sinha
History of Visual Arts & Design
Faculty of Visual Arts
Banaras Hindu University
Varanasi-221005
E-mail- sssbhu@gmail.com

Sarasvati (also known as Bharati, Vak-devi, Vagishvari and Sharada etc.), the presiding goddess of wisdom, knowledge and music (Buddhi, Jnana and Sangita), was popular in Indian tradition since Vaidik times. The river Sarasvati on the banks of which Vaidik learning and Yajna took place, played vital role in the development of her mythology. As a result river became the personification of goddess Sarasvati. The hymns found in the Samaveda were chanted on her bank. It is because of the above reasons that she was conceived as holding manuscript (symbol of knowledge), rosary (akshamala) and water-vessel (kamandalu) which were symbolic attributes for Yajna and Upasana. The swan (hamsa) became her vahana (vehicle), which again symbolizes knowledge and also power of Nira-Kshira-Vivechana (discussion in the spirit of differentiation of water from milk). However it was from the Sunga - Kushan period that Sarasvati is represented in art and in the mythology. In the Puranas, she is associated with Brahma both as daughter and Shakti (consort) and at same times with Vishnu also along-with Lakshmi as his Shakti to be seem mainly in Pala art (8th – 10th century A.D.) of eastern India.

Sarasvati was assimilated in Shramanic tradition also. In Jainism she appears as Sarasvati and Shrutadevata (as Jina-Vani) atleast from second century A.D. (Kushana period), while in Buddhism she appears as Prajna-Paramita probably after the Gupta period (c. sixth century A.D.). Thus she was accepted in all the Indian religious traditions as goddess of knowledge and was to be shown invariably with Pustaka (manuscript) and Hamsa-Vahana (swan).
CONCEPT OF SARASVATI IN JAINA TRADITION AND ART

Much has been written about Sarasvati in Vaidik-Puranic tradition and art and also about Prajna-Paramita in Buddhist tradition but very little is written on the concept, form and iconography of Sarasvati in Jain context. Therefore we have decided to focus mainly on Sarasvati in Jain Tradition and Art. The study reveals her powerful presence in Jain texts and visual renderings.

The earliest goddess to be worshipped by the Jains was Sarasvati\(^1\) also called the Shrutadevata, the personified knowledge embodied in of sacred Jain scriptures preached by the Jinas and the Kevalins (Vyakhya-Prajnapati-11.11.430 and Paumachariya-3.59)\(^2\). The dvadashanga –the twelve anga-text are described as the different limbs of the Shrutadevata while the fourteen purva texts are said to be her ornaments.\(^3\) Sarasvati is invoked for dispelling the darkness of ignorance, for removing the infatuation caused by the jnanavarniya karma (i.e. the karma matter covering right knowledge) and also for destroying miseries.

Sarasvati as the bestower of knowledge and purity has been endowed with symbols like swan (as mount), manuscript, rosary, varada-mudra and water-vessel (in hand), which do represent her distinctive character. Subsequently by the end of ninth century, she also became the presiding goddess of music and hence provided with Vina (lute) in hands and peacock as mount. The popularity of worship of Sarasvati in Jainism is established on the testimony of literary references in the Vyakhya-prajnapati (c. 2\(^{nd}\)-3\(^{rd}\) century A.D.), the Paksika-sutra of Shivasharma (c. 5\(^{th}\) century A.D.), the Dvadasharanyachakravritt of Simha suri Kshamashramana (c. CE 675), the Panchashaka of Haribhardra suri (c. CE 775), the Samsaradavanala-stotra (also of Haribhadra suri), the Mahanishitha-sutra (c. 9\(^{th}\) century A.D.) and the Sharada-stotra of Bhappabhatti suri (c. 3\(^{rd}\) quarter of the 8\(^{th}\) century A.D.) and also by the archaeological evidence of the famous image of Sarasvati from Mathura belonging to the Kushana period (CE 132)\(^4\). The popularity of her worship can also be understood from the large number of Sarasvati figures placed at different parts of Jain temples particularly in western India. A special festival held in the honour of Sarasvati is called Jnana-panchami in the Svetambara tradition and Shruta-panchami in the Digambara tradition.\(^5\) Besides this festival, special penance like the Shrutadevata-tapas and Shruta-skandha and Shrutaajnana-vratas are also observed by the Jains.\(^6\)

