

## CONCEPT OF SARASWATI IN JAIN TRADITION AND ART

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*Sarasvati* (also known as *Bharati*, *Vak-devi*, *Vagishvoari* 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 (8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> 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).

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*<sup>1</sup> also called the *Shrutadevata*, the personified knowledge embodied in of sacred *Jain* scriptures preached by the *Jinas* and the *Kevalins* (*Vyakhya-Prajnapti*-11.11.430 and *Paumachariya*-3.59)<sup>2</sup>. 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.<sup>3</sup> *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-prajnapti* (c. 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.), the *Paksika-sutra* of *Shivasharma* (c. 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), the *Dvadasharanyachakravritti* of *Simha suri Kshamashramana* (c. CE 675), the *Panchashaka* of *Haribhadra suri* (c. CE 775), the *Samsaradavanala-stotra* (also of *Haribhadra suri*), the *Mahanishitha-sutra* (c. 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and the *Sharada-stotra* of *Bhappabhatti suri* (c. 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and also by the archaeological evidence of the famous image of *Sarasvati* from *Mathura* belonging to the Kushana period (CE 132)<sup>4</sup>. 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.<sup>5</sup> Besides this festival, special penance like the *Shrutadevata-tapas* and *Shruta-skandha* and *Shrutajnana-vratas* are also observed by the *Jains*.<sup>6</sup>

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 *Prabhachandracharya* (c. CE 1250), the *Prabandhachinatamani* of *Merutungacharya* (c. CE 1305-06), the *Prabandhakosha* of *Rajashekhara suri* (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*)<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> The *Jain* works also make frequent reference to the journey of *Hemachandra* and other *Jain Acharyas* to *Brahmidesha* i.e. Kashmir for winning the favour of goddess *Brahmi* in order to overcome all their rivals in disputations (*vada*).<sup>9</sup>

The *Prabandha-kavyas* invariably refer to a story wherein *Bappabhatti suri* is said to have invoked *Sarasvati* for winning over a Buddhist deflection *Vardhanakunjara* at the court of *Amaraja* in *Gopagiri*.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> This anecdote distinctly gives an idea as to the power achieved by the invocation of *Sarasvati*. 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.<sup>12</sup> The *Prabandhakosha* also refers to this story without any change, except that *Sarasvati* is not shown as coming undraped.<sup>13</sup>

*Hemachandra* (c. mid 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) was also blessed with *Sarasvata*-power along-with other magical powers.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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*.<sup>16</sup>

*Mallisena suri* (c. CE 1047), the author of *Bhairava-Padmavati-Kalpa* and *Bharati-Kalpa* (wrongly called *Sarasvati-mantra-kalpa*), was also blessed with *Sarasvata*-power.<sup>17</sup> 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 *Prakrita*, a grammarian, a dialectician and also well versed in all the sacred scriptures and was favoured by *Sarasvati* with a boon (*Sarasvatilabdhavoprasadah*).<sup>18</sup> Another reference pertains to *Balachandra suri*, author of the *Vasantavilasha* (c. early 13<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

The *Prabhavaka-charita* and the *Prabandhachintamani* refer to *Mallavadi suri* of the court of *Shiladitya*<sup>20</sup> who favoured with a logical treatise *nayachakra* by *Sarasvati*. She also descended into his throat in a *vada* with *Buddhists* to silence them.<sup>21</sup> *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.<sup>23</sup>

One other story pertains to *Vriddhavadi suri* (c. 4<sup>th</sup> 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*).<sup>24</sup> After having the blessings of *Sarasvati*

*Vriddavadi* 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.<sup>25</sup> The *Prabandha-kosha* also calls him *apratimalla-vadi* upon whom on the that account, his preceptor *Skandiacharya* bestowed the status of an *Acharya*.<sup>26</sup>

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.<sup>27</sup>

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).<sup>28</sup> *Vastupala* commented that his prediction regarding his death cannot go wrong in as much as he is *Sarasvati siddhisampanna*.<sup>29</sup>

