

The Sarasvati and Drisadvati River

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The Sarasvati nadi is represented by an insignificant drain today called Surasti. It takes its rise in the submontane plains in the south of Ad-Badri in Jagadhari tehsil of Ambala District. But its upper course which once joined the present dry bed of the Sarasvati is represented by a rivulet in the hills which joins the Somb at Ad-Badri. It is possible that anciently this upper course of Sarasvati and the Somb flowed southward through the Sarasvati dry bed before its headwaters were caught by Yamuna. The dry course of Sarasvati is irregularly represented till it reaches Mustafabad in the west of Jagadhari. Thence it takes a south- westerly course. Passing by Bhagwanpura, Kuruskhetra and Pehowa, the Sarasvati joined the Ghaggar near Shatrana in Patiala district of Punjab. At Arnaya near, the Sarasvati was joined by the Markanda nadi.

The joint course of Ghahhar and Sarasvati flowed through a wide bed upto Jakhal. From near Jakhal the Sarasvati bed seems to be represented by the Rangoi bed along Talwara, Chimun, Aharwan, Banawali to Sirsa and Ottu. From Ottu onwards the Ghaggar and the Sarasvati seem to have flowed through a wide common bed. Thus, it appears that the Sarasvati and the Ghaggar in fact anciently met at Ottu near Sirsa and

their present Sangam near Shatrana in Patiala district is recent. The width of the Sarasvati dry bed and the existence of a continuous chain of protohistoric settlements along its course and a comparatively fewer and insignificant settlements on the course of the Ghaggar before it was joined by Sarasvati (of Rangoi bed) at Ottu suggests the relative significance of the Sarasvati nadi in the past.

The Sarasvati has been frequently mentioned in the ancient Indian literature. The Rigveda refers to the sacrifices conducted on the banks of the holy Sarasvati (RV. I, 89.3; 164, 19; II. 41, 16; 30, 8; 32.8; III. 54, 13; V. 42,12; 43, 11; 46, 2; VI. 49, 7; 50, 12; 52, 6; VII. 9, 5; 25; 6; X. 17, 7; 30, 12; 131, 5; 184; 2.) The river is mentioned as par excellence and is stated to be joining the sea. But by the later vedic times the river ceases to be perennial. It is known to have disappeared at Vinasana on account of contact with the low cast Sudras and Abhiras.¹ In fact, the fear of its becoming dry had haunted even the minds of the Rigvedic seers who prayed in the Rigveda lest the river might deprive them its life- giving waters.²

The explorations have revealed that while the pre- Harappan Harappan and late-Harappan settlements were located on the high banks of the Sarasvati, the painted Gray were settlements were found located within the flood plain in Haryana,³ as well as in Rajasthan.⁴ This perhaps points to the desiccation of the Sarasvati by the Painted Grey were timed. It is possible that the joint course of the Sarasvati and Somb was caught by Yamuna about this time.⁵

THE DRISADVATI

This river has been mentioned as early as the Rigveda (III. 23-24). According to Mahabharata (Parva I, 50-74) it passed along the southern boundary of Kurukshetra Rapson identified this river with the modern Chitang.⁶ Cunningham identified it with Rakshi a stream on the south-east of Thanesar.⁷ On the other hand, Alphonson and Todd thought that the Drisadvati is represented by the river Ghaggar.⁸ The river has also been mentioned in the puranic literature.⁹

Firozshah Tuglak is known to have excavated Chatuang or Chitang canal in the dry bed of Drisadvati.¹⁰ The canal takes its rise in the sub- montanous Ambala district in the south- east of the Sarasvati and passes by

Kapalmochan, Balchhappar and Mustafabad in the Jagadhari tehsil. Its channel is further traced along Ladwa, Pujam, Nilokheri, etc. in Kurukshetra and Karnal districts. The Rakshi nadi joins the Chitang near Pujam. Beyond this, the Chitang represented at present by a drain cut through its bed can be observed along Sitamai, Neesang, Dhatrat, Jind, Hansi, Hissar and Siswal. In Rajasthan territory its traces can be detected among the sand dunes in Ganganagar district along Bhadra, Sothi, Nohar. Rawatsar, etc. till it joins the wide Sarasvati bed in the north of Suratgarh.

According to literacy tradition, the Drisadvati remained a significant stream of the Indo-Gangetta Dividde in the past. It formed the south-eastern boundary of Kurukshetra.¹¹ The Rigveda (III. 23, 4) mentions Drisadvati alongwith the Apga (Apya) and Sarasvati. The explorations by A. Ghosh in Rajasthan,¹² and by Suraj Bhan¹³ in Haryana along its dries up bed brought to light a good number of protihistoric settlements going back to the Kalibangan- I times. The problem of the upper course of Drisadvati, however, baffled the scholars for long. Suraj Bhan has suggested that the Somb and Sarasvati changed their course and joined the Yamuna possibly by the PGW times. A stream called Patharala joins the joint course or to the south- east of Sarasvati and between Yamuna and the Manusmriti. The Patharala nadi corredponds with the above Locations of

the Drisadvati as it is a stream which lies between Yamuna on the east and Sarasvati in the west. Moreover, the Drisadvati meaning a 'river of stones' and Patharala (river or stones) are synonyms. It appears logical that Pathrala is the modern Haryanvi name for the Sanskrit name of Drisadvati. Thus it is reasonable to accept the above suggestion that the Pathrala represents the upper course and the Chantang the lower course of the ancient Drisadvati.¹⁴

1. Mcdonell, A.A. and Keith (1912), op. cit., p.300; Indras, The Lost Sarasvati, pp. 46-50.
2. Rigveda, VI, 61, 14.
3. Suraj Bhan (1973), "Pre-historic Archaeology of the Sarasvati and Drisadvati Valleys, Haryana", Ph. D. Thesis, M.S. University, Baroda, (Unpublished).
4. Ghosh, A. (1952), "The Rajputana Desert—Its Archaeological Aspects", Bulletin of the National Institute of Sciences of India, Vol. I, pp. 37-42.
5. Suraj Bhan (1972), op. cit., pp. 125-28: Gurdev Singh, op. cit., pp. 29-37.
6. Rapson, E.J. (ed.) (1955), Ancient India. Vol. I, p.51: Imperial Gazetteer of India, p. 26.
7. Cunningham, Archaeological Survey Report, Vol. XIV.
8. Alphinston and Todd, JASB, Vol. VI, p. 181.
9. Vaman Purana, Ch. 34.
10. Law, B.C. (1976), op. cit.
11. Manismriti, II, 19.
12. Ghosh, A. (1953-54), "Exploration in Bikaner" East and West. Vol. IX, No. 1, pp. 31-34, by the same author (1965), "The Indus Civilization—It's Origins, the Author, Extend and Chronology", Indian Pre-History, Poona, pp. 113-24.
13. Suraj Bhan (1968), "Down of Civilization in Haryana", Haryana—Studies in History and Culture, pp. 135-39.
14. Suraj Bhan (1972), op. cit., pp. 125-28.