

Depiction of Vedic Vāk (Speech Personified) in the Images of Yajña Varāha in Madhya Pradesh

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The study of the iconography of gods and goddesses of any religion helps us to understand their specific postures, marks, symbols, *mudrās*, and attributes as prescribed in the Āgamas and Śilpaśāstras. But as some of the icons are more complex in their nature by the way of their body contour, attributes, postures and *vāhanas*, etc., such images need to be studied from the various aspects in detail.

In Vaiṣṇavism, among the ten *avatāras* of Viṣṇu, the incarnation of Varāha is considered to be very significant because only in this *avatāra* Lord Hari Viṣṇu incarnated himself in the form of a Boar which was identified by the *ṛṣis* as Brahmā Varāha and Viṣṇu Varāha. Lord Hari took these forms for two reasons. They are (1) to create the universe and (2) to redeem the goddess Earth from the clutches of the demon Hiraṇyākṣa. While for the first purpose Lord Hari in the name of Brahmā Varāha associated himself with the cosmogonical aspect, in the name of Viṣṇu Varāha (Bhū Varāha) he maintained the *avatāra* aspect.¹

The myth of Varāha is described in the Purāṇas.² Interestingly while narrating the *kathā* of Varāha as the creator of the universe and the *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the Purāṇas relate Varāha to the sacrifice and call it “Yajña Varāha and Ādi Varāha”. In this form they co-relate each and every limb of its body to each and every component of the sacrifice. In this connection one should be very clear that Varāha as the symbol of sacrifice and Varāha as the creator or saviour of the earth are not different from each other. They are one and the same. However, the Purāṇas while describing Varāha, identify it with Brahmā who was then identified with Nārāyaṇa.

Secondly from these Purāṇas we come to know that this is the only *avatāra* of Viṣṇu in which the denizens of *Janaloka*, *Maharloka*, and *Tapaloka* could witness the feat of Varāha in Pātāla and addressed him Vāk. This means by addressing him as Vāk (speech personified) the denizens could visualize him as the embodiment of Female Energy Vāk.³

In Madhya Pradesh the images of Yajña Varāha is exclusively represented in zoomorphic form and its every limb is depicted with the figures of the components of Yajña. Through the medium of sculptural representation the artists have brought out the symbolic essence of both the concepts (about which mention is already made) of Varāha *kathā* that is narrated by the Purāṇas. For example, in the image of Yajña Varāha at Eran datable to the 5th cent. C.E. the whole body of it is depicted with the figures of sages residing in the *Janaloka*, *Maharloka* and *Tapaloka* who are shown in the posture of overwhelming admiration for Varāha and exclaiming him as Vāk. Similarly on the body of the image of Yajña Varāha of Badoh belonging to the 8th cent. C.E. and in the present time being preserved in the Gujari Mahal Museum at Gwalior, the whole creation of *Bhū*, *Bhuvah*, *Svah* and *Pātāla* is very realistically symbolised with the crisp figures of the respective *lokas*. They are depicted on the vertebral column of Varāha. Khajuraho Varāha is a superb creation of the 10th cent. C.E. In this the sculptors in addition to the figures of creation included in their depiction the figures of four Sanat Kumāras and Aṣṭadikpālas with their respective *vāhanas* and attributes. More than that by depicting the figures of *Vyūha* divinities they have very emphatically brought out the Śrī Vaiṣṇava theology of *Vyūha* theory and synchronized it with the Purāṇic gods of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. The whole depiction is shown on the vertebral column of Varāha. In this panel the Khajuraho artists have portrayed the quint essence of the pure creation of the Supreme Being.⁴ Interestingly in the images of Yajña Varāha two important factors are being taken care of by the sculptors. Firstly in the representation of Yajña Varāha the image of Bhūdevī is shown holding the tusk of it and hanging (Fig. 5.1). Secondly and most importantly the personified figure of Female Energy of Varāha is depicted on the snout of Varāha who is 'speech personified' as *Vāk* of Vedic religion.

On the other hand in the Varāha Viṣṇu form the same Yajña Varāha is being represented with boar face and the body of a human being and called as Nṛvarāha. Bhūdevī is shown being held by Nṛvarāha either on his shoulder or on his elbow and thus he is called Bhū Varāha. Most importantly in all the Bhū Varāha images, the figure of *Vāk* is conspicuously not represented (Fig. 5.2).

