

Know Your Motherland - M.K.Raina
River Vitasta (Jhelum)

Vitasta is known to the Kashmiris as Veth. When it leaves the Valley at Baramulla, it is called Kashur Darya. After it joins Kishenganga, it is called Jhelum, the name, derived from a Punjab town of the same name. Jhelum is now the most commonly known name.

Origin: Nilamata Purana regards Vitasta as an incarnation of Uma, who at the request of Kashyapa came bubbling forth as a river from a hole as big as Vitashi, made by Lord Shiva with his spear. Traditional source is the Nila Kund, also called Vitastatru. The auspicious Vitasta is verily the holy river, remover of all sins. According to a legend, Vitasta disappeared and re-appeared three times till it finally appeared at Vethavatur, about one mile to the West of Verinaag.

Tributaries: Vitasta is the recipient of the drainage of the entire valley. Its major tributaries are as follows:

Between its source and Khanabal, Vitasta is joined by streams known as Sandrin, Brang and Arpal, bringing water from Kothar, Kokarnaag and Achhabal respectively.

On its right bank, the Vitasta is joined by Lidr near Khanabal, Sindh at Shadipur, Tsunthkol (from Dal Lake) at Mysuma, Srinagar and Pohru at Doabgah near Sopore.

On its left bank, the Vishau Rambiar combine joins it at Sangam (Khanabal) and the Doodganga just below Srinagar.

Sindh is its biggest tributary. It drains the entire mountain water from Dras to Harmukh. It forms the Prayag of Kashmir at its confluence with the Vitasta at Shadipur.

The Vitasta has a zigzag course and wends its way through the Valley. Its length from Khanabal to Baramulla is 102 miles. Its breadth and depth may vary with seasons. According to Lawrence, its average width was 210 feet and depth 9 feet. Its fall from Khanabal to its basin i.e. Wular Lake is just 220 feet, with a little more up to Baramulla. Its normal velocity was 1.5 miles per hour (before dredging). It is prone to floods in rainy season and gets alluvial soil with it.