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 *Bappabhakti suri* who is also invoked as *Shrutadevata* with *Rishabhanatha* and *Munisuvrata* in his *Charturvimshatika*.<sup>30</sup> The later *tantric Jain* works such as the *Bharati-Kalpa* by *Mallisena* and the enlarged version of the *Sarasvati-Kalpa* attributed, though wrongly, to *Bappabhakti* (c. 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the *Sidhasarasvat-stava* (misread as of *Sadhvi Shivarya* but in reality the composition of *Hemachandra suri*) and *Sharadastavana* by *Jinaprabha suri* (c. 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) enjoin her worship in all the *tantric* rites such as the *Shantika*, *Paushtika*, *Stambhana*,<sup>31</sup> *Marana*, *Ucatana* etc. The various *tantric* modes included her *sakalikarana*, *archna*, *yantravidhi*, *pithasthapana*, *saubhagaraksha* 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 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The *Bharati-Kalpa* of *Mallisena*, the *Sarasvati-kalpa* of *Arhaddasa*, *Sarasvatayantra-puja* of *Shubhachandra* (c.10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and *Jinasamhita* of *Ekasamdhi* enunciate the goddess in horrible form with three eyes and crescent in her *jata* and also making terrifying sounds (*humkaranada*).<sup>32</sup> These features bear testimony to her closeness with *Shiva*. *Bappabhakti*, in his

*Sarasvati-Kalpa* invokes the goddess under the name Gauri.<sup>33</sup> It may be noted in passing that the *Sutasamhita* of the *Skanda-Purana* (c. 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), likewise describes *Sarasvati* with three eyes and having *jata-mukuta* with crescent.<sup>34</sup> A few later *Jain* works visualizing *Sarasvati* with goad and noose in her two hands further reveal her power aspect.<sup>35</sup> However, she is also addressed by various such names as *Kali*, *Kapalini*, *Kauli*, *Vijna*, *Trilochana*, *Raudri*, *Khadgini*, *Kamarupini*, *Nitya*, *Tripurasundari*, *Chandrashekhari*, *Shulini*, *Chamunda*, *Humkara*, *Bhairavi* and so forth which attests to the amalgamation purely of *tantric* features in her worship.<sup>36</sup>

According to *Vidyanushasana* (c. 15<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> The *Acharadinakara* of *Vardnaman suri* (c. CE 1412) includes *Sarasvati* in the list of 64 *yogins* as well.<sup>38</sup>

The *Sarasvati-Kalpa*, the *Bharati-Kalpa* and the *Sarasvata-Yantra-puja*, however, speak of different *yantras* or magical diagrams for the *sadhana* of *Sarasvati*.<sup>39</sup> 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*<sup>40</sup> and the *Ashta-Bhairvas* to be worshipped in the *mandala* or *yantra* of *Sarasvati*.<sup>41</sup> *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 alter) and the recitation of *mantras* for 10000, 12000, 100000 and for even more times.<sup>42</sup> All these *tantric* rites have been described as *Siddhasarasvata-bija* in the *Sarasvati-kalpa*.

The iconographic of study of *Sarasvati* images reveals that the spirit of *tantra* was never so overt in *Jain* sculpture<sup>43</sup> as has been the case with Buddhists and Brahminic icons known from places like Ellora (Maharashtra), Nalanda (Bihar), Kurkihar (Bihar), Gurgi (Rewa, MP), Hinglajgarh (Mandsore, MP), Lokhari (Banda, U.P.), Malhar (Bilaspur, MP), Bhubaneswar (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 *Achardinakara*, 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*.<sup>44</sup> 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. <sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup> The *Sarasvati-yantra-puja* of Shubhachandra, however describes the two armed *mayuravahini* with three eyes and holding a rosary and a book.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> The *Sarasvati-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.<sup>49</sup> The *Bharati-kalpa* renders the *dhyana* of the goddess showing *abhaya-mudra*, *jnana-mudra*, rosary and manuscript.<sup>50</sup> It was only sometimes after the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. that *Shrutadevta* became the goddess of music as well and was consequently provided with a *vina* replacing the *varada-mudra*.<sup>51</sup> The *Jinendrakalyanabhyudaya* refers to *Sarasvati* as holding a *pasha* in place of *vina*.<sup>52</sup> According to *Nirvanakalika* of Padalipta 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.<sup>53</sup>

