



Short Review Paper

Economic value of water resources of South Kashmir, India

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Abstract

The economic prosperity of south Kashmir essentially depends both directly or indirectly on its water resources. What makes south Kashmir so distinct? Many things, but exclusively its water resources such as snow-capped mountains, crisscrossed by rivers and sprinkled with lakes, springs, canals which originate from this region of India. Like other parts of India, the character of water resources of south Kashmir are very significant for the growth of many sectors of Indian economy like agriculture, hydroelectricity, food, construction, transport, minerals, industry etc. the water bodies of south Kashmir are directly or indirectly good sources of revenue for the Indian government.

Keywords: Water, springs, economy, South Kashmir, rivers, districts.

Introduction

South Kashmir is located in the extreme north of India. It consists of four districts viz Kulgam, Anantnag, Shopian and Pulwama. District Kulgam is situated on the banks of river Vishu, about 60 km to the south of Srinagar. Anantnag is about 52 km to the south of Srinagar, an important town, the biggest after Srinagar. District Pulwama is situated on the Srinagar–Shopian road about 50 km from Srinagar. District Shopian, a foothill, is 55 km from Srinagar¹.

Different water resources of south Kashmir are snow-capped glaciers like Kolahai, Peer Gali, Kounsarnag, Betaab Valley etc. The main rivers of south Kashmir are: Jehlum [Vitasta], Vishav, Ramiadd, Lidder, Bringi. The famous lakes are Vishnupad [Kounsarnag], Sheshnag. The attractive springs are Achabal, Verinag, Kokarnag, Sheeshnag, Maliknag, Khee [Jogipora Nag] etc. Whereas its important canals are Martand Canal, Zainapora Canal, Rishipur Canal, Nur Canal¹.

Like the other parts of India, the role of water resources of south Kashmir in the Indian economy is very precious for the development of its various economic sectors which are mentioned as under:

Agriculture: It is the primary source of the economy of the people of south Kashmir. Mainly 85% of the people are related to this sector. About 95% of the land is irrigated through these lakes, canals, rivers, springs in south Kashmir¹.

The Karewas [lacustrine deposits] have great agricultural and economic value because of commercial and cash crops like saffron, walnut, apples, peaches, pears that flourish luxuriously in the Karewas. For the irrigation purposes, the people of south

Kashmir mostly depends on water of the river Jhelum and its tributaries².

The spring of Anantnag, known as Maliknag, is mostly sulphurous and its water is highly prized for garden cultivation³.

Health: According to local people of south Kashmir, the water of the spring of Kheejogipora and the spring of Shaganpora are very beneficial for skin diseases, especially wounds, burnings, marks, cysts, dandruff etc. During our visit on 12 July, 2020, we found a rush of people at the springs of Kheejogipora and Shaganpora for bathing. Sunday is a special day for bathing in this way. These two springs decreased the work load of hospitals of district Kulgam to some extent.

Tourism: South Kashmir is very famous because of its best tourist spots. Many springs such as Achabal, Verinag, Kokarnag, Kounsarnag, are famous tourist picnic spots⁴.

These springs attract both domestic and foreign tourists which is an economically good point for the government of India to earn foreign exchange.

Hydroelectricity: Jhelum is the main river of south Kashmir. It is a precious natural gift for the government because this is a cheap and clean source of electricity during this scientific age. From 1947, the government built Mohra Power Station at Mohra [Baramulla] on the river Jhelum and Pahalgam H.E. Project at Pahalgam [Anantnag] on the Lidder river. These power projects have been established and run by the central government of India¹.

The waterfall of Aharbal [Kulgam] is also a beneficial site for the establishment of a hydro power project but yet the government of India has not turned its attention towards its development. The shawl, carpet, silk, bat, flour industries and mills of south

Kashmir are directly dependent on these hydel electrical projects. These limits are sources of revenue for government.

Food: Kokernag, Verinag river Jhelum, Vishu, Rambliadd, Bringi, Lidder etc. are mostly known for fishing. In this way these water resources decreases the rate of food crises and create employment for many people especially for fishermen [known as Hanjis in Kashmir].⁵

Under the supervision and patronage of fishers department many youths of south Kashmir established their own trout fish farms [hatres] on the banks of springs, rivers, lakes etc. in this way created employment opportunities for themselves.

The government of U.T. of J&K also established their hatres at different places such as verinag, achabal etc. which give sources of revenue for government, the rate of per kg fish is fixed 400 to 500 Rs. at government farms.