The earliest figure of *Vāk* depicted on the snout of Varāha has come to light from Eran in Madhya Pradesh. The two armed *Vāk* is shown standing in *samabhaṅga* pose and kept her hands to her sides. It is belonging to the Gupta period, datable to the 5th cent. C.E. It is to be noted that this is the only image of Yajña Varāha in which the figure of *Vāk* is shown in standing position with two hands. From the eighth century onwards the figure of *Vāk* is replaced by the figure of Sarasvatī who is shown seated and holding *viṇā* in her

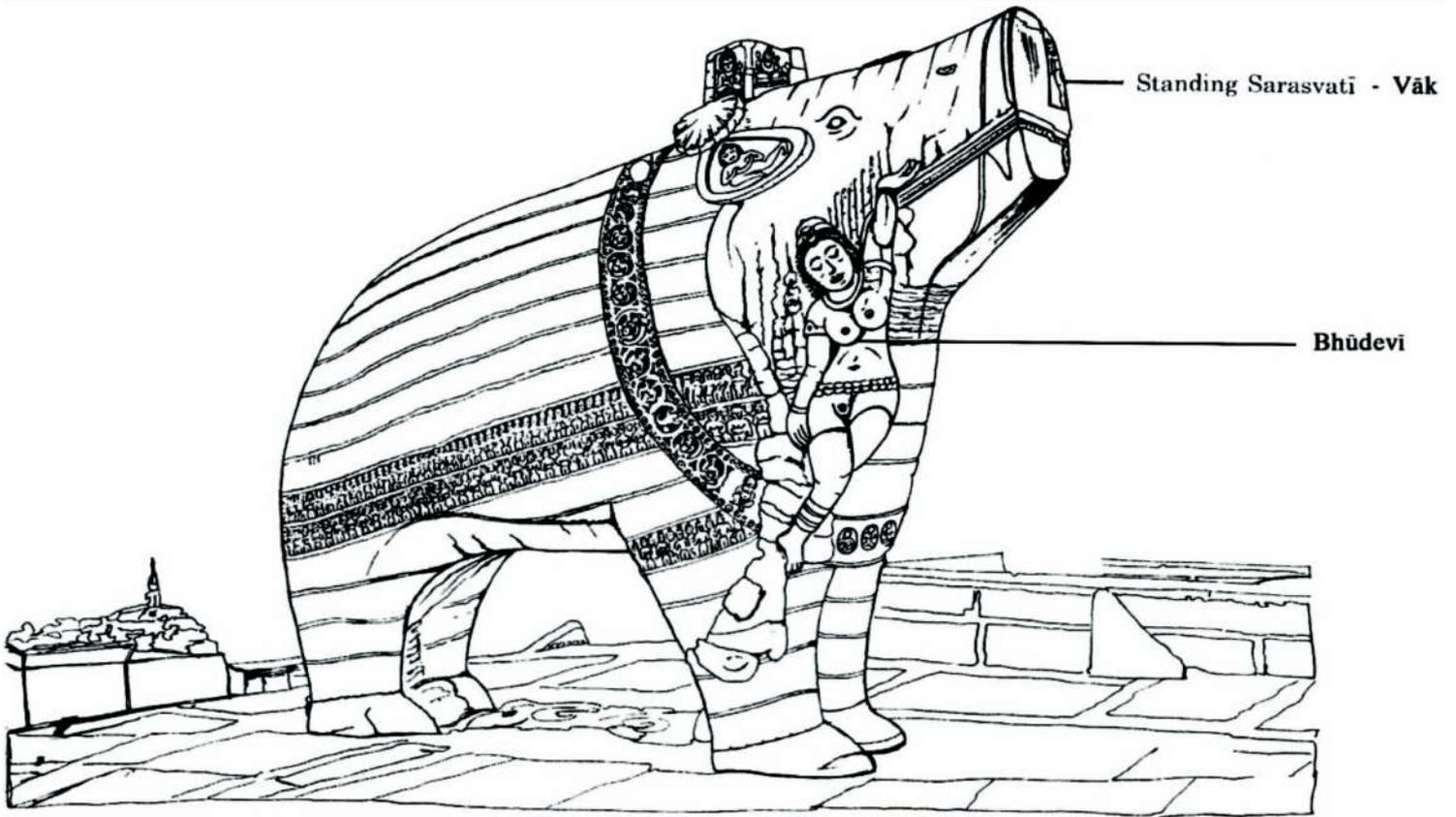


Fig. 5.1: Yajña Varāha, showing Bhūdevī, Eran



Fig. 5.2: Four-armed Bhū-Varāha with Nāga couple and Garuḍa at the bottom. Bhūdevī is touching the long tongue of the deity, Sohagpur (AIIS No. 101.84)



