

Independent Kashmir: Practical Possibilities

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Abstract

Unabated curfews, clampdown on all sorts of communications including media gag, and protests in Indian-administered Kashmir is not a new phenomenon, it has been going on since 1947. Over tens of thousands civilian got killed, innumerable locals got permanently disabled and the region has suffered immense economical loss. Kashmir witnessed civil uprising in 2016, 2008 and 2010 that led to killing of hundreds of civilians. Though, the region has seen many lull periods (normalcy), which never lasted, even a small untoward happening in Kashmir can trigger a massive uprising. The underlying fact is the majority of population in this region have been demanding freedom, according to an opinion poll conducted in 1995 by a credible Indian magazine (Outlook): 72% respondents opted for Independence as an option which is enormous. Similar sort of poll on the issue was conducted by Chatham House, think-tank in London, has shown that an overwhelming number of people, 74% to 95%, in Kashmir region support independence. The huge percentage based on these polls demands an exhaustive viability study which in this paper will be restricted to some significant arguments put forth by many well know experts on the subject. In this paper an attempt has been made to answer some of the questions like: In present day world order and given historical perspective, Independent Kashmir (IK) can't exist? Moreover, the small area and population of the region, would IK be a viable option. Give the poor educational status, the IK could be a breeding ground for 'Islamic Jihadist'. And of all these much talked about issues are that of security, land locked state, economic dependency and similar concerns have often been put forth when question of independence crop-up in the power corridors of India and Pakistan.

Keywords: Conflict; Independence; Islamic Jihadist; Security; Economic dependency

Introduction

Over the decades, the people of Kashmir have expressed their desire to have an identity, a homeland, and a separate nation where they are secure, in many forms at multiple times. However, the Indian state has so far successfully been able to convince the global community about the non-viability of an Independent Kashmir. Persistent curfews, clampdown on all sorts of communications including media gag, killings, and protests in Kashmir have become a norm since 1947-the year which saw the independence of India and Pakistan-when Kashmir lost its Freedom. The Indian state is all powerful to use all these tools to check the just movement of stranded Kashmiris, however, this policy has pushed common Kashmiris to wall and are giving tough resistance to the establishment.

Though, the region witnesses normalcy (lull periods) however, small untoward happenings in Kashmir have triggered massive uprisings leaving New Delhi and the state government dumb stuck. Why is it so and what brings people to the roads to pelt stones and protest? The fact is that the majority of the population in this region have been demanding freedom, as suggested by the findings of reliable research and media houses. According to an opinion poll conducted in 1995 by a credible Indian magazine (Outlook): 72% of respondents opted for Independence of the region as an option [1].

Similar sorts of polls on the subject have been conducted by Chatham House [2], a think-tank in London, which showed that an overwhelming number of people: 74% to 95% in Kashmir region support independence. Till date, the state has experimented many measures and to some extent have succeeded in containing the masses, however, the successive governments have failed miserably in winning hearts and altering the desires of the people: Freedom [3]. The huge percentage based on the polls can't be wished away; reasonably, it needs some detailed study. While the idea needs rational thinking, however, some concerns need to be addressed given the complexities that have engulfed the region. In the present day world-order and given the historical perspective, can Independent Kashmir (IK) exist?

Moreover, regarding the small area and population of the region, will it be practical? Given the poor educational status, the IK could be a breeding ground for 'Islamic Jihadist'. And the much talked about issues are: security, land locked region, economic dependency and many more which are often raised. The most obvious question to be followed should be: Is an Independent Kashmir practical and a viable solution? This paper tries to critical examine the viability of the Independent Kashmir through various dimensions that a new state should possess to survive and sustain the sovereignty.

In this paper an attempt has been made to go through the exiting literature by the researchers, studies by the independent institutions, government reports and credible news reports to analyze and examine the practicality of Kashmir nation.

