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## THE SARASVATI: AN UNMISTAKABLE SYMBIOTIC HARMONY OF MYTH AND REALITY

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### Abstract:

The journey in the quest of Sarasvati from myth to reality is the stepping stone to perform the unique journey for unearthing data with regard to the origin of the river, locating the complete track and route of Sarasvati and the reasons that led to the dedication of the river.

The incredible river that has metamorphosed into a myth in the Indian psyche. The river has produced a mighty civilization. It is the river on the bank of which the epic, literatures and philosophies were conceived and the river where an unending tradition has been practiced for more than five thousand years is not only thrilling but an enlightening one. This incredible river is none other than the mighty Sarasvati which has been eulogized in Rig-Veda as *Ambitame*, *Naditame* *Devitame* *Sarasvati-Ambitame*, the best among the mothers; *Naditame*, the best among the rivers; and *Devitame*, the best among the goddesses.

**Keywords:** River, Sarasvati River, Myth, Rig-Veda, Civilization.

### Introduction:

The journey from myth to the destination of reality with the object to unravel the truth about an incredible river that has metamorphosed into a myth in the Indian psyche, a river that has produced a mighty civilization spreading over almost 11, 00000 sq. km., the river on the bank of which the epic, literatures and philosophies were conceived and the river where an unending tradition have been practised for more than five thousand years, is not only thrilling but an enlightening one. This incredible river is none other than the mighty Sarasvati which has been eulogized in *Rig-Veda* as *Ambitame*, *Naditame* *Devitame* *Sarasvati - Amitame*, the best among the mothers; *Naditame*, the best among the rivers; and *Devitame*, the best among the goddesses.

### Archaeological excavations:

The saga of Indian culture has been unfolded through scientific archaeological excavations on the banks of lost bed of Sarasvati, Drishadvati, Indus, Sutlej, Ghaggar, Yamuna and Ganga. The explorations and excavations in the post-independence era have revealed astounding evidences pertaining to the river Sarasvati and its tributaries. Rakhigarhi (Hissar, Haryana) on Drishadvati, Bhirdana, Kunal and Banawali (Fatehabad, Haryana) on the ancient Sarasvati or Ghaggar reveal adequate evidences pertaining to pre, mature and post-Harrapan Civilization from (4000 BC to 1700 BC). The data also indicates how the birth of a civilization took place in the newly discovered sites on the bank of Sarasvati in Haryana rather than the Harappa and Mohenjo-daro whose dates are comparatively much late than Bhirdana, and Kunal. It also shows that how slowly the civilization was reaching to its highest water mark and eventually declining due to desiccation of the river and ushering into a new civilization called Indo-Gangetic Civilization on the banks of Indus, Yamuna and Gangetic Valley. The findings of Bhagawanpura at Kurukshetra are important because it is one of the rarest sites that yielded late Harappan antiquities along with Painted Grey Ware culture, indicating the emergence of PGW in the late Harappan time. This phenomenon can also be interpreted environmentally as how with the passage of time with the decline of major sources of glacier waters, the river either lost its course or was captured by later river systems such as Indus, Sutlej and Yamuna. Newer civilization emerged and flourished on these banks the Ganga and Yamuna (erstwhile Chambal) which is a tributary of the Ganga, captured the Sarasvati source at Paontasaheb (the site is known as a Sikh shrine in Himachal Pradesh). Owing to river capturing, Sarasvati was deprived of the perennial source of molten glaciers from the Himalayas. As the river started drying-up, people slowly started migrating into eastwards towards the Ganga-Yamuna *doab* or westward towards Indus and Sutlej.



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## Foundation of Modern Research on Sarasvati:

The modern search for Sarasvati on the ground level started in 1893 by C.F. Oldham an engineer when he was riding his horse along the dry bed of a seasonal Rajasthani river called the Ghaggar. He was of the opinion that the bulk of the water of ancient Sarasvati was contributed by Sutlej which latter changed its course and became a tributary of the Indus. Most geoscientists believe that neotectonism and river capturing or piracy caused the eastward diversion of the water of the Sarasvati and westward drifting of Sutlej to become a tributary of Indus. This has been substantiated by archaeological findings in the region of Indus and Yamuna during the so-called Mature Harappan period in the Indus and its tributaries and later during the Harappan and PGW periods at the recently excavated sites such as Saloni and Daksha Khara on Yamuna.