The earliest representation of *Sarasvati* (Fig. 01) is known from Mathura (132 A.D.)<sup>54</sup>. 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. 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> 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)*’.<sup>55</sup>



Fig 01: The earliest representation of *Sarasvati*

A figure of *Sarasvati* from Deogarh, carved on the exterior wall of temple No. 1 (now in the modern temples of *Jain Dharmashala*, late 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), shows the goddess in the *tritirthi* image (Fig. 02), wherein *Sarasvati* is depicted with two Jinas 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*.

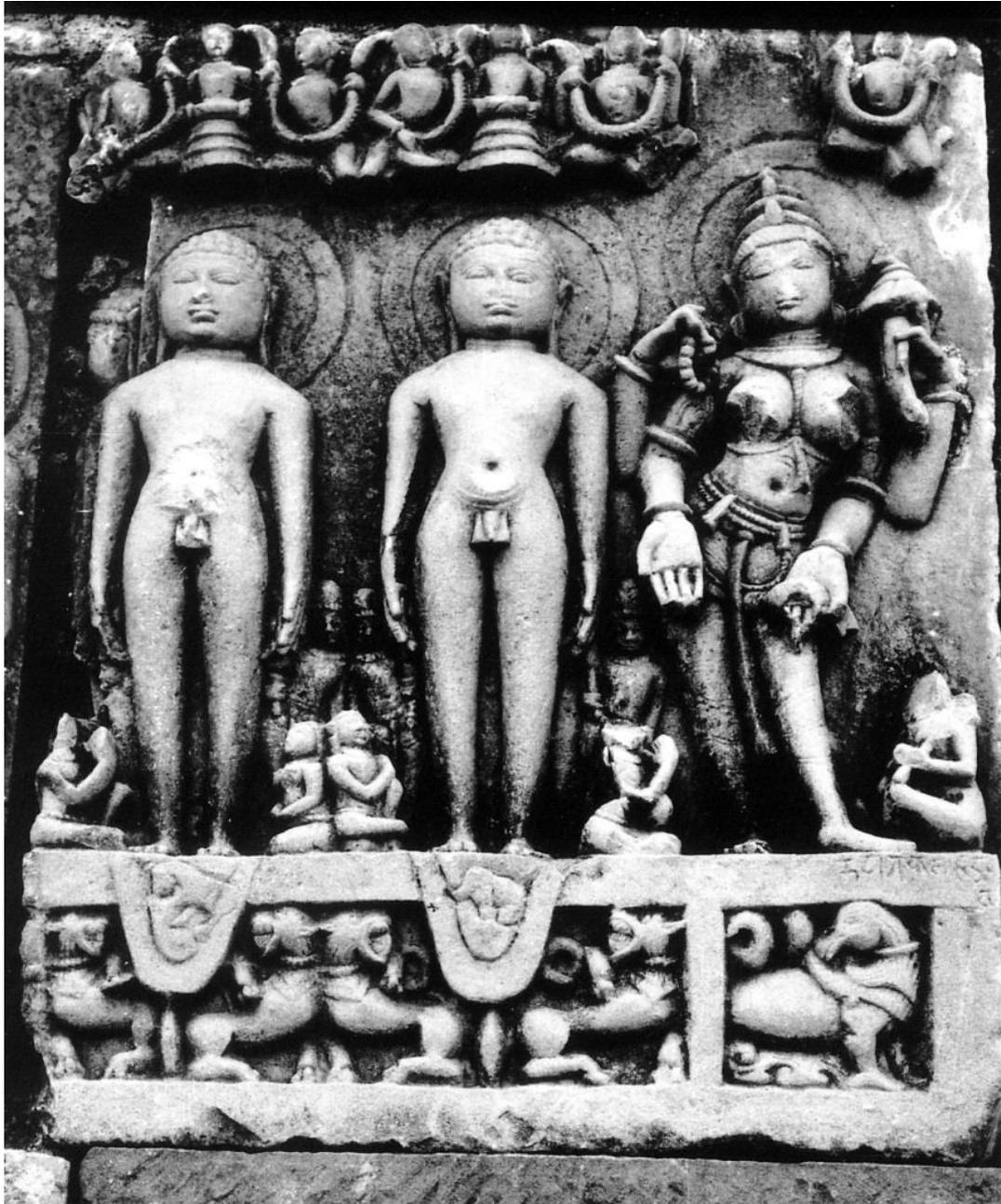


Fig 02: A figure of *Sarasvati* shown in the *Tritirithi* image, found in Deogarh

The two-armed *Sarasvati* in Deogarh usually bears the *abhaya-mudra* and a manuscript (temple no. 16). The four-armed figures, either wearing a *dhammila* or a *jata-juta*, shows the *varada-mudra*, the *vyakhyana-cum-rosary*, a long-stalked louts and a manuscript.<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup>



Fig 03: *Sarasvati in Vyakhyaana Mudra*

Khajuraho, a *Digambara Jain* site (Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh), has yielded eight figures of *Sarasvati* wherein she, except for one instance<sup>58</sup> is always four-armed.<sup>59</sup> 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 *adhithana* of the *Parshvanatha* temple (c. 950-70 A.D., Fig. 04). The six-armed *Sarasvati* on the southern *adhithana* 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.



Fig 04: Sarasvati on her vahana swan

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 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>60</sup> *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.



Fig 05: *Sarasvati* seated in *dhyana-mudra* without *vahana*

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, Rajasthan) (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. 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) and the *Luna-Vasahi* (13<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), Mt. Abu, Rajasthan and the *Ajitanatha* temple at Taranga (Mehesana, Gujarat, 12<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> 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*

