

A Study on Water Falls of Central Kashmir and their Significance

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Abstract

Waterfalls have been well liked tourist attractions in the Kashmir valley since very long. This paper discusses the waterfalls of Central Kashmir in historical perspective, their role in tourism and their impact on the landscape development. Not only a delight to the eyes, have waterfalls provided for a wide range of outdoor activities as well. Usually these are found in higher reaches and dangerous terrains so in order to make it reachable for the tourists, footpaths, narrow roads and even certain passes are constructed. New developments in the form of power generation and an increased number of visitors tend to spoil the aesthetic enjoyment of waterfalls. The study revealed that many tourists as well as common people dislike the commercial development at most of the sites and prefer avoiding such places and choose some other alternative which is not this much explored and misused. Thus a new waterfall which was not much highlighted earlier, gets discovered and made known to the masses and yet again more the display more is the chance of misuse and exploitation of the place. Though the government is committed to the sustainable development but it is the responsibility of every stakeholder to protect the environment while going for developmental works. Neither should be compromised for the sake of other as development and environmental protection go hand in hand.

Keywords: Kashmir, Water fall, Tourism, Economy, government.

INTRODUCTION

A waterfall As per Britannica kids Encyclopedias a place in a river where the water suddenly spills downwards. Some large waterfalls are sometimes called Cataracts which often drop straight down whereby the falling water may not even touch the rock behind it. Small or less steep waterfalls may be called Cascades which often fall over a number of short rock walls. The

action of flowing water is one of the most common causes of waterfalls. Flowing water wears away the rock in a riverbed which sometimes contain areas of hard rock and areas of soft rock. In these cases the river wears away the soft rock before the hard rock. The hard rock that is left creates a steep wall. The river water plunges over the rock wall, forming a waterfall. Waterfalls also form as a result of movements in Earth's crust. These

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movements can cause huge blocks of rock to rise or drop. This creates rock walls over which rivers may fall. Large, moving sheets of ice called glaciers also can cut away rock to form waterfalls. Jammu & Kashmir is located in northernmost India between latitudes 32°-15' and 37°-05' and longitudes 72°-35' and 80°-20'. It is bordered by Pakistan in the west, China in the north and east. Its southern border is formed by Punjab and Himachal Pradesh states. It occupies 222,236 square kilometers, or 6.93% of the territory of India. The U.T. is known for its natural splendor, kind hospitality, and unity in variety. It has something to offer to everyone. The valley has various attributes that are timeless in their appeal, including the rich beauty of its attractions, temperate climate, historic sites, majestic snow-capped mountains, lush grasslands and forests, serene backwaters and beaches, stunning rivers and lakes, waterfalls and, above all, its well-meaning, endearing people. All these team up to make the valley truly a "paradise on earth." The tourist destinations continue to be highly regarded on a global scale, and each year a large number of travelers from all over the world visit these locations (Rai, 2007, Nengroo and Bhat, 2015). This sector provides a direct source of income for almost 70% of the state population (Economic survey, 2014-15; 2022-23). Bhatt, 2005, reported in "Land and people of Indian states and union territories: (in 36 volumes). The study conducted by Bhat and Yadav 2018, discussed the impact of tourism on the economy of J&K and a number of studies on water bodies of Kashmir simultaneously are found in the literature (e.g., Dar and Choaubey, 2021). In the state's economy, tourism plays a significant role. Many rural destinations in the valley are unexplored so there is a need to develop tourism in these areas so that more travelers are attracted to visit the nature-bound places. This in-turn will boost the income of the locals in particular and of the valley in general. In short a sort of ecotourism, nature tourism, agriculture tourism, whatever we call it must be developed. The villages of Jammu and Kashmir have their own distinct characteristics and magnificent natural beauty, which catch the eyes of both domestic and foreign tourists. For urban residents who reside in over populated and much polluted cities, the beauty and the calm of the villages serve as major draws (Wani and Balamurgan, 2022).

Study Area: In J&K we have 20 districts in total, with 10 districts in Kashmir region and 10 in Jammu region. The present study was based on Central Kashmir region which consists of three districts namely Srinagar, Budgam and Ganderbal district.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is mostly based on the information collected from secondary sources during 2023-24. The primary data was collected from surveys, group discussion with people who reside around waterfalls, people who visit waterfalls and share their experiences and knowledge regarding their visit to these places of attraction. The information for this research paper has also been collected from the government sources available online on their official websites. In addition to this, the data has been collected from journals, articles and newspapers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Jammu and Kashmir is well known worldwide for some of its significant waterfalls along with ice covered peaks, Rocky Mountains, superb glaciers and delightful gardens. These waterfalls and the surroundings nearby are often used to spend quality time in quiet atmosphere. They act as a catalyst of revitalization away from the daily dull life routines. These waterfalls not only display the breath taking beauty they possess but the visitors can also engage in a variety of adventure sports to make the most out of their waterfall site experience. Some of the activities are as under:

Picnic Spot: The surroundings around the waterfall are usually lush green making it suitable for people to spend time with family and friends by just spreading a small sheet, wrapping up meals in a picnic basket and enjoy the serene beauty.

