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ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL DESTRUCTION OF DEVIKA STREAM IN UDHAMPUR DISTRICT IN LOWER SHIWALIK REGION - JAMMU KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT

Udhampur in J&K is also well-known city for the Devika River. As it appears and disappears at many places, Devika is also known as Gupt Ganga. The Devika River also holds great religious significance as it is revered by Hindus as the sister of river Ganga. Faith is believed to be so strong that it moves mountains, but the current sorry state of Devika River makes the soul to cry. The unprecedented ecological and cultural destruction caused by a series of unauthorized construction and disposal of municipal wastes, other solid wastes and untreated sewage and garbage directly into these water bodies especially sacred Devika River Udhampur and River Tawi.

KEYWORDS: *River Devika, pollution, water quality, river project*

INTRODUCTION:

The importance of rivers for human survival and our ability to thrive cannot be overstated. Rivers are not just areas of important biodiversity and home to endangered wildlife; they are also vitally important for the human race. From the beginning of human history, we have gathered around rivers to make use of their natural resources and it can be argued that in many cases rivers gave us the ability to grow as a civilization. Even today, it is surprising just how much we still rely on rivers to support our livelihoods and economies

STUDY AREA:

The Udhampur district is located in the Shivalik range of Himalayas and the terrain is mostly mountainous. The upper reaches of district experience snowfall in the winter season. Udhampur is popularly known as 'land of Devika' and 'land of Bowlis, Headquarter of District, is named after Raja Udham Singh, the eldest son of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of Dogra rule in Jammu and Kashmir.

Udhampur city is located at 32.93°N 75.13°E in a relatively flatter part of the district at an elevation of 756 metres

(2480 feet) and rarely experiences any snowfall. The city itself spreads on uneven hills of Shivaliks. Udhampur town like all other towns of the State is expanding in all directions. The expansion has particularly been accelerated due to the location of headquarter of Northern Command of Indian Army. This town is also the district Head Quarter of Udhampur district. Being a centrally located place for some adjoining towns such as Ramnagar, Kishanpur, Ladan, Pancheri, Kud, Sudhmahadev, chenani etc. people started settling here resulting in increase of population of the town and consequently economic activities increased manifold. Such is the impact of expansion of this town that Holy Devika and its tributary Doodh Ganga which used to be the western Limit of the town now is centrally located.

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY:

The present study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. For primary sources of data, questionnaires were prepared. To understand the ground realities, local inhabitants were consulted. The secondary data have been collected from following sources.

- Deputy Commissioner Office, Udhampur.
- Forest and ecological Department.
- Internet.
- Newspaper
- Jal Shakti department.
- Internet. Etc.

The required data is then analyzed and tabulated with the help of statistical techniques. In order to select the area random sampling has been applied. Stratified Random sampling techniques is used. The extent of affected area is analyzed with the help of Google Imageries

HISTORY OF DEVIKA:

Udhampur is additionally notable city for the Devika River also known as Devak Nagri. It also beign called Depka by the local Dogras of the City. The Devika River is otherwise called the more youthful sister of the Ganges. In the Nilmat Puran that was written in the seventh century by Nela Muni, it is referenced that the Devika River is an indication of the mother Goddess Parwati herself to profit the individuals of Mader Desha that covers zones between stream Ravi and Chenab and the waterway Devika showed up on Shiv Ratri. Master Shiva himself stays next to each other with his associate Uma showing himself in type of Shiv Lingas at 8 spots nearby the Devika waterway.

In Devi Mahatmays it is referenced that there is no compelling reason to perform Japa or any custom for acquiring otherworldly advantages at this explorer place, just to contact with the Devika waters or having a shower in its waters is sufficient to get profound advantages. Water comes out by delving about a foot into the sand bed. Incineration on the sands of Devika is considered as praiseworthy as incineration on the banks of the Ganges at Kashi.

RELIGIONAL IMPORTANCE:

There are countless people in the region who pray to the Devika as mother Goddess and elder sister of Ganga. It is believed that having a bath in this River not only purifies human body but also the soul. A tributary Doodh Ganga joins Devika at historical Aapshambu temple, Udhampur named as 'Sangam' a replica of Paryag at Allahabad according to the faith of Hindus. The survival of devika river is in danger after the unprecedented ecological and cultural destruction caused by a series of unauthorized construction and disposal of municipal wastes, other solid wastes and untreated sewage and garbage directly into these water bodies especially sacred Devika River Udhampur and River Tawi.