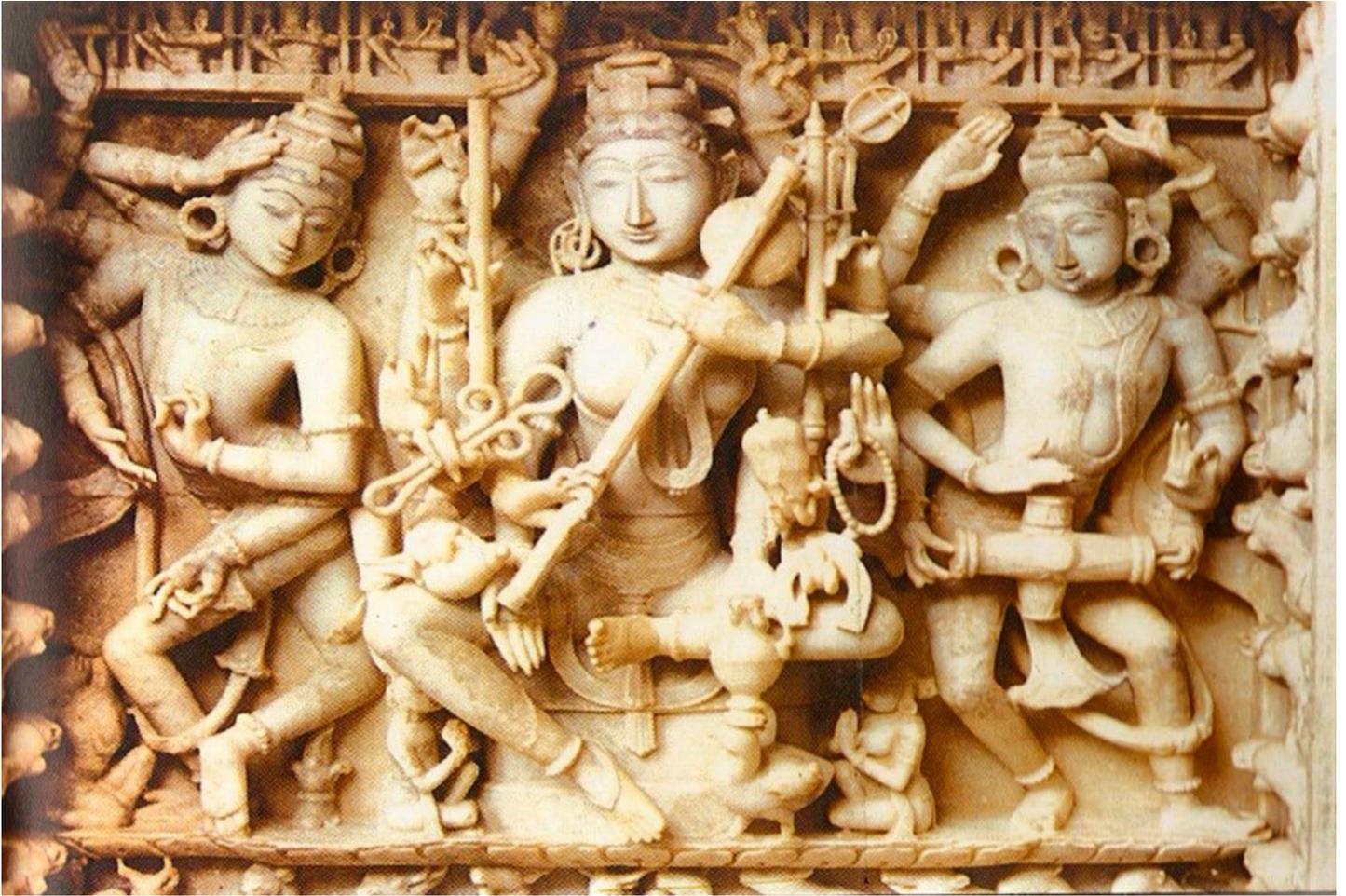


Fig 07: The 16 armed goddess sitting on *bhadrasana* in *lalita-pose* with swan

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.<sup>62</sup>

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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 *varadhaksha*, 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*,<sup>63</sup> 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*).<sup>64</sup>