Fig. 5.3: Two-armed Vāk-Sarasvatī standing on the snout of Yajña Varāha, only figure of Vāk in Madhya Pradesh, Eran

hands. It is very important to note that in Madhya Pradesh the earliest image of Yajña Varāha in zoomorphic form with the figure of Vāk (Sarasvatī) on the snout is first being introduced to the art world by the sculptors in the Gupta period. This indicates that the Gupta sculptors must have abundant knowledge about Vedic literature as well as the myth of Varāha explained in the Purāṇas.

After narrating so much about the Varāha *avatāra* and its association with Vāk Sarasvatī we should proceed to know about four important questions with regard to Vāk Sarasvatī. They are (1) who is Vāk?, (2) who is Sarasvatī and when was she identified with Vāk?, (3) What is the relationship of Vāk Sarasvatī with Varāha?, and (4) Why is the figure of Vāk Sarasvatī not depicted in the images of Bhū Varāha?

When the Āryans came to India they brought along with them a definite form of culture of their own which was quite distinct from the culture of the Pre Āryans of Indus Valley. The Āryans were primarily exhibited themselves as speculative thinkers and ardent worshippers of Nature. They personified each and every aspect of natural phenomena depending on their qualities in the form of gods and goddesses and invoked them in hymns. That is why the entire Vedic literature is presented with full of religious fervour. However, in the later Vedic period the Āryan beliefs and principles got mingled with the Pre Āryan elements of worship which paved the way for an evolutionary process of amalgamation in the religious faith.

It is very interesting to note that the Ṛgvedic seers have brought to our notice the names of as many as forty goddesses in different capacities. They are indeed the personifications of different aspects of Nature. Among them the most important goddess of our purpose was called Vāk Speech Personified. Ṛgvedic seers looked upon her as the word, the first creation and representative of spirit and the means of communication between men and gods. In the Vedic literature she was regarded as the single head of *Jñā* type of female divinities. *Jñā* means “Female Productive Consorts of Gods.”⁵ In the Ṛgveda, VII, 36, 7, she is called as *Akṣara*, the imperishable goddess of speech. In the same text in X, 125, 1-8 Vāk describes about herself. In the first *sūkta*, Vāk is said to be traveling with the Rudra, Vasus, Ādityas, Varuṇa, Mitra, Indra, Agni and pair of Aśvins. Second *sūkta* says that she cherishes Soma and Tvaṣṭar and supports Pūṣan and Bhaga (Sūrya). In the third *sūkta* she calls herself as queen of heaven, the gatherer of treasures, most thoughtful to those who merit worship. Thus gods have established her in many places with many homes to enter and abide (Mahālakṣmī). In the fourth *sūkta* she says that only through her alone all eat the food in the world that feeds them (Annapūrṇā, or Dhānya-lakṣmī).



