



## GODDESS SARASWATI

Goddess Saraswati is one of the most revered deities in Hinduism, known as the goddess of wisdom, knowledge, learning, arts, and music. She is considered the personification of wisdom and the mother of the Vedas, the sacred texts of Hinduism.

- ◆ **Other names** - Sharada, Savitri, Brahmani, Bharadi, Vani, Vagdevi
- ◆ **Devanagari**- सरस्वती
- ◆ **Affiliation**- Devi, River goddess, Tridevi, Gayatri
- ◆ **Abode**- Satyaloka, Manidvipa
- ◆ **Mantra**- ॐ ऐं महसरस्वत्यै नमः
- ◆ **Symbols**- The colour white, lotus, veena, Saraswati river, books
- ◆ **Day**- Friday
- ◆ **Mount**- Swan or peacock
- ◆ **Festival**- vasant panchmi and seventh day of navratri
- ◆ **Consort**- Brahma

## Origins and Significance

**Name:** Saraswati (Sanskrit : सरस्वती)

**Meaning:** The name “Saraswati” is derived from the Sanskrit root “Saras,” which means “flow” or “essence,” and “wati,” which means “one who possesses.” Therefore, Saraswati is interpreted as “the one who possesses the essence of the self,” symbolizing knowledge and wisdom.

**Role:** Saraswati is venerated as the goddess who bestows knowledge, wisdom, learning, speech (Vak), music, and arts. She is also associated with eloquence and the purity of language.



## Appearance:

**White Attire:** Saraswati is typically depicted wearing a white sari, symbolizing purity and knowledge.

**Veena:** She holds a Veena, a musical instrument, representing the harmony of knowledge, arts, and the universe.

**Books and a Rosary:** She is often shown with sacred texts and a rosary, indicating her connection to learning and spirituality.

**Swan and Lotus:** Saraswati is often depicted with a swan, symbolizing discernment and wisdom, and seated on a lotus, symbolizing purity and transcendence.



## Origins and Creation

**Creation by Brahma:** Saraswati is said to have emerged from the mouth of Brahma, the creator god, at the beginning of the universe. Brahma created her to bring order to the chaos, as her wisdom was needed to shape the cosmos. In this way, she is closely associated with creation and the dissemination of knowledge throughout the world.

## Symbolism in Stories

**Veena Player:** Saraswati is often depicted playing the Veena, an ancient Indian string instrument. This represents the music of the spheres, the rhythm of the universe, and the harmony that knowledge and arts bring to the world.

**The River Saraswati:** In Vedic traditions, Saraswati is also personified as a sacred river. The river Saraswati was once a significant and real river in the Vedic civilization, symbolizing life, purity, and the continuous flow of wisdom. The actual river is believed to have dried up thousands of years ago, but it remains sacred in spiritual and cultural contexts.

## As a water and river goddess

In early texts like the Rigveda, Saraswati was a river goddess and the personification of the Saraswati river. As a river goddess, she represented fertility and purity. There are three hymns in the Rigveda which are dedicated to the Saraswati River. A Rigvedic prayer also describes her as ‘the best of mothers, of rivers and of goddesses’

### Forms and avatars

Many different avatars and forms of Saraswati have been attested in scriptures.

Dancing Saraswati with eight-hands (above) is depicted in three panels of the Hoysaleswara temple, Halebidu Karnataka (c. 1150 CE). One of these is shown above. She is in a classical Indian dance posture, and in one of her eight hands she holds a pen, a palm leaf manuscript, a musical instrument and the tools of major arts. The *shilpins* thus depicted her as the goddess of knowledge and all arts.

She is venerated as Mahasaraswati in the Kashmir Shakti Peetha, as Vidhya Saraswati in Basara and Vargal, and as Sharadamba in Sringeri. In some regions, she is known by her twin identities, Savitri and Gayatri.

In Shaktism, she takes her Matrika (mother goddess) avatar as Brahmani. Saraswati is not just the goddess of knowledge and wisdom, but also the Brahavidya herself, the goddess of the wisdom of ultimate truth. Her Mahavidya form is Matangi.

- ◆ Vidhya, she is the formless concept of wisdom and knowledge in all of its aspects.
- ◆ Gayatri, she is the personification of the Vedas
- ◆ Savitri, She is the personification of purity, the consort of Brahma

## The Festivals related to goddess Saraswati

Basant Panchami, also known as Vasant Panchami, is celebrated to mark the arrival of spring and is dedicated to Saraswati Maa, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, wisdom, music, and arts. The festival usually falls on the fifth day (Panchami) of the Hindu month of Magha, which typically occurs in late January or early February.