As analyzed by the Meyer et al. [4], the nation-state as a worldwide institution constructed by worldwide cultural and associational processes, developing four main topics: properties of nation-states that result from their exogenously driven construction; processes by which rationalistic world culture affects national states; characteristics of world society that enhance the impact of world culture on national states and societies, and dynamic features of world culture and society that generate expansion, conflict, and change, especially the statelessness of world society, legitimization of multiple levels of rationalized actors, and internal inconsistencies and contradictions. On the similar lines the dimensions like historical aspect, area, population, security, secularity,

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scholars' & international independent agencies' perspective, education, and economic opportunities have been taken in account while evaluating the practical possibilities of Independent Kashmir.

Literature Review

In one of the significant research, Wimmer and Feinstein [5] concludes their study with a note on that secessions from established nation-states will continue to occur, as the recent creations of Kosovo, East Timor, and Montenegro. And the few existing non-national states in the Middle East and elsewhere might experience a constitutional revolution in the future. The nationalist dream of organizing the world into a series of states that provide a roof for each culturally defined people, to use a Gellnerian metaphor, has come close to being realized. History, however, refuses to ever come to an end. It represents a trail traversed in the past, not a compass to determine its future direction. Generations to come will certainly imagine other communities than the nation and reshape the world's political landscape according to tectonic principles that we cannot possibly imagine today.

India has for several years been regarded as an emerging or rising state Cohen [6] in of the chapter mentions. After decades of unfulfilled promise, it now seems to be inching ahead, with more rapid economic growth, new attention from the major powers, and the development of a modest nuclear arsenal. These adding these developments to India's traditional strengths-a unique and persistent democracy and an influential culture-it is no wonder that many have predicted the emergence of India as a major Asian power, or even a world-class state. However, this remains a problematic development as long as India's comprehensive and debilitating rivalry with Pakistan continues, including that dimension of the rivalry that encompasses the fifty-year old Kashmir dispute.

The Cohen [7] in his book 'India: emerging power' has gone deeper to an extent where he has questioned India's insecurity mentioned, "One of the most important puzzles of India-Pakistan relations is not why the smaller Pakistan feels encircled and threatened, but why the larger India does. It would seem that India, seven times more populous than Pakistan and five times its size, and which defeated Pakistan in 1971, would feel more secure. This has not been the case and Pakistan remains deeply embedded in Indian thinking. There are historical, strategic, ideological, and domestic reasons why Pakistan remains the central obsession of much of the Indian strategic community, just as India remains Pakistan's."

Besides, UNMOGIP [8] in one of its reports mention that the failure of diplomacy to address, let alone resolve the Kashmir dispute is remarkable, given the amount of attention paid to it. After the 1948, and 1965 India Pakistan wars, and the India-China war of 1962, there were concerted efforts to resolve Kashmir. In 1948, the United Nations became deeply involved-Kashmir is the oldest conflict inscribed in the body of UN resolutions and is certainly one of the most serious.

Yet other important study by Widmalm [9] states in a conclusion remarks that the political violence within democracies can be countered by functioning and well-organized institutions, and by political freedom. Also, mentions that it is yet to be seen whether or not the legitimacy of the Indian union's rule can be restored in Jammu and Kashmir.

Describing the gravity of the problem Ganguly [10] emphasis that the dispute over Kashmir has dogged relations between India and Pakistan since the states were created by the partition of British since the states were created by the partition of British India in 1947. The two

countries have fought three wars (in 1947-48, 1965, and 1999) over the issue and related matters; twice (in 1990 and 2001-2002) they nearly resorted to the use of nuclear weapons.

Methodology

The paper analyzes the one of the least discussed options of historically entangled Kashmir political issue in context of new nation state. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the practical possibilities of Independent Kashmir through existing literature informal interviews which includes questions about the small area and population of the region, poor educational status, breeding ground for 'Islamic Jihadist', security, land locked state, economic dependency and similar sorts. In this paper mostly secondary data has been used for the analysis purposes. Furthermore, the existing literature at large have not discussed the Independent Kashmir in depth, making gender specific analyses difficult.