The worship of Sarasvati was far more popular with the Svetambaras which is why, her images at the famous Digambara Jain sites like Badami, Aihole, Ellora, etc. are absent. Sarasvati at some stage in pre-medieval period began to be invoked by the Svetambaras as a power. The pursuit of supernatural powers and the development of rites to attain them had acquired strong tantric colours by medieval period and as a natural corollary, the hymns addressed to a number of Jain goddesses, including Sarasvati, often were composed after the tantric mode.
The Jains, particularly the monks friars and pontiffs such as Bappabhatti suri, Hemachandra, Mallisena, Mallavadi suri (II), Narachandra suri, are reported in the medieval literature to have acquired Sarasvat-power from Sarasvati, the medieval works being the Prabhavaka-charita of Prabhachandraracharya (c. CE 1250), the Prabandhachinatamani of Merutungacharya (c. CE 1305-06), the Prabandhakosha of Rajashekharasuri (c. CE 1328-49) and the Kumarapalacharita of Jinamandana (c. CE 1435-36). The reason for such pursuit was not only to become a poet (kavi) of unequal merit and invincible dialectician (vadi)7 but also to obtain certain supernatural powers. There are references which distinctly reveal that the Jain Acaryas and poets sought to acquire the Sarasvata-mantra, a magic formula for obtaining mastery over speech. Hemachandra himself in his manual of poetics, the Alankarachudamani, admits unreservedly his faith in such means.8 The Jain works also make frequent reference to the journey of Hemachandra and other Jain Acharyas to Brahmidesa i.e. Kashmir for winning the favour of goddess Brahma in order to overcome all their rivals in disputations (vada).9

The Prabandha-kavyas invariably refer to a story wherein Bappabhatti suri is said to have invoked Sarasvati for winning over a Buddhist deflection Vardhankunjara at the court of Amaraja in Gopagiri.10 The Prabhavakacharita mentions that the vada between Bappabhatti and Varadhanakunjara continued for six months without any result. Bappabhatti thereupon invoked Giradevi i.e. Sarasvati in the mid night by the mantra given by his guru. The mantra was so forceful that Sarasvati forgot even to drape herself while appearing before Bappabhatti (anavrittashariram). Bappabhatti then composed a stotra of 14 verses in praise of Sarasvati, and the goddess, after being pleased with the hymn disclosed that his rival Vardhankunjara was her great adorer for the last seven bhavas (births) and consequently obtained from her akshayavacana -gutika which enabled him at unstoping and flawless speech and hence made him aparajeya (unconquerable). On request Sarasvai also suggested Bappabhatti to win over Vardhanakunjara. That was by asking him, along-with other vadis present, to gurgle with water (mukhashauca) and while he would do so, the akshayavacana-gutika will drop out of his mouth by the grace of the goddess, where after Bappabhatti could easily defeat him in the vada. We further find that Bappabhatti acted accordingly and was able to defeat his rival and become vadi-kunjara-kesari, the lion for the elephants who are disputants.11 This anecdote distinctly gives an idea as to the power achieved by the invocation of Sarsavati. The akshayavacana-gutika of the story symbolizes the personified vani itself. Before disappearing, Sarasvati also asked Bappabhatti that he would neither recite before anybody nor even put the 14 stotras into writing because they are so forceful that the moment they are recited she would be compelled to appear in person before the sadhaka which cause great inconvenience to her.12 The Prabandhakosha also refers to this story without any change, except that Sarasvati is not shown as coming undraped.13
Hemachandra (c. mid 12th century A.D.) was also blessed with Sarasvata-power along-with other magical powers.14 The Prabhavaka-charita mentions that Chaulukya king Jayasimha requested Hemachandra to prepare a new grammar on the model of the grammar of Paramara king Bhoja of Ujjain. Hemachandra then asked for eight ancient grammars which were to be found only in the library of the Sarasvati temple in Kashmir. Jayasimha at once sent his officials to Kashmir for bringing the manuscripts. Sarasvati pleased with the psalms of her praise by the officials appeared and ordered the librarian to send the desired manuscript to her favourite devotee, Hemachandra. On completion of the new grammar by Hemachandra, its 20 copies were sent to Kashmir which was accepted by Sarasvati herself for the library of her temple.15 The Prabandhakosha gives another story, according to which Hemachandra once invoked Sarasvati on the bank of river Sarasvati for knowing the previous existence (purvabhava) of Kumarapala Chaulukya. After three days dhyana Sarasvati (vidyadevi) appeared and told Hemachandra as to the purvabhavas of Kumarapala.16