Fig. 5.4: Yajña Varāha with Sarasvatī on the snout, Khajuraho

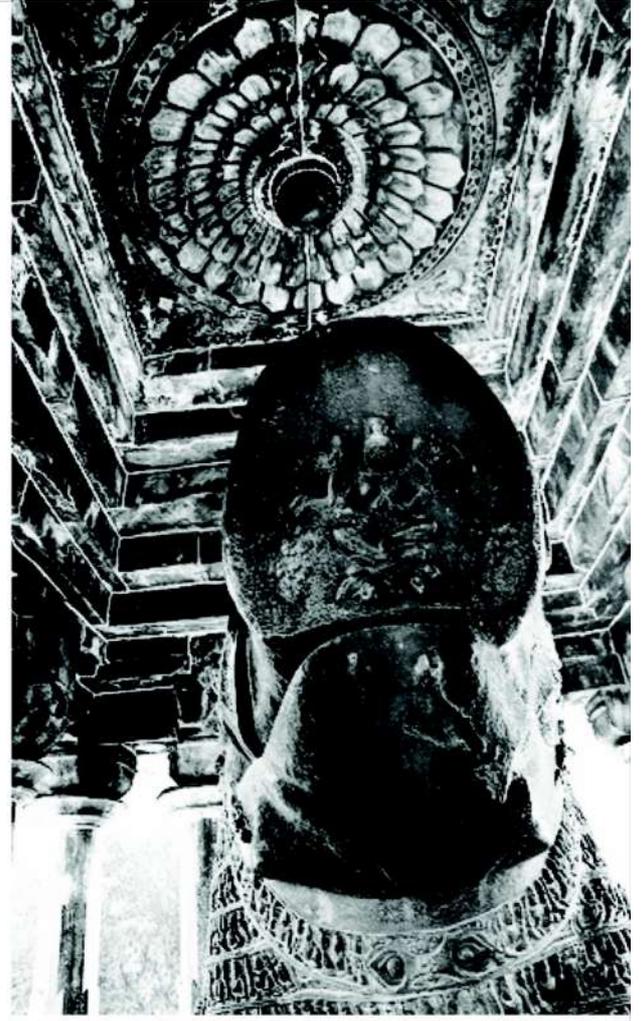


Fig. 5.5: Sarasvatī seated on the lotus pīṭha on the snout of Yajña Varāha, Khajuraho

Further they dwell besides her and only through her they see, breath and hear the word outspoken. They hear the truth which she declares but they do not know that it is from her. In the fifth *sūkta* she emphatically declares that she is the 'Mantra Mother' and utter the word that gods and men alike welcome it. It indicates speech personified 'Vāk' is Sarasvatī. She as the 'Female Energy' of Brahma creates the man a mighty, a sage or a ṛṣi. Sixth *sūkta* declares Vāk as a martial goddess of Rudra or Kāla. It says that Vāk bends the bow for Rudra to slay the hater of devotion (death goddess). In the seventh *sūkta* Vāk is said to have brought forth the Father on the world's summit. She says her home is in the waters, in the ocean. This *sūkta* clearly indicates that Vāk is none other than the goddess Lakṣmī whose abode is ocean or *Kṣīrasāgara* where Lord Nārāyaṇa takes sleep on the Śeṣa bed. In this *sūkta*, the term 'Father' denotes heaven or sky produced from Vāk and is identified as *Paramātmā*. It also says that Vāk is the mother of whole creation. The last *sūkta* tells that Vāk is the annihilator. She breaths strong breath like the wind and tempest and holds together all existence. She is beyond the earth and beyond the heavens. She is the Supreme Female Energy.⁶

1. अहं रुद्रेभिर्वसुभिश्चराम्यहमादित्यैरूत विश्वदेवैः।
अहं मित्रावरुणोभा बिभर्म्यहमिन्द्राग्नी अहमश्विनोभा॥
2. अहं सोममाहनसं बिभर्म्यहं त्वष्टारमुत पूषणं भगम्।
अहं दधामि द्रविणं हविष्मते सुप्राव्येउ यजमानाय सुन्वते॥
3. अहं राष्ट्री संगमनी वसूनां चिकितुषी प्रथमा यज्ञियानाम्।
तां मा देवा व्यदधुः पुरूत्रा भूरिस्थात्रां भूर्यावेशयन्तीम्॥
4. मया सो अन्नमत्ति यो विपश्यति यः प्राणिति य ई शृणोत्युक्तम्।
अमन्तवो मां त उप क्षियन्ति श्रुधि श्रुत श्रद्धिवं ते वदामि॥
5. अहमेव स्वयमिदं वदामि जुष्टं देवेभिरुत मानुषेभिः।
यं कामये तंतमुग्रं कृणोमि तं ब्रह्माणं तमृषिं तं सुमेधाम्॥
6. अहं रुद्राय धनुरा तनोमि ब्रह्मद्विषे शरवे हन्तवा उ।
अहं जनाय समदं कृणोम्यहं द्यावापृथिवी आ विवेश॥
7. अहं सुवे पितरमस्य मूर्धन्मम योनिरप्स्वऽन्तः समुद्रे।
ततो वितिष्ठे भुवनानु विश्वोतामूं द्यां वर्षणोप स्पृशामि॥
8. अहमेव वात इव प्र वाम्यारभमाणा भुवनानि विश्वा।
परो दिवा पर एना पृथिव्यैतावती महिना सं बभूव॥