Fig 08: Sarasvati

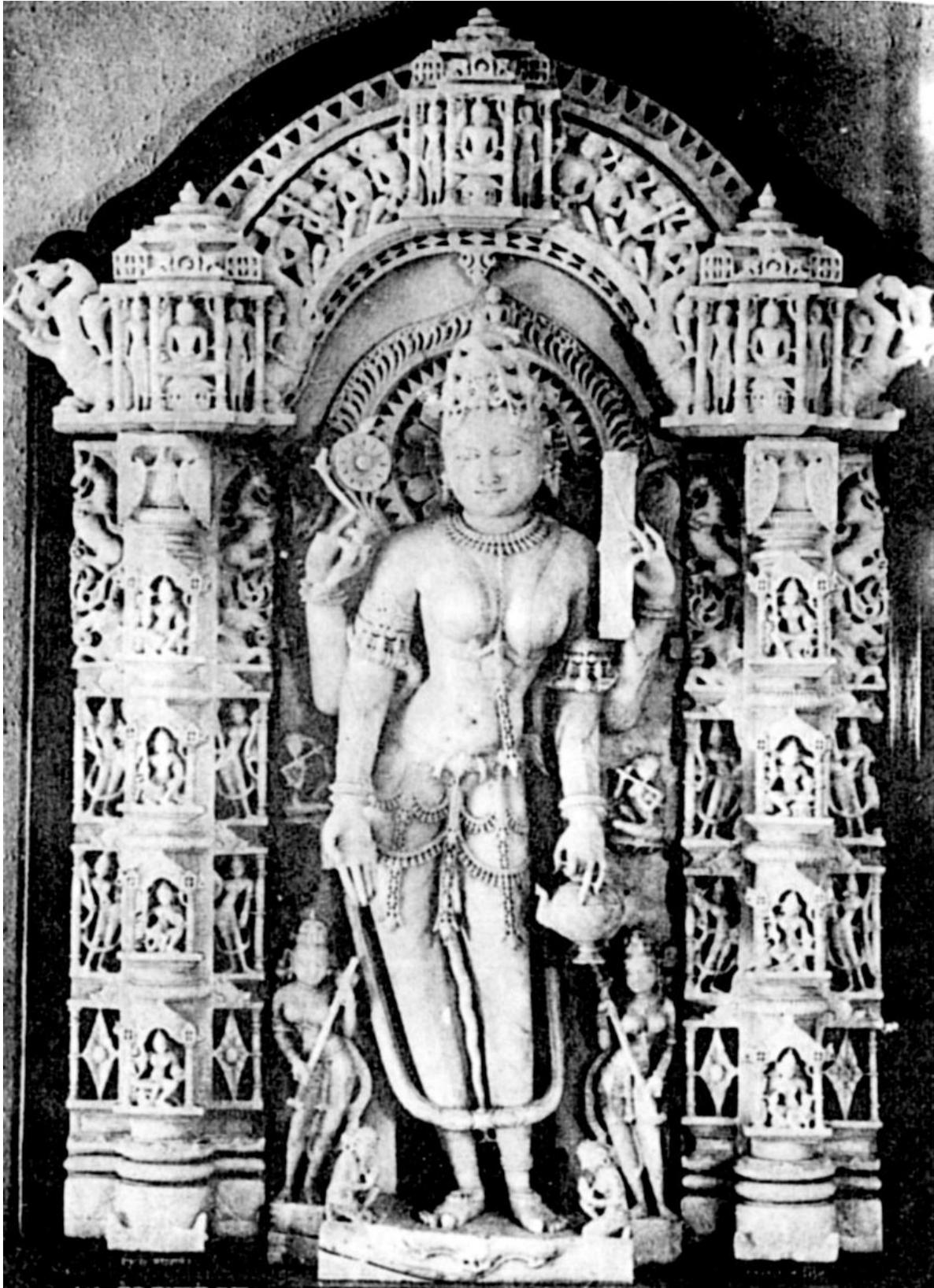


Fig 09: *Sarasvati*

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-prajnapiti -11.11.430, Paumachariya-3.59  
*Jinapatiprathitakhilavangmayi Ganadharananmandapanartaki/ Chaturvimshatika* (of *Bappabhakti* suri; appendix A-*Sharada-stotra*-3 (Ed. H.R Kapadia and Hiralal Jain, Bombay, 1926, p. 181).
3. ...*dvadsangashrutadevadhivade Sarasvatyai Svaha* –Nirvankalika, p.17, see U.P. Shah, 'Iconography of *Jain* Goddess *Sarasvati*', Jour University of Bombay, Vol. X (New series), P. II, Sept. 1941, p. 196.
4. Recent researches demonstrate that the *Shaka* era (CE 78) had started form the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 *Jyestha*.
6. U.P. Shah. Op.cit., p.196
7. Chaturvimshatika (of *Bappabhakti* suri) Appendix A-*Sharada Stotra*-11.; *Amarshatanatanghih Kamadhenuh Kavinaam*- As quoted in *Jain-Stotra-sandoha*, Vol- I, Ed. Amarijaya Muni, Ahmedabad, 1932, p. 346.