Mallisena suri (c. CE 1047), the author of Bhairava-Padnavati-Kalpa and Bharati-Kalpa (wrongly called Sarasvati-mantra-kalpa), was also blessed with Sarasvata-power.17 From the various titles mentioned for him in his works we gather that he was not only a great mantric but also a great poet of Sanskrit and Prakrit, a grammarian, a dialectician and also well versed in all the sacred scriptures and was favoured by Sarasvati with a boon (Sarasvatilabdhabhavaroprasadah).18 Another reference pertains to Balachandra suri, author of the Vasantavilasha (c. early 13th century A.D.) who was well known as Siddhasarasvata i.e. one who has successfully practiced the sadhana of Sarasvati. He is described to have realized the form of Shri Sharada in a yogic trance.19

The Prabhavaka-charita and the Prabandhachatamani refer to Mallavadi suri of the court of Shiladitya20 who favoured with a logical treatise nayachakra by Sarasvati. She also descended into his throat in a vada with Buddhists to silence them.21 Mallavadi was able to please Sarasvati with his excellent memory alone. According to the anecdote, on one occasion, Sarasvati, roaming in the sky, asked him while he was engrossed in her worship ‘what things are sweet’ (kemistha)? He answered ‘grains of wheat’ (valla). Again after the laps of six months, the goddess returned at the same time asking him ‘with what’ (keneti). Malla then remembered the former dialogue and answered ‘molasses and ghee’ (guda ghrieneti). The answer apparently pleased Sarasvati and she blessed him with the desired boon [22]. According to the Prabhavaka-charita, Sarasvati blessed Mallavadi with the power to grasp the complete meaning of the shastra only by a single verse.23

One other story pertains to Vriddhavadi suri (c. 4th century A.D.) who is so called because he cultivated learning at a late age. Once he invoked Sarasvati in a Jinalaya (temple of Tirthankara) and observed fast for 21 days. Sarasvati pleased with his austerities appeared and favoured him with a boon of becoming the master of all vidyas (sarvavidyasiddha).24 After having the blessings of Sarasvati
Vridhavadi by his mantric power demonstrated the shower of flowers on a pestal (mushala) and hence become famous as Prajnamushala. The Prabhavaka-charita explains that he prayed Sarasvati to bless him with such powers. The Prabandha-kosha also calls him apratimalla-vadi upon whom on the that account, his preceptor Skandicharya bestowed the status of an Acharya.

The Prabandha-kosha also refers to an interesting story in its Harihara-Prabandha which bears testimony to Sarasvata power. The story pertains how a poet Someshvara from Gujarat was humiliated by a Gauda poet Harihara in the assembly of Vastupala. Once Someshvara composed a stotra of 108 verses and recited it before Vastupala and Harihara. Harihara, on hearing the stotra remarked that it is not an original composition and is just the copy of the work of Bhojadeva, he had seen in the cellar of Sarasvati-Kanthabharana-Prasada. To prove this he at once repeated the entire stotra verbatim. After Sometime, Harihara himself disclosed to the Vastupala that he had mastered the Sarasvata-mantra and was thus blessed with a tremendous memory by which he could remember 108 verses, Shatapadakavya and many more things. Just by listening to their recitation once he could reproduce them verbatim.

The Prabandha-kosha in its Vastupala-prabandha also cites an example wherein Narachandra suri makes a prediction as to the death of Vastupala in V.S. 1298 (CE 1241). Vastupala commented that his prediction regarding his death cannot go wrong in as much as he is Sarasvati siddhisampanna.