The above mentioned hymn clearly indicates that the Ṛgvedic seers conceived Vāk as the first creation and a productive principle and representative of the Supreme Spirit. She



Fig. 5.6: Sarasvatī seated on a lotus piṭha on the snout of Yajña Varāha, Khajuraho



Fig. 5.7: Seated Sarasvatī on the snout of Yajña Varāha, Dudhai. Tongue of Varāha is symbolic of Agni. Śeṣa in añjali-mudrā is facing front (Lucknow Museum, Acc. No. 0.84)

is the energy of Brahman proceeding from him. We may say that the earliest reference to Vāk in a profound manner is found in the *R̥gveda* X, 125, 1-8. The beauty of the *sūktas* lies in the fact that they are narrated by Vāk herself. She explains how powerful she is as “Supreme Female Energy”.

Again in the *R̥gveda*, III.57.1 and in VII, 87.4 Vāk is depicted as the cow, the voice of prayer and praise. In the same text, X, 71, 1, Vāk is regarded as the means of communication between men and gods. In X, 109, 5, Vāk is said to be the wife of Bṛhaspati who is identified with Brahma.

The above references of Vāk in the *R̥gveda* indicate that the *ṛṣis* even in the early Vedic period sought to establish an essential communication of Vāk with the Vedic meters. The same concept of cow referred to Vāk appears in the *Atharvaveda*. In this text X, 10, 21, Sāyaṇa explains the cow as Vāk, speech or sound. It is really amazing to say that among the animals cow is the only one which gives the sound of “Ma” (Mother). Sāyaṇa further says that Vāk is the Mantra Mother giving birth to the manifold and multifold progeny of sounds.⁷ Another important factor mentioned in the *Atharvaveda* IX, 2, 5, is that Vāk is identified with Virāj who in the *R̥gveda* X, 90, 5, is said to have been from Puruṣa (the Primeaval Male) from whom the whole universe was evolved. In the *Atharvaveda* she is identified with *Prāṇa* or Vital Spirit (Virāj). In this text the same Virāj is described as a divine being evolved by speculation and being identified with Puruṣa, Prajāpati, Agni and later Viṣṇu in the Yajña form (*Atharvaveda* VIII, 5, 10).

Thus in the Vedic period the seers had begun to conceive Vāk as (a) Active Energy of Brahma, (b) Supreme Female Energy of Supreme Productive Energy, (c) Personified sound and (d) Mantra Mother in the form of Divine cow for the meters of the Vedic *mantras*.

In the *Brāhmaṇas* Vāk was identified with ‘Female Energy’ of Prajāpati, the lord of generation. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* Vāk is given a very important place among the gods. Here she is mentioned as the Queen of Sacrifice and an exuberant companion of Prajāpati. Most importantly in this text Vāk is mentioned as Sarasvatī Vāk.⁸ This is the earliest reference we have so far come across to identify Vāk with Sarasvatī.

In the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, the relationship of Vāk with Prajāpati is explained. It says “Prajāpati” (at the beginning) was alone, this (universe); the word was his only (Possession); the word was the second (that existed). He thought - 'Let me emit this word, it will pervade this whole (universe).' He emitted the word and it pervaded this whole (universe). It rose upwards as a continuous stream of water. Speaking (the syllable) 'A', he cut off a third part of it; this became the earth. He thought: 'This has come into existence’

(*abhūt*), hence the name earth (*bhūmi*). With (the syllable) 'Ka', he cut off a (second) part of it, this became the intermediate region. (He thought:) 'This is between' hence it is called the intermediate region. With (the syllable) 'Ho', he threw a (third) part upwards; that became the heaven. (He thought:) 'This has shone yonder' (*adyutat*) hence the name of heaven (*dyaus*).⁹

In the Upaniṣads Vāk is identified with *Om*. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* II, 23, 3 says speech is *Aum*. The same text also mentions that "Virāj is speech" which means speech is the first progeny of Brahman.¹⁰ The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* by symbolizing Vāk as a cow explains that one should meditate on speech as a milch cow. She has four tits to her udder which are the sounds, *svāhā*, *vaṣaṭ*, *hanta*, and *svadhā*. The gods live on two of her tits, the sounds of *svāhā* and *vaṣaṭ*, men on the sound of *hanta* and the fathers on the sound of *svadhā*.¹¹