8. Alamkarachudamani I.4. (as quoted by G. Buhler in his 'The Life of Hemachandracharya' (Tr. By Manilal Patel), Singhi *Jain* Series-11, Shantiniketan, 1936, p. 10)
9. G. Buhler, Op-Cit., p. 10
10. Prabhavakacharita of Prabhachandracharya, (Ed. Jinavijaya Muni, Singhi *Jains* Granthmala-13, Ahamedabad-Calcutta, 1940), 11-*Bappabhakti* Suricharita; Prabandhakosha of Rajashekara suri (Ed. Jinavijaya Muni, 1<sup>st</sup> Part, Singhi *Jain* Series-6, Shantiniketan 1935) a- *Bappabhakti* suri Prabandha.
11. Prabhavaka charita-11: *Bappabhakti* Suricharita-419-442
12. *Chaturdasham punarvritam na prakashyam kadapi hil*  
*Yatastatra shrute sakshad bhavitavyam maya dhruvam//*  
*Bappabhaktisuricharita*-435-6; Prabhavaka-charita-11.
13. Prabandhakosha – 9; *Bappabhaktisuri*-prabandha.
14. G. Buhler., Op.cit., p. 54
15. Ibid, pp. 15-16
16. Prabandhakosha- 10 Hemasuriprabhadha.

