

Saraswati River

The origin of the river Saraswati is in the Siwalik range of hills between the rivers Sutlej and the Yamuna. The Siwalik Hills belong to the Lower Himalayan group of mountains in north-eastern India. The rivers Hakra (in Pakistan) and the Ghaggar (in India) have been identified as the lost Saraswati. The river flows through the plains of Punjab in India and Pakistan. In the Vedic times it was considered as one of the holiest rivers. Some of the most important Indus settlements, such as Kalibangan, Banawali and Ganweriwala, were situated on the banks of this river. This river came into existence during the Pleistocene period.

We did not know the existence of the river until 1874. It is mentioned in the Vedic texts, namely the Rig Veda. Although the existence of the river is not in question, the identification of this dry river bed as belonging to the original Saraswati river is in doubt. It is not clear if the course of the river which has been accepted by most scholars is an accurate description (Ratnagar 2001). There is hardly any conclusive evidence for the drying of the river. No one knows for certain the reasons for its disappearance.

Some of the reasons for the drying of the Saraswati river could be

- Capture of the waters of the Saraswati by the adjoining rivers, Sutlej and the Yamuna. During the Indus period, the Saraswati was a large river, receiving water from the Sutlej and the Yamuna. Tectonic movements in the region caused the separation of the river Yamuna from the Indus system. Over time, these waters were withdrawn and the river became smaller and eventually dry.
- The river bed could be choked with modern moving sand.
- The lack of water far down the old course threatens the vegetation necessary to help maintain the river
- The banks have undergone intense erosion leading to the collapse of the

banks and drying of the river.

- Two major shifts in the course and the volume of water associated with the river during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC. The two major shifts were the drying of one of the important tributaries of the Saraswati, resulting in reduced volume of water and the capture of the river Sutlej by the river Beas which rendered part of the river dry.