The dhyanamantras of Sarasvati both in the Svetambara and Digambara tradition, reveal the tantric mode of her worship, wherein she is invariably conceived with two, four and even more arms and with differing attributes. The vahana of Sarasvati in the Svetambara tradition is swan, while in Digambara tradition she rides a peacock. The first tantric expression of the worship of Sarasvati is found in the Sharadastotra of Bappabhatti suri who is also invoked as Shrutadevata with Rishabhanatha and Muniswara in his Charturvimshatika. The later tantric Jain works such as the Bharati-Kalpa by Mallisena and the enlarged version of the Sarasvati-Kalpa attributed, though wrongly, to Bappabhatti (c. 10th-11th century A.D., the Sidhhasarasvat-stava (misread as of Sadhvi Shivarya but in reality the composition of Hemachandra suri) and Sharadastavana by Jinaprabha suri (c. 14th century A.D.) enjoin her worship in all the tantric rites such as the Shantika, Paushtika, Stambhana, Marana, Ucatana etc. The various tantric modes included her sakalikaran, archna, yantravidhi, pithasthapan, saubhagyaraksha and vashya-mantras along-with different rites to be performed. Apart from the propitiatory rites, the gruesome rites were also accepted and the terrific form of Sarasvati was also visualized from about the 10th-11th century A.D. The Bharati-Kalpa of Mallisena, the Sarasvati-kalpa of Arhaddasa, Sarasvatayantra-puja of Shubhachandra (c.10th century A.D.) and Jinasamhita of Ekasamdhii enunciate the goddess in horrible form with three eyes and crescent in her jata and also making terrifying sounds (humkaranada). These features bear testimony to her closeness with Shiva. Bappabhatti, in his
Sarasvati-Kalpa invokes the goddess under the name Gauri. It may be noted in passing that the Sutamasnita of the Skanda-Purana (c. 13th century A.D.), likewise describes Sarasvati with three eyes and having jata-mukuta with crescent. A few later Jain works visualizing Sarasvati with goad and noose in her two hands further reveal her power aspect. However, she is also addressed by various such names as Kali, Kapalini, Kauli, Vijna, Trilochana, Raudri, Khadgini, Kamarupini, Nitya, Tripurasundari, Chandrashekhar, Shulini, Chamunda, Humkara, Bhairavi and so forth which attests to the amalgamation purely of tantric features in her worship.

According to Vidyanushasana (c. 15th century A.D.) Vagishari should be worshipped in a form with sharp bare fangs and protruding tongue, three eyes and terrific appearance. Her worship in this form with Khadga-manta results in removing all mishaps. The Acharadinakara of Vardnaman suri (c. CE 1412) includes Sarasvati in the list of 64 yogins as well.

The Sarasvati-Kalpa, the Bharati-Kalpa and the Sarasvata-Yantra-puja, however, speak of different yantras or magical diagrams for the sadhana of Sarasvati. The Saravata-yantras sometime give interesting information on the parivara of Sarasvati as well. The yantra-puja envisaged in the Sarasvati-kalpa of Bappabhatti suri mentions Moha, Nanda, Bhadra, Jaya, Vijaya, Aparajita, Jambha, Stambha, the Sixteen Vidyadevis (Rohini, Prajnapti etc), the eight Dikpalas, Ashtamatrikas and the Ashta-Bhairvas to be worshipped in the mandala or yantra of Sarasvati. Bappabhatti and Mallisena in their respective Sarasvati-yantra-puja-vidhi refer to the formation of several diagrams to be made on the lotuses with eight, twelve, sixteen, sixty-four, 108 and 1000 petals, various tantric rites and rituals to be performed in the homakunda (sacrificial altar) and the recitation of mantras for 10000, 12000, 100000 and for even more times. All these tantric rites have been described as Siddhasarasvata-bija in the Sarasvati-kalpa.

The iconographic study of Sarasvati images reveals that the spirit of tantra was never so overt in Jain sculpture as has been the case with Buddhists and Brahminic icons known form places like Ellora (Maharashtra), Nalanda (Bihar), Kurkihar (Bihar), Gurgi (Rewa, MP), Hinglaigarh (Mandsore, MP), Lokhari (Banda, U.P.), Malhar (Bilaspur, MP), Bhubaneshwar (Orissa), Bheraghat (Tripuri, MP) etc. Sarasvati, even when she came under the fold of tantric worship in Jainism during the medieval time, had her image hardly bearing any tantric shade. In Jain sculptures she usually is represented with benign appearance with only a few exceptions showing her as ‘Power’ especially of music and fine arts.

Jain Sarasvati has also some bearing of Vaidik-Pauranic Sarasvati who is conceived as consort both of Brahma and Vishnu. This closeness can be established on account of their common attributes, like pustaka, vina, akshamala, kamandalu, shruk, ankusha and pasha. The Acharadinakara, however
envisaged the same sets of symbols for Shrutadevata and Brahmani. The four armed Brahmani here is visualized like Sarasvati as riding on hamsa (swan) and holding vina, pustaka, padma and akshamala. The rendering of sruk with Sarasvati although never prescribed by any Jain text is noticed in good number of Jain Sarasvati figures which happens to be an invariant features of Brahma.