17. Bhairava-Padmavati-*kalpa*, Appendix 11: *Sarasvatimantra-kalpa* (actually *Bharati-kalpa*), verse 3. (Ed. K. V. Abhyankara, Gujarati trans. Sarabhai Manilal Nawab, Ahmedabad, 1937, p. 61)
18. Mohanlal Bhagwandas Jhaveri, Comparative and critical study of Mantrashastra, Ahmedabad, 1944, p. 300
19. Gaekwad Oriental Series, Vol. VIII, p. 5, Also Bhattacharya, Kanailal, *Sarasvati* (A Study on her Concept and Iconography), Calcutta, 1983, p. 109.
20. The name of the contemporary king, however, is anachronistic.
21. Prabandhachintamani (Eng. Trans. C.H. Tawney, Delhi, 1982, pp. 171-172)-Panchama-prakasha: 11 Prakirnaka-Prabhandha: Mallavadiprabandha (Ed. Jinavijaya Muni, Pt. I, Singhi *Jain* Series-I, Shantiniketan, 1933, p.107).
22. Prabhavaka-charita: 10 Mallavadisuricharita 22-35; Prabandhachintamani-Tawneys, trans., pp. 171-172.
23. *Shlokenaikena shastrasya sarvamartham grahisyasi/*  
Mallavadisuricharita- verse 33; Prabhavakar-charita: 10.
24. Prabandhakosha: Vriddhavadi-Siddhasenaprabandha, p. 15.
25. Prabhavaka-charita: 8 Vriddhavadisuricharita, verse 30-31.
26. Prabandha-kosha: Vriddhavadi-Siddhasena-prabandha, p. 15.
27. Prabandhakosha: 12 Hariharaprabandha, pp. 59-60.
28. Actually the death occurred in CE 1239.
29. ....1298 *Varshe svargaroho bhavishyati/*  
*tesham ca vacamsi na calanti Gihisiddisampannavat/*  
Prabandh-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. *Abhayajnanamudrakshamalapustakadharini/*  
*trinetra patu mam veni jatabalendumandita//*  
Bharati *kalpa*, verse 2  
*Chandraprabham nilagalaprayanam/*  
*Trinetramyam svagunapratushtam//*  
Sarasvatamantra-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*.
34. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. I, Pt. II, Delhi, 1971 (Reprint), P. 378.
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.
36. Shri *Sarasvatistotra* (of unknown author), Publ. in *Jain-stotra-sandoha*, Vol. I, 107, pp. 345-46
37. As quoted by U.P. Shah in his article on 'Supernatural Beings in the *Jain* Tantras', Acharya Dhruva Commemoration Vol., Pt. III, Ahmedabad, 1946, p.75
38. Acharadinakara, Pt. II: Pratishthavidhi (Bhagavti mandala), Bombay, 1923, p. 207.
39. U.P. Shah, Iconography of *Sarasvati*, pp. 211-12.
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.
44. Acharadinakara -I, p.12, II, p. 158, Bombay, 1923.
45. Such figures are in the Parshvanatha temple (eastern façade) at Kumbhariya, (c. 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), Ajitanatha temple at Taranga (c. 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), Vimala-Vasahi at Mt. Abu (ceiling of cell no. 48, c. CE 1150 and Mahavira temple at Jalore, c. 12<sup>th</sup> 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*.
47. As quoted by U.P. Shah, 'Iconography of *Sarasvati*', p. 201, fn. 29.
48. Nirvanakalika of Padalipata suri (c. CE 900), p. 37. (Ed.) Mohanlal Bhagwandas, Muni Shri Mohanlal *Jain Granthamala*- 5, Bombay, 1926.
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.
52. Jinendrakalyanabhyudaya folio 98 (As quoted by U.P. Shah, 'Iconography of *Sarasvati*'), p. 207, fn 58.
53. As quoted by U.P. Shah, Op. cit. p. 211, fn 70.
54. K.D. Bajpai, 'Jain Image of *Sarasvati* in the Lucknow Museum' *Jain Antiquary*, Vol. XI, No. 2, Jan. 1946, pp. 1-4; M. N. P. Tiwari and S. S. Sinha, *Jain Art and Aesthetics*, New Delhi, 2011, p. 131.
55. Bruhn, Kalaus, *The Jina Images of Deogarh*, Leiden, 1965, pp. 102, 105: The four-armed *mayuravahana yakshi*, with Jina Suparshvanatha stands in *tribhanga* and shows the *vyakhyana-mudra*, a *chamara*, *padma* (typical of Deogarh), a manuscript and a conch; Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari, *Jain Pratimavijyana*, Varanasi, 1985; Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari and Shanti Swaroop Sinha, *Jain Kala-Tirth: Deogarh, Lalitpur*, 2012 (third edition), pp. 112-114; Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari and Shanti Swaroop Sinha, *Jain Art and Aesthetics*, p. 131-132
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 Parashvanatha temple at Khajuraho.
59. Figures on the façade of the Parshvanatha temple and the door-lintels of different temples; for detail see- Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari, *Khajuraho Ka Jain Puratattva*, Khajuraho, 1987, pp. 72-74.
60. Another image with the same symbols is preserved in the temple at Tiruparuttikunaram (Tamilnadu).
61. Jayantavijaya Muni, *Holy Abu* (Eng. Trans, U.P. Shah), Bhavanagar, 1954, p. 55, fn. 2; Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari and Shanti Swaroop Sinha, *Jain Art and Aesthetics*, p. 133.
62. Maruti Nandan Pd. Tiwari and Shanti Swaroop Sinha, *Jain Art and Aesthetics*, p. 133.
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.