Photography: To make memories out of the visit to these beautiful waterfalls, the best way to capture the moment forever is by clicking the pictures and storing them in the mobile phones or the camera. The picturesque surroundings attract every nature lover to capture stunning shots so that they can share it with others. This not only creates a memory but also displays the beauty of the place to people who see it and crave to explore the place as soon as possible. In a way it's a personal experience helping to promote the tourist rush to the site.

Trekking: As the waterfalls are covered with rocky and rugged terrains, trekking to the base or summit can be a thrilling experience. Trekkers take up the endearing task amidst nature's calling beauty with sound of the fall adding to the cinematic background as if there is a movie being pictured throughout.

Relaxation: The melody in the sound of water falling from the fall and the peace and serene

atmosphere around gives a sort of solace to a human soul. People can just close their eyes, lie back and forget about the worries and stress of life and relax as if there is nothing between them and nature just peace and only peace around. .

In this study, we try to bring to fore the importance of waterfalls of Kashmir and their impact on the valley economically and socially.

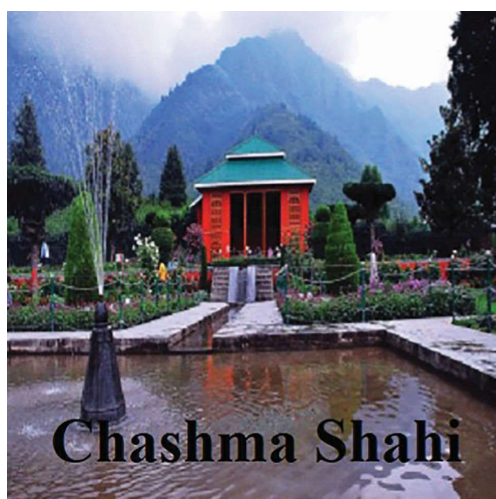
Krishansar Waterfall: It originates from an alpine high elevation oligotrophic lake called Krishansar

Lake situated near Sonamarg, in the Ganderbal district of J&K. It can be accessed from Srinagar 80 kilometers by road up to village Shitkadi from which ponies can be hired to cover an alpine trek of 35kms to reach the destination, which takes a complete day of trek, passing Nichnai Pass of 4100 meters above sea level. The best time to visit the lake is from the month of June to September. Visitors can enjoy leisurely walks along the banks of the waterfall or embark on trekking expeditions to explore the picturesque meadows around.



Chashme Shahi: It is one of the most beautiful Mughal gardens, a delightful example of Mughal horticultural aesthetic with a Persian influence constructed in 1632 AD in the heart of Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, India. Commissioned by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan for his elder son, Dara Shikoh, Chashme Shahi was built by his governor Ali Mardan. Primarily famous for its natural spring, this garden catches the eyes of the tourists in Srinagar.

It is believed to have been discovered by the great female saint of Kashmir, Rupa Bhawani, the spring got its name from her clan and was originally called Chashma-e- Sahibi. Tourists visit this attraction to drink the water from the spring which is believed to have medicinal properties. On top of it, even in summer season, the water from the spring is always cold. The garden itself provides a serene environment to relax and enjoy the natural beauty of Kashmir.



Dara Harwan waterfall: Harwan lies on the outskirts of Srinagar which has the ruins of an old Buddhist Monastery and it is quiet impossible to imagine the importance of the site without

mentioning this fact. In the history of Buddhism this ancient monastery played a pivotal role as it is said that the 4th Buddhist council of the Sarvastivada school of Buddhism was held sometime in the 1st or

2nd century CE, on the orders of the Kushana emperor Kanishka I. Harwan has also been the home to one of the greatest Buddhist masters Nagarjuna (150-250 CE), who propounded the theory of 'Sunnyata' or 'Emptiness' which was a cause of revolutionising the Buddhist thought. Tracing its history one feels that the significance this place once had with respect to the history of Buddhism in Kashmir, is somewhat lost

because of the modernisation in vogue. Dara Harwan is a beautiful Village of Srinagar district, 23Kms from Srinagar's Lal Chowk. It is famous for clear air, pristine water and scenery which are adorned by the visitors. In summers local as well outside visitors enjoy trekking and waterfall of this area. Dara is also a route to the Mahadev peak.