The early Jain works conceive Sarasvati only with two hands and as holding either a book and a lotus or a water-vessel and a rosary, and riding a swan. The Sarasvati-yantra-puja of Shubhachandra, however describes the two armed mayuravahini with three eyes and holding a rosary and a book. The four armed Sarasvati appears to have enjoyed the highest veneration among both the Svetambara and the Digambara sects. The four-armed goddess in both the sects bears almost identical attributes, except for the vahana. The Svetambara works invariably conceived her with the varada-mudra, a lotus, a manuscripts and a rosary. The Sarasavati-kalpa, however, gives two sets of symbols for four-armed Sarasvati; the first showing her with the abhaya-mudra, the varada-mudra, pustaka and a lotus, while in other the abhaya and the varada-mudra have been replaced by a vina and a rosary. The Bharati-kalpa renders the dhyana of the goddess showing abhaya-mudra, jnana-mudra, rosary and manuscript. It was only sometimes after the 9th century A.D. that Shrutadevta became the goddess of music as well and was consequently provided with a vina replacing the varada-mudra. The Jinendrakalyanabhyudaya refers to Sarasvati as holding a pasha in place of vina. According to Nirvanakalika of Padalpita suri (III) (c. 900 A.D.), Sarasvati bears a book, a rosary, a lotus, the varada-mudra and various other symbols in her numerous hands.

The earliest representation of Sarasvati (Fig. 01) is known from Mathura (132 A.D.). The image now preserved in State Museum, Lucknow (Acc. No. J. 24), is inscribed and mentions the date and name of Sarasvati on the pedestal. The two-armed goddess squats on a rectangular pedestal, holds a manuscript in her left hand, while her mutilated hand was showing the abhayaksha. The hamsa-vahana is not carved in the present instance. Deogarh (Lalitpur, U.P.) a prolific Digambara Jain site has yielded a number of independent figures of Sarasvati, datable between c. 9th to 12th century A.D. Sarasvati in Deograh, riding either a swan or a peacock, is represented either with two or four arms. The rendering of Sarasvati twice in the group of 24 yakshis in particularly interesting. These figures carved on the façade of the temple no. 12 (862 A.D.) at Deogarh, represent her as the yakshi respectively of Jina Abhinandana and Jina Suparshvanatha with the labeling “Bhagavati Sarasvati” and ‘Mayuravahini (ni)”.

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A figure of *Sarasvati* from Deogarh, carved on the exterior wall of temple No. 1 (now in the modern temples of Jain Dharmashala, late 11th century A.D.), shows the goddess in the *tritirthi* image (Fig. 02), wherein *Sarasvati* is depicted with two Jins standing on same pedestal. *Sarasvati*, occupying the left extremely of the *tritirthi*, is shown equal in size to the Jina figures, which may however be interpreted that as *Shrutadevata*, personifying *Jina-vani*, she is given a status as honourable as that of the Jinas. The four-armed goddess, standing in *tribhanga*-posture with peacock mount, shows the *varada-mudra*, a rosary, a lotus and a manuscript. She also finds representation on different door-lintels (temple no. 12) with *Cakreshvari, Rohini, Ambika and Lakshmi*. 
Fig 02: A figure of Sarasvati shown in the Tritirthi image, found in Deogarh