Construction: All the canals and rivers of south Kashmir are rich in pebbles, sand and stones which are used in construction of roads, bridges and buildings by the people in place of marble, iron, wood, plastic, rubber etc.⁶.

This construct material of these water bodies is a good source of revenue for government because the tender processes is directly under central of government the fixed rate of these construction materials are as:

Materials name:	Rate
Pebble per Tipper (200 feet)	4500
Sand per Tipper (200 feet)	5000
Stones per Tipper	4000
Pebble per Tractor (70 feet)	2000
Sand per Tractor (80 feet)	2100
Stones per Tractor	1700

Transport: The cheap and clean means of transport from ancient times in south Kashmir is river Jhelum which is navigable from Khanabal to Baramulla. Doongas are used to carry passengers from one place to another place where as khoch and bahach are used to carry grains and other items of internal trade¹.

The water of river Vishu, Bringi, Lidder, Rrambiadd etc. is also used for the transport of wood pieces from one place to another place easily like Canada. This cheap transport helps us to reduce the use of costly fuels like petrol and diesel and protects the south Kashmir from noise, air and water pollution.

Defense: The small glaciers of Pirpanjal such as Kaunsarnag, peer gali and kotikolahai glacier, Pahalgam, protects us from the external invaders because it is very difficult for anyone to

cross these snow-capped cold glaciers especially during winter season¹.

Minerals: The spring of maliknag [situated in Anantnag district] and spring of Kheejogipora [Kulgam] possess sulphur⁷.

According to scholars of Kashmir geography these springs possess sulphur but in less quantity and perhaps this is the main reason that the government not turned his attention towards its extraction.

Industry: The famous industries of south Kashmir are shawl, carpets, gabba, namda etc. But these depend indirectly on these water resources in one way or other because these industries depend on wool of sheep and goats as their raw material. The banks of these water bodies such as banks of vishu, lidder, bringi, jehlum, rambiadd etc. are rich in willow trees. These willow trees provides food for goats and sheep especially in winter⁵.

People of south Kashmir believe that the water of Jhelum, Vishu, Lidder etc. is very good for the washing of wool of goats and sheep.

Willow trees also provide wood for cricket bat industries of south Kashmir⁴.

Crafts: The soft branches of willow trees are used by many craftsmen for the construction of fire pots [known as Kangri in Kashmiri] which is mostly used by Kashmiris during winter⁴.

In this way these fire pots reduces the rate of use of electric heaters, and heaters run by other costly fuels.

The soft branches of these willow trees are also used for construction of baskets, boxes, etc.

These soft branches are also used for cleaning of teeth and respiratory system.

Historical information: Many water resources are good sources of history such as the spring of achabal provides us informations about the Han ruler "Akasha". The Hemaal Nagray spring of balporashopian provides us information about the story of episode of hemaal and nagray. The story of spring of kheejogipora is directly related with the famous Sufisaint of Kashmir known as Sheikh Noor Din Noorani [R.A.].

Drinking: The fresh and pure water of these sources especially water of springs is frequently used by people for drinking, cleaning of utensils and clothes etc. this clean water is also used for the spray of pesticides and insecticides in horticulture sector which is considered as back bone of south Kashmir. Here we want to answer the people of South Kashmir by this information that we have destroyed there pervious water bodies through different illegal activities such as: i. Cleaning of vehicles in the

centre of river Vishu and Raimbeadd. ii. Cleaning of vehicles on the banks of river Jhelum. iii. Cleaning of Pesticides and insecticides, Utensils and machinery in these water bodies. iv. Construction of wash points and latrines on the banks of these water bodies. v. Use of Toxic medicines by people to catch fishes. vi. Construction of house drains with these water bodies. vii. Illegal mining.

Conclusion

At last, it is without any doubt that the different water resources of south Kashmir such as glaciers [kolahai, peer gali, kounsarnag, etc] rivers [Jhelum, lidder, vishew etc.] lakes [vishu pad, shesnag etc.] springs [achabal, verinag, maliknag etc.] and canals [martand canal, zainapora canal etc.] play an important role for the expansion of various segments of Indian economy like other parts of country such as agriculture, tourism, transport, energy, health, industry, etc. every aspect of economy of south Kashmir are directly or indirectly depends upon these water resources for their development now it is my humble request to every citizen of south Kashmir that protect this precious natural resource from every type of pollution.

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