## Satellite Images:

The Landsat imageries, satellite images of the palaeochannels, geological and sedimentological data and groundwater surveys and the presence of thousands of archaeological sites yielding human antiquity for more than five thousand years have significantly contributed many facts about the existence of a mighty river which for a considerable time, considered as a mythical river.

The satellite data precisely on the toposheets of Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat along the track of the lost Sarasvati vindicates many archaeological sites of historical and cultural importance showing the signature of river Sarasvati and Drishadvati right from Siwaliks to Bhatner desert and further joining at the confluence on the Arabian Sea in Gujarat.

- The excavation at Bhirrana on the bank of Sarasvati in Fatehabad district has brought sensational results as the antiquity of the sites dates back to 4565 BC which suggests the civilization on the bank of Sarasvati is considerably older than the Harappa and Mohenjo-daro (c. 2200 BC) pottery.
- Clinching evidence of the township was that the earth outside the wall comprised of virgin soil while the one inside the fortification wall had all the evidence of structures.

The excavation at Kunal in Fatehabad district has revealed that the antiquity of the civilization in this region that dates back to 3200 BC. The site has yielded pit-dwelling settlement, pottery resembling that of the Baluchistan region; bead manufacturing centre, two royal silver crowns of Harappan period and many more.

- Neolithic tendency.
- Pit-dwelling.
- Pre-Harappa.
- Steatite button seals show its ancestry to Rehman-Dheri, Baluchistan—two deers on (Obv.) geometric design on (Rev.) c. 4000 BC.
- Oval-shaped ovens.
- Largest living pit with a floor made of fine clay and cow dung.
- Steatite button seals shows its ancestry to Rehman-Dheri, Baluchistan ñ two deer on (ob) geometric design (Rev) c. 4000 BC.
- Terracotta balls, net sinkers, animal figurines, wheels toy cart frames, shell bangles.
- Grey ware with geometric design, natural motif and graffiti affinity with Gomal Valley in Baluchistan.
- Kunal—fresh running water aquatic molasses oyster.

Banawali yet another site on the bank of Sarasvati in the same district has unearthed antiquities pertaining to the early Indus and matured Indus Civilization which includes antiquities of typical Harappan settlement of grid pattern, wells, terracotta plough, micro weights and many more.

- Banawali is a pre-Harappan and Harappan site.
- Evidence of **ploughed fields** has been found.
- Large quantity of **barley and evidence of growing of sesame and mustard.**



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- The use of **wooden plough to plough** the fields.
- A **fortified town (2500-1700 BC)**.
- Banawali - The name Banawali etymologically means series of forests or rows of Ban or forest. Interestingly **among the faunal evidence a complete skeleton of a baby elephant suggesting a forest area**.
- **Kurukshetra was known as Kurujangal**.

Balu (Kaithal), a pre-Indus-Sarasvati site on the bank of river *Apaya* or *Apaga*, a tributary of Sarasvati. References are made to *yajnas* performed by King Citra on the banks of the river Apaya, a branch of the Chitang River.

- *Apaga* or *Apaya* a Rigvedic river.
- Pre-Harappan-Grey, Red, Buff, Black and Red Ware-Storage jar, pot, etc. Terracotta bangles and structure in mud bricks.
- Harappan-Perforated jar, dish on stand, goblet, beaker-decorated with *pipal* leaves, intersecting circles, etc., Terracotta, triangular terracotta cakes, animal figurines, toy carts, wheel, bull, disc, bone points, stone pestle, steatite disc beads, faience bangles, copper objects.
- Evidence of orientation of streets and Fort of Harappan period.

Bhagwanpura (Kurukshetra), a unique site showing the interlocking phase of Indus and Painted Grey Ware culture identified as the culture of Mahabharata period on the right bank of river Sarasvati.

- On the bank of Sarasvati.
- Harappa and PGW.
- Shakti peetha Savitri Sthanu.
- Pehwa-Prachi-Eastern Saraswati.

Daulatpur (Kurukshetra), a site yielding the antiquity from late Indus to medieval period. The most interesting finding is an inscription inscribed *Sthaneswarasya* dated back to 6th or 7th century BCE.