Among the Upaniṣads, the only text which attributes the term '*Devātmaśakti*' to female energy is the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*. It says that Prakṛti is not an independent entity but belongs to the self of the Divine.¹² According to this Upaniṣad I, 4 the unconditioned Absolute cannot be regarded as the cause of the world. The actual creator is Īśvara (IV, 9), the personal God who is acting through his power of *māyā* which is called *Devātmaśakti*. When Īśvara is united with Śakti, then only in the form of Śiva has power to manifest, without her God cannot even stir. In the opinion of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan "the self-power of Divine is not like the Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya which is independent. While the Sāṅkhya Prakṛti is identified with the Māyā of the Vedāntins, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* attempts to reconcile the views of the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta. According to the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1, 3 the unconditioned Absolute cannot be regarded as the cause of the world. So it is that causation of the world is traced to Māyā or Prakṛti which is the power of Brahman conceived as Īśvara."¹³ This Upaniṣad clearly says that this self power, i.e., Māyā is hidden by the three qualities of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. It is the cause of the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the world. This is the same Māyā-śakti that is being referred to in the *Ṛgveda* as 'all knower Vāk'. This *Devātmaśakti* is known by several names like Mūlaprakṛti, Mahāmāyā, Yoganidrā, Viṣṇumāyā, Viṣṇuśakti, and Varāhaśakti. It is very important to note that this *Devātmaśakti* is named differently with accordance to the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. For example, in the *Varāha avatāra* of Viṣṇu she exhibited herself as his Śakti called 'Vāk-Sarasvatī' (*Vārāhī*). Similarly in the *Kṛṣṇa avatāra* of Viṣṇu, she with eight arms and named herself as Mahāmāyā appeared in front of Kaṁsa who wanted to kill her. In the *Varāha avatāra* this Female Energy promptly occupied the frontal portion of the snout of Varāha by which Lord Hari was going to strike Hiranyākṣa. This Female Energy was none other than the martial goddess of *Ṛgveda*

(Rudrānī). In the *R̥gveda* she was called Vāk, in the Brāhmaṇas as Female Energy of Prajāpati and in the Upaniṣad she was called Devātmaśakti. From the Purāṇas it is clear that the sages who witnessed the great feat of Varāha could have experienced the presence of the Female Energy and its active role in the fight. It may be the reason that they addressed Varāha as Vāk who is none other than the Śakti of Varāha.¹⁴ It is also clear that Varāha and his Śakti are inseparable. But in the Purāṇas she is mentioned as Vāk which is the earliest name being addressed in the *R̥gveda*.

Before explaining the reason for naming Vāk as Sarasvatī it is very important to analyse that how and when had the fusion of Vāk with Sarasvatī taken place? In the *R̥gveda*, Sarasvatī is described as a river on whose bank several Āryan tribes are said to have performed prayers and sacrifices. One can presume that because of her connection with such pious and religious activities of Āryans she got herself the appellation 'Goddess residing over the wisdom of speech.' In the *Atharvaveda* III, 20, 7, for the first time Sarasvatī is identified with Vāk and she is described as a female divinity of the upper region and the guardian of waters and the bestower of fertility. In the same text Sarasvatī as in the capacity of being the wise goddess of eloquence of learning is asked to be with Vāk. In V, 12, 8 and in V, 7, 10, along with Ilā and Bhāratī she is requested to preside over sacred speech, prayer in the sacrifice. Just like Vāk is described in VI, 41, 2, Sarasvatī is described as auspicious goddess with sacrifice in VI, 3, 2. Further more in the *Atharvaveda* the appellation 'Queen' is given to Sarasvatī just like for Vāk in the *R̥gveda*, X, 125. In this text XVIII, 1, 41-43 the description of Sarasvatī as the goddess of virtuous and the pious people is exactly mentioned for Vāk in the *R̥gveda* X, 125. Sarasvatī is called 'Vāk and Mantrarūpiṇī' because she is asked by the pious people to take part in the course of sacrifice. In the *Atharvaveda* XIX, 11, 1, and in 31, 10 she is described as Truth, goddess of wealth and the saviour and guardian of wealth and prosperity.