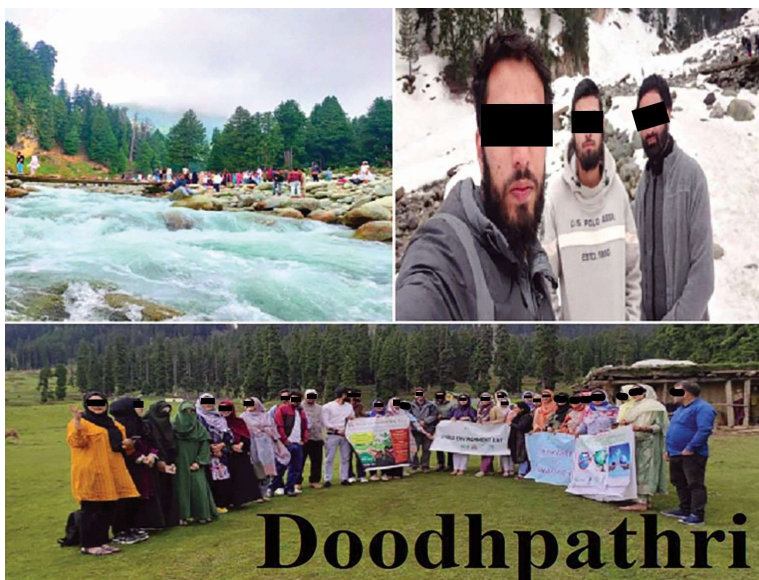


Doodhpathri: Doodhpathri is a picturesque hill station in the Budgam region of Jammu and Kashmir, India. It is located around 42 kilometers (26 miles) from Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir. The travel from Srinagar to Doodhpathri usually takes 1.5 to 2 hours, depending on road conditions and traffic. The drive provides stunning views of the Kashmir landscape, which includes undulating hills, attractive villages, and thick woods. Doodhpathri is situated at an elevation of approximately 8,957 feet (2,730 meters) above sea level. The location is bordered by extensive forests of deodar and pine trees, making it ideal for nature lovers. The name "Doodhpathri" translates to "Valley of Milk," derived from the frothy, milky appearance of the water caused by the rapid flow of water through large rocks, which creates white foam and bubbles, that flows through the area, particularly in the Shaliganga River. The valley is notable for its beautiful green pastures, undulating hills, and the river Shaliganga which meanders through it. The river's water is crystal pure and frequently characterized as having a milky white appearance, particularly when it flows quickly over the rocks. Doodhpathri is interspersed with little streams, making it an excellent location for picnics, trekking, and horseback riding. The tranquil surroundings and stunning views provide the ideal respite from the hustle and bustle of city life. The Shaliganga River that flows from the Pir Panjal Range, is a part of the Western Himalayas. It is nourished by melting snow and glacial waters

from the upper elevations of this mountain range. The river travels through the Doodhpathri valley, enhancing the region's natural beauty by passing through lush green meadows, dense forests, and small villages. River Jhelum is one of the main rivers in the valley, and the waters of the Shaliganga River contribute to its overall flow as it passes through the valley and into Pakistan. The Doodhpathri Waterfall is a popular tourist attraction because of its serene surroundings and the calming sound of cascading water. The Shaliganga River eventually joins the Sukhnag River, which is a tributary of the Jhelum River which is important to the ecology and economy of the area. In addition to lush woodlands and a profusion of wildflowers, the area surrounding the waterfall is rich in flora. Travellers can take a taxi or drive themselves from Srinagar to reach Doodhpathri via road. Though occasionally narrow and twisty, the route to Doodhpathri is generally well-maintained. The only indication of civilization back then was a small settlement made up of the shepherds' homes. However, thanks to the government's attempt for its promotion, it is now rapidly increasing and experiences year-round demand from tourists. A resort for visitors wishing to spend the night has also been constructed in Doodhpathri by JKTDC. Since it can be somewhat challenging to get there during the peak of winter due to heavy snowfall, the area does not yet have year-round road access. Doodhpathri is best visited in the summer season especially from May to September. For those seeking to take