The two-armed Sarasvati in Deogarh usually bears the abhaya-mudra and a manuscript (temple no. 16). The four-armed figures, either wearing a dharmila or a jata-juta, shows the varada-mudra, the vyakhyana-cum-rosary, a long-stalked louts and a manuscript. In one instance (temple no. 19, Fig. 03), Sarasvati is accompanied by fly-whisk bearers, tiny Jina figures and also the Jain Acharyas, holding a manuscripts, the vyakhyana-mudra and a mayurapichika, which is the manifestation of her being the goddess of Jina-vani or agamic literature. A few instances carved mainly on the door-lintels, shows her with a vina and a water-vessel, sometimes the latter being replaced by a conch.
Khajuraho, a Digambara Jain site (Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh), has yielded eight figures of Sarasvati wherein she, except for one instance\textsuperscript{58} is always four-armed.\textsuperscript{59} The figures, datable between c. 950-1100 A.D., depict her in lalita-mudra and as holding a manuscript, a vina (either in one or two hands), a lotus (usually in two hands) and also the varada-mudra (or a water-vessel or a rosary). However, the vahana swan is carved only in one instance on the northern adhisthana of the Parshvanatha temple (c. 950-70 A.D., Fig. 04). The six-armed Sarasvati on the southern adhisthana of the same temple, shows a lotus and manuscript in upper pair of hands, while the middle pair of hands are engaged in playing on vina. The remaining two hands, however, show the varada-mudra and a water-vessel. The presence of female chanvara-bearers, adorers, hovering maladharas and above all, small Jina figure overhead, signify that she was accorded a favoured position at the site.
Belonging as they do to Digambara tradition, a few sculptures from different places in Karnataka have some indications as to the power aspect of Sarasvati. Three such examples, datable to 11th-12th century A.D., are known from the Panchakuta-basti, Humcha (Shimoga district, Fig. 05), Shantinatha-basti, Jinanathapura and Adinatha temple, Halebid (Hassan) all in Karnataka. Sarasvati, seated in dhyana-mudra without vahana, in all cases shows abhayaksha, goad, noose and manuscript. The face although much mutilated, has at least some suggestions of power through large open eyes, open lips and even somewhat swollen nose.
The Svetambaras Jain temples in western India have yielded a large number of figures of Sarasvati coming as they do mainly from Osian, Kumbhariya, Mt. Abu and Taranga. The figures on the Mahavira temple at Osian (Jodhpur, Rajshthan) (close of eighth century A.D.) show the goddess both with two and four arms and riding either a peacock or a swan. The two-armed goddess holds a lotus and manuscript, while the four-armed goddess (mukhamandapa on west) shows a shruk, a lotus, a lotus and a manuscript. The figure of five Jain devakulikas at Osian (c. 10th-11th century A.D.) invariably show the four-armed goddess riding a swan and as holding a manuscript and lotus in two hands, and the remaining two showing the abhaya-mudra and a water-vessel or the varadaksha and a book.
The figures from the Vimala-Vasahi (latter half of 12th century A.D.) and the Luna-Vasahi (13th century A.D.), Mt. Abu, Rajasthan and the Ajitanatha temple at Taranga (Mehesana, Gujarat, 12th century A.D.) are particularly interesting since they exhibit the goddess with two, four, six, eight and even 16 arms, thus distinctly suggesting her power aspect by way of increase in number of hands. Besides the usual four-armed figures of Sarasvati with swan as mount and the varada (or the abhaya-mudra), a lotus, a manuscript (sometimes shruk or vina replacing lotus or manuscript) and a fruit (or a water-vessel) in hands, Vimala-Vasahi has two other such figures which deserve our attention. In one case, carved in the southern bay ceiling, Sarasvati (Fig. 06) seated in lalitasana on a bhadrapitha and holding varadaksha, a spiral lotus, a manuscript and a water-vessel, is accompanied by two male figures, standing close to her with folded hands. These figures bear inscriptions, according to which the bearded figure to her right is sutradhara Loyana while the figure to left with a measuring-rod is sutradhara Kela. The first seems to be the chief architect of the rangamandapa, while the other was possibly the chief sculptor.61 The present figure apparently suggests that Sarasvati here has been visualized as the goddess of fine-arts, which also may be taken to be a step ahead towards the manifestation of her power aspect. The figures of 16 armed goddess (Fig. 07) carved in a bhramika-ceiling, depicts here as sitting on bhadrasana in lalita-pose with swan and holding the varada-mudra, a conch (suggesting her Vaishnavite character), small stick (possibly measuring rod in two hands), a chain (in uppermost pair of hands) a vina (in two hands), a noose, the kartari-mudra, an indistinct object, a goad, the abhayaksha, a fruit, a manuscript and a water-vessel. The goddess is joined by six-armed dancing male figure on each side, thus suggesting her command over musical power.
Fig 06: Sarasvati seated in lalitasana on a bhadrapitha and holding varadaksha
The figures in Luna-Vasahi show the goddess with four and six hands and riding a swan. An interesting point in this regard is the collective rendering of eight Sarasvati on each of the four pillars of the navachauki close to rangamandopa. The four-armed Sarasvati in these instances shows the varadamudra (or varadaksha), a long-stalked lotus (or manuscript), manuscript (or vina) and water-vessel. There are two examples wherein Sarasvati possesses six hands. These figures are carved in the bhramika-ceiling of devakulika no. 11 and in the ceiling close to the rangamandapa on north. Accompanied by a swan, she in latter case bears the abhayaksha, a double petalled lotus (in two hands), a water-vessel and the jnana-mudra (with the middle pair of hands). The other instance again revealing her musical-power shows her as holding cymbals in middle pair of hand with a vina in the upper left. The remaining three hands, as usual, show the varadaksha, a spiral lotus and a manuscript.