In the Brāhmaṇas the identification of Vāk with Sarasvatī is wholly accepted and she is recognized as 'Speech Personified'. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (II, 5, 4, 6 and III, 1, 4, 9) she is being emphatically addressed as Vāk and (IX, 3, 4, 17, and, V, 2, 2, 13 and 14) she is called as 'Sarasvatī Vāk' the leader of sacrifice. Interestingly in the V, 4, 5, 2, 7 the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* informs us that rice pap is prepared for Sarasvatī the 'Speech' for oblation. This clearly indicates that she is the supporter of the sacrificial rites. The reason it says that Sarasvatī is Vāk, the supporter of sacrifice. She is the vital power and the breath of the creator (XII, 7, 2, 5).

The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* II, 20 identifies Sarasvatī with Vāk.¹⁵ The *Tāṇḍya-Mahā-Brahmaṇa* XVI, 5, 16 addresses her as Śabdātmika Vāk, i.e., Speech in the form of sound or śabda or dhvani.¹⁶ The *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* (1.3.4.5; III, 8.11.2) refers to Sarasvatī as

Vāk with one remark. It says that Vāk is the manifestation of *Prāṇa* and Sarasvatī is considered to be superior to the *Prāṇa*.

In the *Sarasvatīrahasyopaniṣad* of the *R̥gveda* there are ten *ślokas* with *bījamantra* which were sung by Bhagavān Āśvalāyana to the *ṛṣis*. These hymns enumerate the greatness of Sarasvatī for which Āśvalāyana himself is *ṛṣi*, *anuṣṭup chanda*, and Śrī Vāgīśvarī herself is *devatā*. In this, it is said that *Yadvāg* is the *bīja*, *Devīm Vācam* is *śakti*, *praṇo devī* is *Kīlaka* and it is for Śrī Vāgīśvarī *Devatā prītyartham*. In the first hymn Sarasvatī is described as Devī Annapūrṇā and is prayed for the food. In the second hymn she is the only *devatā* of learning who is prayed by all the four Vedas with its *aṅga* and *upāṅga* and she is the *advaitaśakti* of Brahma. In the third hymn goddess Sarasvatī in her capacity of Śrī makes her devotees very pious and gives riches to them. The fourth hymn says that Sarasvatī is truth and encourages those who are pious and virtuous and helps them in their efforts to perform *yajñā*. The fifth hymn says that Sarasvatī controls all the three *lokas* in the *antaryāmī* form. She is in the form of Rudra and Āditya. The sixth hymn says that Sarasvatī is present in various forms for the sake of different creatures in this world. In this hymn ॐ is very important syllable. It means there are four *pādas* or divisions of Vāṇī. They are *Parā*, *Paśyantī*, *Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī*. Among these the first three are secretly present in our inner mind. The fourth one called *Vaikharī-vāṇī* form is the only one through which human beings worship goddess Sarasvatī. The seventh hymn describes her as form and formless whose presence is realized by the wise men in the sacrifice. Her presence in the *yajñā* in the *jyoti* form bestows knowledge to the ignorant and blesses the four directions with food and water. The eighth hymn says that all the human beings irrespective of their speaking and not speaking receive her blessings. As *Kāmadhenu* she bestows them the knowledge. Brahma the *prāṇa* who has brought forth the light of *Vaikharī* speech is spoken by all creatures in this world. *Vaikharī* speech is Vāgdevī Bhagavatī who is happy by the praises made by the devotees. The ninth *śloka* tells us that some men do not hear and do not see even when they are given the opportunity to do so. But with some men Vāgdevī is so kind that she shows herself fully to them in her original form. The last hymn says that Sarasvatī is worshipped by Brahmajñānī. She is the Brahmasvarūpā.¹⁷

In the *dhvanirūpa (nādātmika)* Vāk has four *pādas* or divisions. They are *Parā*, *Paśyantī*, *Madhyamā* and *Vaikharī*. Vāk is *Parā* which is subtle (*sūkṣma*) and resides in the heart. *Paśyantī* is perceived by *yogins*. When Vāk is manifest and intelligible it is *madhyamā* which is being arisen in the heart (*Madhya*), when it comes to mouth, that is, when it comes through vocal organs like palate, lips, etc. it is known as *Vaikharī*. These are the four stages in the manifestation of Vāk in a man. In these, human beings worship goddess Sarasvatī

through *Vaikharī* form. Thus the amalgamation of atmospheric form of Sarasvatī with Parā Vāk brought the name as Vāk Sarasvatī and Sarasvatī Vāk in the later literature.¹⁸