**List of illustrations:-**

1. *Sarasvati* (inscribed), Kankali-Tila, Mathura, A.D. 132, in State Museum, Lucknow (Acc. No. J.24)
2. *Tritirthi* image showing two Jinas and *Sarasvati* together (as *Shrutadevata*), temple no. 2, Deogarh, 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D.
3. *Sarasvati* (worshipped by figures of *Upadhyayas*), temple no. 19, Deogarh, 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D.
4. *Sarasvati*, southern *adhithana*, Parshvanatha temple, Khajuraho, 950-70 CE.
5. *Sarasvati*, Panchakuta Basti, Humcha (Shimoga, Karnataka), CE 1077
6. *Sarasvati* (flanked by inscribed figures of Kela and Loyana, the main architect and sculptor of temple), *Brhamika* ceiling, Vimala-Vasahi, c.1150 CE.
7. *Sarasvati* (flanked by 6-armed dancing divine figures), *Bhramika* ceiling, Vimala-Vasahi, c. 1150 CE.
8. *Sarasvati*, Pallu (Bikaner, Rajasthan), 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., in National Museum, Delhi (Acc. No. 1/6/278)
9. *Sarasvati* (with 16 *Mahavidya* figures on *torana* pillar), Pallu, c. mid-11<sup>th</sup> century A.D., in Ganga Golden Jubilee Museum, Bikaner (Acc. No. 203)
10. *Sarasvati*, Ladnun (Nagaur, Rajasthan), 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., in Modern *Jain* temple.