The most exquisite of all the known figure of Sarasvati are the two images from Pallu (Bikaner, Rajasthan). Of the two identical figures, one is in the National Museum, New Delhi (Acc. No. 1/6/278,
Fig. 08), while the other is in the Ganga Golden Jubilee Museum, Bikaner (Acc. No. 203). These figures belonging to c. mid 11th CE, show the four-armed goddess as standing in tribhanga-posture on a lotus pedestal with a small figure of swan. The goddess, benign in appearance, is bedecked with beautifully carved ornaments and karanda-mukuta. The whole composition is endowed with divine grace and aesthetic qualities. She shows the varadhatksha, a full blown lotus, a manuscript and a water-vessel. The goddess is accompanied by two female figures playing on vina, topped by another two figures playing on flute, thus revealing her musical-power. What is particularly interesting about the image in the Ganga Golden Jubilee Museum (Fig. 09), Bikaner is the beautiful prabhatorana, containing the two-armed figures of 16 Maha-vidyas. Some of them may be identified with Apratichakra, Vajrankusa, Kali, Rohini and Prajnapti. The figures on the prabha-torana, possibly suggest that Sarasvati here has been conceived as the Superintending goddess of all the Great-Powers (Mahavidyas).
Fig 08: Sarasvati
Fig 09: Sarasvati
Another beautiful image of Sarasvati in marble (Fig. 10) is preserved in Modern Jain Temple at Ladnun (Nagaur, Rajasthan). The image inscribed in V.S. 1219 (1162 A.D.) gives the name of Sarasvati and refers to its carving at the instance of Shresthi’s (trader) wife Asha Deva. Sarasvati with a tiny seated Jina figure atop stands in tribhanga and wears tastefully chiselled karanda-mukuta, long vanamala hanging down to the knees and other ornaments, which make her sarvabharanabhushita. Sarasvati like Pallu images bears (clockwise) varadaksha, spiral lotus, manuscript and water-vessel in her four hands. The swan mount also is likewise shown in miniature form in the midst of beautifully delineated rolled lotuses on the pedestal exhibiting at its extremities male-female devotee (probably donors) with folded hands. Sarasvati also being the presiding goddess of music is joined by the figures of two female musicians playing on flute and vina along-with two flywhisk bearing female attendants. The beautiful oval face with benign smile and supple body emanates divine beauty and grace.
Fig 10: Sarasvati
The present study thus reveals that the worship and rendering of Sarasvati in Jain tradition and art, popular from the Kushana period through the centuries, evolved from being the goddess of wisdom to the presiding goddess of music and fine arts. She has been invoked mainly as benevolent goddess granting Sarasvata-power (power of knowledge) to the worshippers but in tantric invocation she has also been conceived in gruesome form with attributes like goad, noose and having such appellation as Kali, Kapalini, Kauli, Trilochana, Khadgini and Shulini.

Owing to the fact that Sarasvati in Jain context was visualized as personification of the preaching’s of the Jinas (Jina-Vani), she was provided not only with manuscript (symbols of Jinas preaching’s) but was also given a status equal to the Jinas, as it evident from an image of Sarasvati from Deogarh depicting her with Jinas on the same pedestal and in same composition and size.

References:

1. She is variously called Shrutadevta, Sharada, Bharati, Vak, Vakdevata, Vagishvari, Vani, Vagvadini and Brahmi.
2. Vyakhya-prajnapti -11.11.430, Paumacharya-3.59  
4. Recent researches demonstrate that the Shaka era (CE 78) had started form the 1st Year of Kshatrapa Nahapana and has no relationship with the Kushana era. The Kushana era apparently began c. CE 105 as ascertained by Prof. A.K. Narain.
5. The Jnana-panchami falls on the fifty day of the bright fortnight of the month of Karttika while the shruta-panchami is the fifth day of the bright half of Jyeshta.
9. G. Buhler, Op-Cit., p. 10
11. Prabhavaka charita-11: Bappabhatti Suricharita-419-442
12. “Chaturdasha Yatatstra shrute sakshd bhavitavyamaya dhruvam”  
Bappbhattisuricharita-435-6; Prabhavaka-charita-11.
13. Prabhahakosa – 9; Bappbhattisuri-prabandha.
15. Ibid, pp. 15-16
16. Prabhahakosa- 10 Hemasuriprabandha.
18. Mohanlal Bhagwandas Jhaveri, Comparative and critical study of Mantraashastra, Ahmedabad, 1944, p. 300
20. The name of the contemporary king, however, is anachronistic.
23. Shlokenaikena shastrasya sarvamarthham grahisyasi/
Mallavadisurcharita- verse 33; Prabhavakar-charita: 10.
28. Actually the death occurred in CE 1239.
29. ………1298 Varshe svargaroaho bhavishyati/
tesham ca vacamsi na calanti Gihsiddisampannavat/
Prabhandh-kosha: 24 Vastupalprabhadh, p. 128.
30. Chaturvimshatika, 4.1, 76.19, 80.20.
31. Stambhana is defensive magical bower for making the evil spirit motionless.
32. Abhayajnanamudrakshamalapustakadhurini/
trinetra patu mam veni jatabalendumandita/
Bharati kalpa, verse 2
Chandraprabham nilagalaprayananam/
Trinetramyum svagunapratushtam/
Sarvasvatamana-puja (As quoted by U.P. Shah in ‘Iconography of Sarasvati’, p. 201, fn. 29, also his p. 211. fn. 71)
33. Sarasvati-kalpa, verse 6: As Appendix 12 of Bhairava-Padmavati-Kalpa.
35. The goad and noose, principal attributes respectively of Indra and Varuna (also of Yama), are suggestive of power since these are among the main attributes held by various Tantric deities in gruesome form. Sarasvati through these attributes perhaps control the evil spirits of ignorance.
38. Acharadinakara, Pt. II: Pratishthavidhi (Bhagvati mandala), Bombay, 1923, p. 207.
40. Brahmani, Maheshvari, Kaumari, Varahai, Vaishnavi, Chamunda, Chandika and Mahalakshmi- Sarasvati-kalpa, p. 73.
41. Sarasvati-kalpa: Appendix 12 of Bhairava-Padmavati-Kalpa, pp. 69-76.
42. The detailed Yantra-Puja is mentioned in the appendices 11 and 12 of Bhairva-Padmavati-Kalpa (of Mallisena), pp. 61-78.
43. Although a few dhyana-mantra of Sarasvati conceive her with three eyes and having crescent in jata but she has never been shown with such features in concrete manifestations.
45. Such figures are in the Parshvanatha temple (eastern façade) at Kumbhriya, (c. 12th century A.D.), Ajitanatha temple at Taranga (c. 12th century A.D.), Vimala-Vasahi at Mt. Abu (ceiling of cell no. 48, c. CE 1150 and Mahavira temple at Jalore, c. 12th century A.D.).
46. The Chaturvimashatika (76.19) and the Sharada-stotra (verse- 1-2, 8) of Bappabhatti suri respectively give two different sets of symbols for Sarasvati who is visualized either holding kamandalu and rosary or pustaka and padma.
49. Sarasvati-kalpa, verse 6 and 11.
50. Bharati-kalpa, verse 2
51. Shrisharadastavana (of Jinaprabha suri-c. CE 1263-1333), verse 7: As in Appendix 14 of Bhairava Padmavati-kalpa, p. 81, Also Acharadinakara, supra, fn. 70.
56. Of the three instance, two are in temple nos. 12 and 19 while the remaining one is near the entrance gate of the enclosure wall.
57. Door-lintels of temple Nos. 5, 12, 13 and the pillar figures of temple nos. 1, 4, 12, 24 & 25; For detail see- Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari and Shanti Swaroop Sinha, Jain Kala-Tirth: Deogarh, pp. 112-114; Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari and Shanti Swaroop Sinha, Jain Art and Aesthetics, p. 131-132
58. Figures on the southern adhishthana of the Parshvanatha temple at Khajuraho.
60. Another image with the same symbols is preserved in the temple at Tiruparuttikunaram (Tamilnadu).
63. B.N. Sharma, Jain Images, Delhi, 1979, pp. 15-19: Sharma has opined that the prabha-torana, however, does not originally belong to the Sarasvati image.
64. Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari and Shanti Swaroop Sinha, Jain Art and Aesthetics, p. 133.
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2. Tritirthi image showing two Jinas and Sarasvati together (as Shrutadevata), temple no. 2, Deogarh, 12th century A.D.
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4. Sarasvati, southern adhisthana, Parshvanatha temple, Khajuraho, 950-70 CE.
5. Sarasvati, Panchakuta Basti, Humcha (Shimoga, Karnataka), CE 1077
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8. Sarasvati, Pallu (Bikaner, Rajasthan), 11th century A.D., in National Museum, Delhi (Acc. No. 1/6/278)
9. Sarasvati (with 16 Mahavidya figures on torana pillar), Pallu, c. mid-11th century A.D., in Ganga Golden Jubilee Museum, Bikaner (Acc. No. 203)
10. Sarasvati, Ladnun (Nagaur, Rajasthan), 12th century A.D., in Modern Jain temple.