Mirzapur (Kurukshetra) another Late Indus site along with the historical deposits from Kushana and medieval period.

Raja Karna ka Qila (Kurukshetra), yields antiquity from the Northern Black Polished Ware to medieval times, c. 800 BC to AD 1600.

Thanesar (Kurukshetra), the ancient capital of Harsha Vardhana of the Pushyabhtis excavation unearths antiquity uninterruptedly from the pre-Kushana to late medieval period.

- Harsha ka Tila.
- Capital of Harsha.
- 2000 years antiquity.
- City on the bank of Sarasvati.
- Savitri and Sthanu.

The scientific excavations of these sites on the bank of Sarasvati have revealed the story of Kurukshetra from 4000 BC to contemporary times without any significant gap.

The search for Sarasvati eventually delivered not only an incredible heritage but also the wealth of groundwater in the form of palaeochannels, the precious among the human needs especially in the drought prone and arid zones like Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujurat. The existences of palaeochannels and groundwater resources within a depth of 30 to 60 metres below. There is a possibility of constructing one million sustainable tube wells in the central Sarasvati River basin alone to augment the water resources of the region.



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Extreme in the western Rajasthan desert, in Pakistan side of Thar Desert not far from the border with India in the area lying between Fort Abbas and Dilawar Fort, sensational occurrence of huge quantity of fresh ground water was found almost in a volume of about 10 km. It has occurred along the course of ancient river bed of Sarasvati or Ghaggar. This discovery could virtually transform the lives of thousands of locals in Pakistan who were experiencing harsh water shortages. Similar kind of augmentation of groundwater has been done in India by ONGC at Jaisalmer that which ultimately met the thirst of millions.

Satellite images in possession of the ISRO and ONGC have confirmed that the major course of a river, the Sarasvati, ran through the present-day Ghaggar River, which passes through parts of the states of Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat including the channel that enters parts of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan and adjoining regions in Pakistan before discharging into the Rann of Kachchh.

The Sensational archaeological finding of an ancient river bed on the north of Kurukshetra has been discovered by the author after a meticulous study of palaeochannels of Haryana. The river bed has been found adjacent to an archaeological site known as Bhore Saidan, 13 km from Kurukshetra on Pehowa Road. It has proved what G.E. Pilgrim had presumed long time back. G.E. Pilgrim had published a landmark paper drawing attention to an alluvial deposit of great antiquity found stretching all the way from the Himalayan foothills to the Sindh gulf. Pilgrim imagined the deposit to have been laid by a primitive river that he named as Siwalik River which is none other than Sarasvati.

The cynosure of all eyes is on a huge river bed of river Sarasvati. It has been confirmed from the palaeochannel that a buried channel is there beneath Bhore Saidana. A large number of images of the palaeochannels, buried rivers, old alluvial soils have been mapped on toposheets from the Satellite which also shows distinct channels below the archaeological sites of Haryana. For the first time in the history a buried river bed containing huge amount of sand with mica, monazite, etc. have been found at a depth of about 30 feet in a rain gully of the archaeological mound. The river bed has seven layers alternatively carrying sand and an alluvial clay deposits.

Water carrying ore particles from an aquifer underneath the soil of a palaeochannel were revealed from Kalayat has further substantiated the findings of the river bed by the author. The oil giant ONGC is out to explore the course of the mythological Sarasvati River at Kalayat, in Kaithal and Kurukshetra districts, after an artesian well with particles of and mica was discovered in January during the excavation of a sacred pond at Kalayat in Haryana along the river track of lost and buried Sarasvati.

## Conclusion

Now the point of contention clear we should cross our fingers to explore more data and give a second thought before we call Sarasvati a mythical river. The revival of the Sarasvati River will benefit the country both in terms of augmentation of ground-water from the palaeochannel of Sarasvati in the area where water has been a crisis and secondly the Sarasvati project will enable the scholars to re-examine the mysteries Aryan invasion, mythical Sarasvati River, and the date of event of Mahabharata.

The journey in the quest of Sarasvati from myth to reality has not completed with the discovery of latest findings, rather it is the stepping stone to perform the unique journey for unearthing data with regard to the origin of the river, locating the complete track and route of Sarasvati and the reasons that led to the dedication of the river.

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