### Reasons for Celebrating Basant Panchami:

- ◆ **Welcoming Spring:** Basant Panchami marks the beginning of the spring season (Vasant Ritu) in India. This time is characterized by blooming flowers, pleasant weather, and a sense of renewal in nature. The festival celebrates the beauty and freshness that spring brings after the cold winter months.
- ◆ **Worship of Saraswati Maa:** On this day, Saraswati Maa is worshipped as the embodiment of knowledge, arts, and learning. It is believed that praying to her on Basant Panchami will bring wisdom, prosperity in education, and success in creative pursuits. This is why the festival is particularly important for students, artists, musicians, and scholars. Devotees dress in yellow, which is Saraswati's favorite color and represents the vibrancy of life and nature during spring. Homes, schools, and temples are often decorated with yellow flowers, and offerings of yellow-colored foods are made.

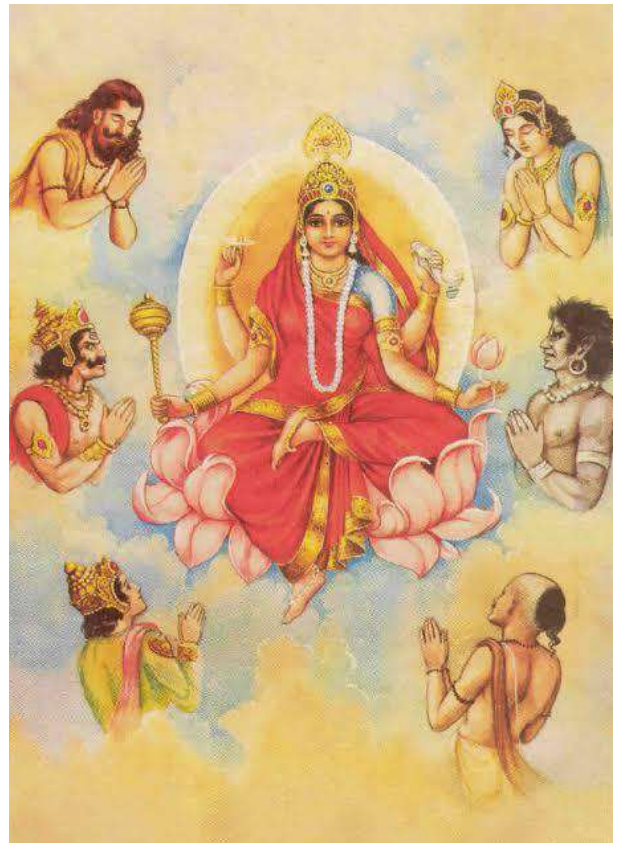


- ◆ **Beginning of New Learning Ventures:** Basant Panchami is considered an auspicious day to start new educational endeavors. Young children are often introduced to the world of letters and education on this day in a ritual called Vidyarambh or Akshar Abhyasam. This is when they learn to write their first letters or words, often in front of an image or idol of Saraswati Maa.
- ◆ **Cultural and Social Significance:** The festival also has a strong cultural aspect. Various educational institutions and cultural organizations hold special events, including music and dance performances, to honor Saraswati Maa. In rural areas, kite flying is a popular activity during Basant Panchami, symbolizing the joy and freedom that comes with spring. The festival is also a time for people to come together, celebrate the renewal of life, and strengthen social bonds.
- ◆ **Mythological Significance:** According to some legends, Basant Panchami is the day Saraswati Maa was born, or the day she blessed the world with her knowledge and wisdom. This mythological significance adds to the devotion with which people observe the festival.



## Navratri (Sharad Navratri)

- ◆ **When:** Navratri is celebrated twice a year—during Chaitra (March-April) and Sharad (September-October). The worship of Saraswati primarily occurs during Sharad Navratri.
- ◆ **Significance:** On the 7th, 8th, and 9th days of Navratri, Saraswati is worshipped as part of the devotion to the nine forms of the goddess Durga. These days are dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and spiritual wisdom.
- ◆ **Rituals:** The last three days of Navratri are dedicated to Saraswati, during which devotees place their books and instruments in front of her image and perform special pujas. On the 9th day (Mahanavami), people perform Ayudha Puja and Saraswati Puja, and on the 10th day (Vijayadashami), the tools and books are taken up again, symbolizing the renewal of learning.



## Diwali (Saraswati Puja during Deepavali)

- ◆ **When:** Diwali, the festival of lights, occurs in October or November, during the Hindu month of Kartika.
- ◆ **Significance:** Although Diwali is primarily associated with Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, Saraswati is also worshipped during this time, especially by those involved in creative and scholarly pursuits.
- ◆ **Rituals:** On the day of Lakshmi Puja, Saraswati is worshipped alongside Lakshmi and Ganesha. People pray for wisdom, creativity, and success in their academic and artistic endeavors.

- ◆ These festivals highlight the significance of Saraswati Maa in the realm of knowledge, wisdom, and the arts, and are celebrated with great devotion across various regions in India.