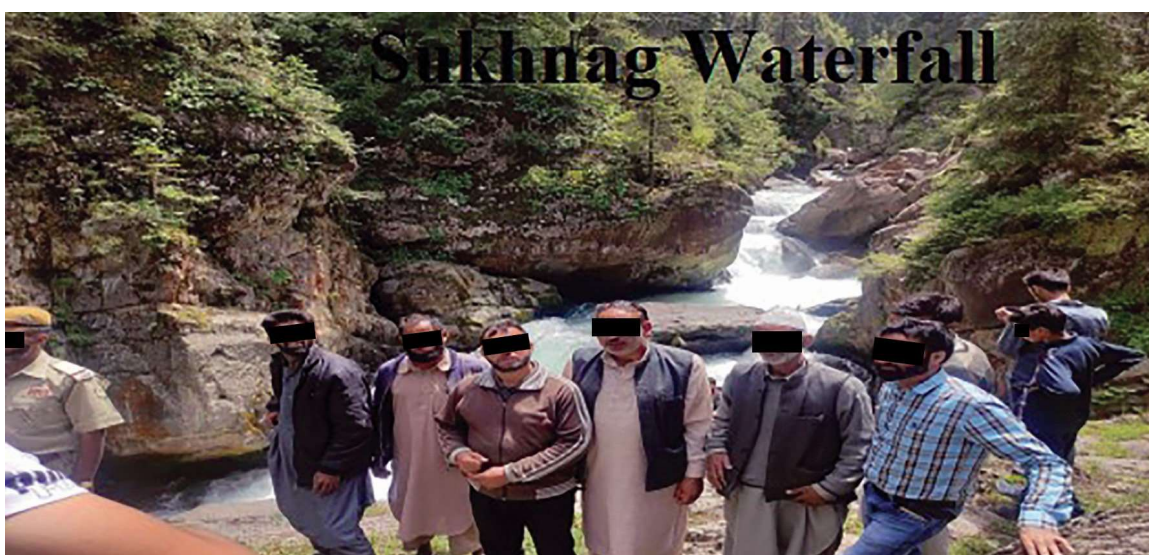
in the unspoiled beauty of the area, Doodhpathri continues to be one of Kashmir's less frequented and commercialized tourist attractions, providing

a tranquil haven. Trekkers, nature enthusiasts, and anyone looking for peace amidst wilderness will find it to be a haven.



Sukhnag: The term “Sukhnag” originates from the Kashmiri language, where “Nag” denotes a spring or stream, and “Sukh” means “peace.” For this reason, Sukhnag means “the spring of peace,” which reflects the serene character of the river and its surrounding area. The Sukhnag River runs through the Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir and originates near Tosamaidan, a high-altitude meadow in the Pir Panjal Range, a notable sub range of the western Himalayas. The river is located roughly 35 to 40 kilometres (22 to 25 miles) from Srinagar, the summer capital of J&K. The travel from Srinagar to the Sukhnag River area usually takes about 1 to 1.5 hours. The river travels northeast through Budgam district, past lush green valleys, forests, and various settlements before entering the Jhelum River. It flows through a

variety of attractive locations, including the famous Doodhpathri valley, where it is joined by smaller streams and tributaries, including the Shaliganga River. Eventually, the Sukhnag River flows towards the lowlands, where it merges with the Jhelum River, one of the main river which flows through the Valley. The ecosystem of the area depends on the Sukhnag River, which also supports local wildlife and agriculture. For millennia, the meadows and forests around the river have been exploited for pastoral and agricultural purposes, contributing to the area's cultural legacy. Doodhpathri is at present considered as one of the favourite travel destination by tourists and even students for its waterfall, environment and beautiful scenery.



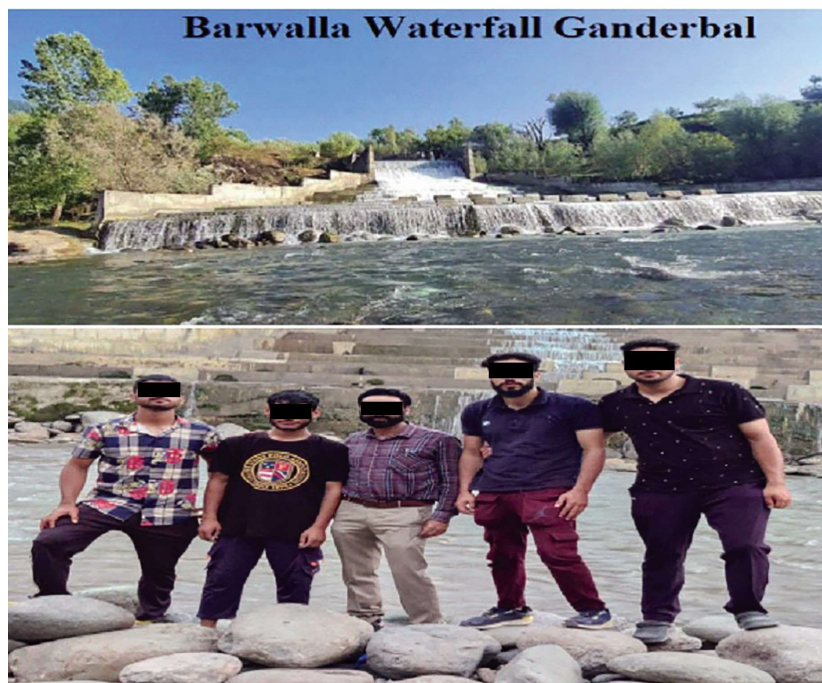
Nunar Wterfall Ganderbal: Nuner village is located in district Ganderbal situated 6km away from sub-district headquarter Ganderbal (tehsildar office) and 6km away from district headquarter Ganderbal. Nunar waterfal is man-made waterfall