So far the identification of Vāk and Sarasvatī and the fusion of both of them is vividly analysed. With regard to the relationship of Vāk Sarasvatī with Varāha a very interesting description is found in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (XXIII, 31-48). It is actually a prayer to goddess Sarasvatī rendered by the Nāga king called Aśvatara. While addressing goddess Sarasvatī as Jagaddhātṛī he says that she is sprung from Brahma and her supreme power comprising of every thing includes three prosodial times, three worlds, three Vedas, three sciences, three fires, three lights, three colours, three qualities, three sounds (*śabda*), three *āśramas*, three states of life, etc. He further says that everything which includes visible and non-visible either in the heaven or on the surface of the earth or in the sky or elsewhere is connected with her by her vowels and by her consonants. In the verse 48, the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* clearly says that the goddess Sarasvatī is the tongue of Viṣṇu.¹⁹ This Sarasvatī is Vāk herself.

It is important to note that while in the *Ṛgveda* Vāk was given a very high position, Sarasvatī was described as the embodiment of a sacred river. In the course of time when the fusion of Vāk with Sarasvatī took place, the status of Sarasvatī river was very much elevated and thus assumed the position of the mother of Vedas and the bestower of the knowledge. During the Purāṇic times Vāk Sarasvatī was recognized as the Śakti of Viṣṇu. To confirm it *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and *Kūrma Purāṇa* clearly indicate by addressing Varāha as Vāk. The same thought was being transformed in the images of Yajña Varāha by the depiction of Vāk Sarasvatī on the snout of the deity. Thus the earliest depiction of such great thinking of the Purāṇas was being exhibited by the artists in the sculptural forms in the Gupta period. It is to be understood that Gupta rulers were the staunch devotees of Viṣṇu.

To answer the last question, one should understand that Vāk as in the capacity of Supreme Female Power is given the name *Devātmaśakti*. It means “the Female Energy of Primordial Being”. Hence whenever and wherever this Female Energy acted as a support to Supreme Being her presence was realized by the sages and ṛsis. In the Varāha *avatāra* she promptly occupied the frontal portion of the snout of Varāha to strike the *asura* Hiraṇyākṣa who had hidden Bhūdevī in the Nether region. This Female Energy was none other than the martial goddess of the *Ṛgveda*. Once the goddess Bhūdevī was being redeemed from the clutches of *asura* and carried by Varāha Viṣṇu on his snout, his *Devātmaśakti* automatically united with the Supreme Being who is Brahma Hari Nārāyaṇa. That is the reason that the sculptors of Madhya Pradesh or anywhere else have not depicted the figure of Vāk Sarasvatī in the images of Bhū Varāha.

After observing the earliest representation in the zoomorphic form of Yajña Varāha with the figure of Vāk that is exclusively depicted on the snout of the image of Varāha, the readers will realize the extraordinary insight of the sculptors of the Gupta period in Madhya Pradesh. They were followed by the Gurjara-Pratihāras, Candelas, and the Paramāras. The sculptors of this state with their sharp understanding of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas and Śilpaśāstras very artistically transformed the highly evolved aspect of cosmogony of Varāha in the sculptural form. There is no doubt that they could realize the fact that Brahmā Varāha and Viṣṇu Varāha were one and the same Supreme Hari Nārāyana. Furthermore, they clearly visualized the amalgamation of two important factors. One is the fusion of Vāk with Sarasvatī and the second is the confirmation of the relationship of Vāk Sarasvatī with Varāha. This has been brought to the reader's notice through the depiction of the figure of Vāk-Sarasvatī on the snout of Yajña Varāha in zoomorphic form.

To conclude, the representation of the figure of Vāk Sarasvatī on the snout of Yajña Varāha is the superb creation of the sculptors of Madhya Pradesh. They by means of their artistic innovation proved that Vāk is Parā and she is the Female Energy of Hari Nārāyana. In fact the personification of the abstract concept of Female Energy in the name of Vāk-Sarasvatī and its depiction with zoomorphic Varāha is the great contribution of the sculptors for the art lovers and art historians.

References and Notes

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