RESULT:

River Devika receives waste water from the adjoining area of the Town namely Housing Colony, Shiv Nagar, Indra Nagar, Adarsh Colony, Chabutra Bazar, Old Bus Stand, T.B. Hospital, waste from

Military Hospital (Human Wastes), Mohalla M.H. road, Pollution of Police Line area. People of these areas have opened their sewerage pipes, drain outlets, latrine drains, dirty water outlets directly into the river. Besides toilets and other wastes from various schools, big hotels on the encroached Devika Lands have been allowed to pour the dirty water into the Holy River. The

river, which has lot of religious significance and for the Hindus of the State, it has the same significance which the Ganga has for the Hindus of the entire country, sources said. But the river has been reduced to a drainage nullah at present as entire sewerage and sewage water of Udhampur town including waste of hospitals and hotels flows through it.

The overflow from septic tanks is also being discharged into various drains which finally flow into Devika. There are approximately 16 drains which are currently being discharged into Devika and contribute in its pollution to optimum level.

Latest water quality of polluted River, its tributaries, drains with Flow details and ground water Quality in the catchment of Polluted River.

Random sampling is done in some areas of Udhampur district from where Devika flows. These four areas are Devika ghat, Pittanwarh, Badali, Nainsoo, Sudhmahadev. The water quality of the river in these areas are analysed and tabulated below. From the table, we come to the conclusion that this river is at the stage of extinction if proper treatment facilities is not available. As this river has also some religious importance so measures should be taken for improving the water quality of this river so that we can preserve our culture and traditions related to this holy river, Devika.

Fig. 1 Monthly basis Monitoring of River Devika Polluted Stretch at NWMP Sanctioned Location Near Shiv Mandir

Month	Mar-20	June-20	June-20	June-20	July-20	July-20	July-20	Aug-20	Aug-20
BOD	3.0	3.5	0.7	0.3	3.8	0.9	0.5	4.8	0.9
COD	15	11	3.0	0.5	14	3.1	1.8	24	3.1
pH	7.30	7.30	7.85	8.0	7.56	7.85	8.10	7.60	7.5
Hardness	210	180	160	140	200	170	156	192	170
Alkalinity	300	280	196	188	264	216	208	240	200

Plan for restoration of Water quality of polluted stretch of River Devika Up to the level of bathing purpose, the main polluting sources are: -

- Un-treated sewage from nearby localities/Establishments.
- Unabated disposal of Municipal Solid Waste.
- Sewage pollution from minor/major Establishments.

The dump site has been identified at village Khari and Mand, away from main city Udhampur, in which 37.939 Sq. Meter area has been covered, in which 10950 tonnes of waste is being dumped, segregated, and processed. There is 73% door to door collection in Udhampur town, which also minimizes the pollution level in the city. (Jal Shakti department ,2020)

Devika River project

This project is compared with the Namami Ganges Project. This is a Rs. 190 crore Project. The work on the project was started in March 2019 under the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP). Under the project, Bathing “ghats” (places) on the banks of the Devika River will be developed. Encroachments will be removed. Natural water bodies will be restored. Catchment areas will be developed along with cremation ground. Small hydropower plants and three solar power plants shall also be developed. The project will lead to reduction in pollution and improvement in water quality.

Beautification work at Devika River in J-K's Udhampur to boost tourism, increase employment

The project namely, 'Devika Rejuvenation and Beautification' has been taken up under National River Conservation Plan (NRCP), being executed by Urban Environmental Engineering Department (UEED) and its estimated cost is INR 190 crore. In a bid to increase the footfall of tourists and boost employment opportunities in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur, the beautification work around Devika River is underway at war footing.

The project includes the construction of three sewage treatment plants of 8 MLD, 4 MLD and 1.6 MLD capacity, sewerage network of 129.27 km, development of two cremation ghats, protection fencing and landscaping, small hydropower plants and three solar power plants. On completion of the project, the rivers will see reduction in pollution and improvement in water quality.

CONCLUSION:

Devika river has a very old history and had been well described in our ancient scriptures. As it is said- there is divine power in Holy Devika that the ASTHIS put in water of Holy Devika get dissolved within two days. It is considered more sacred than Ganga. All the sins vanish, by taking single bath in its water. There are number of temples, water bowalies etc. in the Devika Temple Complex. The river has social economic manifestation as it not only generates lot of employment opportunities for the local people especially during festivals but also benefits people in performing last rites of the mortal remains of their loved ones.

Survey, Recommendations and Necessity Installation of various water treatment plants on River Devika and its tributary has become a necessary, but these should be recommendations by various boards and agencies more particularly the recommendations made by State Pollution Control Board. A preliminary detailed project report for development of Holy Devika temple complex including the pollution control was prepared with the help of the Infra-Structure Development Consultants, Panchkula. The scope of the envisaged project was pollution control of Holy Devika Complex and construction of other allied infra-structure requirement that is installation of treatment plants