and is less known as compared to other waterfalls of area like Preng waterfall etc. Generally tourists stop at this waterfall during their travel to Sonmarg and other tourist places.



Barwalla Waterfall Ganderbal: One of Kashmir's largest artificial waterfalls and amongst most picturesque and stunning features is the Barwalla waterfall of Ganderbal in Kangan Tehsil 34 km away from district Srinagar. This lovely waterfall

frequently visited by tourists is just a one kilometre away from Kangan's Dumping Park. A man-made channel is causing rushing water to fill the area (waterfall) which is encircled by lovely trees. The place is visited by locals as well as tourists.



Sonmarg Waterfall: Sonmarg situated in district Ganderbal is a must visit place. This beautiful place is blessed with splendid beauty. We have the Thajwas glacier that adds to the beauty of the place. It has a frozen lake, alpine trees, meadows and several waterfalls that adorn the glacier, making it more

enchanting for travel. Sonmarg one of the important tourist destination in Kashmir valley is very important place because of its economic importance. The waterfalls around Sonmarg area are visited by tourists throughout the year.



Tourism and Regional Development

Tourism as a service sector industry can act as a catalyst in the development of that region. Most of the tourist spots with scenic and beautiful locations are located mostly in the far-flung and backward areas which contribute significantly in their economic progress and social upliftment. The main advantage and benefit, the tourism activities bring is the generation of money and the creation of jobs particularly for the local residents.

Environmental Challenges

The following points need to be taken care of while promoting any tourist destination:

1. Policy makers, administrators, and governments must implement the practical steps to achieve the balance between tourism and environment of area. The priority should be given to the surrounding environments, flora and fauna while developing infrastructure.
2. There is a need for sustainable growth in different forms of tourism like eco-tourism, adventure, cultural, mountain, etc. through adherence to international standards/ principles.

Social Media in Promoting Tourist Destinations

Worldwide a large population is using different social media sites. Private and government agencies can use social media for the marketing and promotion of tourist destinations. Social Media is a tool, which gives information and knowledge about tourism products and tourism places. Further, it allows tourists to share their opinions, experiences and problems they faced during their visit. The researchers suggested that we must work for sustainable tourism planning and development.

CONCLUSIONS

Waterfalls of Kashmir are, in true sense, unison of nature and soul. The sounds of water falling and the solace a human soul feels is truly divine. From the majestic Sonamarg to the serene Doodhpathri Falls in Central Kashmir, each location offers a unique experience and picturesque ambiance. Whether we look for an adventure or a peaceful getaway, these waterfalls cater to all the wishes and promise unforgettable memories. These splendid creations of nature are perfect to spend time together and enjoy with our friends and family. Though the nature embraces us with open arms but we should not forget that it too needs something in return. YES! "Preservation": When we as locals will try to preserve these gems then only we can help the government to present them for masses because it is the beauty that attracts not the destruction. A balance is to be struck between the exploration and the misuse of nature in the form of these waterfalls. They can be a source of income generation, employment but all this is to be strategically done. When we are putting things on display, (here these places on the tourism map) we need to devise proper innovative solutions beforehand so that there is no misuse of the thing displayed. Hotel facilities, proper transportation and even eateries and sanitation facilities, minimal visiting charges can be imposed so that the visit is a wholesome one. For the preservation part the government can impose fines to ones polluting the surroundings i.e. polluters pay principle (the one who pollutes will be liable to pay for the pollution caused). Tourism in Kashmir definitely needs a boost and recognition on the world tourism platform but for that we need to address the key issues hampering our ways to meet this goal. Once

when we are aware of our lacunas and faults then only we can rectify and come to the forefront to achieve our required goals with more confidence and better innovative solutions.

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