Discussion

The below discussion has been made on various variables that an independent nation should possess. These dimensions include historical perspective, area and population, security concerns, secular state, landlocked nation, education, economic opportunities, trade imbalances, scholar's take, and international independent agencies' perspective:

Historical perspective

In 1947, the economy of Kashmir was closely linked with Pakistan. Its best communications with the outside world lay through Pakistan by way of the Indus River and the road from Srinagar, the Maharaja's summer capital, to Rawalpindi in Pakistan. The researcher lucidly states the economic ties of the region with Pakistan pre-1947 [11].

Similar views have been expressed in a techno-economic survey of Jammu and Kashmir by the National Council of Applied Economic Research [12] which mentions that with the contentious accession of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) to the Indian union in 1947, all earlier roadways and waterways became entirely useless for the people of the state. The age-old economic ties of the people living in the state, particularly on its borders, with those living on the other side of the frontiers had been cut-off, thereby shattering the entire economic structure which was so laboriously and diligently built through centuries.

Likewise, Joseph Korbel in his book titled 'Danger in Kashmir' published by Princeton University Press states that about 36% of the trade was with west Punjab and 64% with those areas which later on constituted what is now known as India. Prior to 1947, almost all export and import businesses of the state were carried on with or through west Punjab which later on became part of Pakistan. Besides blocking the historical routes of the state and splitting the territory, the conflict between India and Pakistan also led to the imposition of restrictions, through the Indus Water Treaty.

Based on the culture and economy of the region, a well-planned partition would have awarded the greater part of Kashmir to Pakistan. However, Kashmir, with its overwhelming Muslim majority, was controlled by a Hindu ruler of the dynasty known as the Dogra Rajputs, Alastair Lamb in his book 'The Kashmir Problem: A Historical Survey' mentions [13].

According to a report by Observer Research Foundation [14], the Indus Water Treaty which was signed in 1960 between India and

Pakistan has remained controversial as it involves the sharing of water of the Indus basin between the two countries. The treaty includes an agreement that Pakistan would receive unrestricted use of the western rivers, which India would allow to flow unimpeded, with minor exceptions. Moreover, the treaty disallows Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) to store the water, which is necessary for power projects and subsequently the state is unable to set up its own electricity projects on the two important rivers. The provisions of the treaty has also a very negative impact on the agricultural sector of the state as irrigation projects could not be set up in view of the fact that construction of storage dams is not being allowed by the treaty.

The author of the book, *Modern History of Jammu and Kashmir: Ancient times to Shimla Agreement*, Agrawal [15], mentions in his book that on 3rd of November, 1947, Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on All India Radio broadcast, said "We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given not only to the people of Kashmir but to the world. We will not and cannot back out of it."

Rao Farman Ali, author of the book: *Kashmir: A Century Struggle (1846-1948)* [16] mentions in his book that so far as Pakistan's stand on the concept of Independence to Jammu & Kashmir, the policy statements of June 16, July 11 and July 30, 1947, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the President of Muslim League had declared that Indian Princely states had every right to declare complete Independence in addition to their right to join India or Pakistan. His (Jinnah's) statement issued on July 11, 1947 said, "I have clearly made it clear more than once that the Indian States are free to join either the Pakistan Constituent Assembly or Indian Constituent Assembly or remain Independent. I have no doubt that the Maharaja and the Kashmir government will give their closest attention and consideration to his matter and realize that interests not only of the ruler but also of his people."

More than anything else the accession of J&K to the Indian Union devastated the economic structure of a historically Independent Kashmir (which was an independent state until the merger with the Mughal Empire in 1586). History is the witness of the existence of independent state; in the past if an independent Kashmir existed with all the difficulties and tough times, so it can survive and exist now as well.

Area and population

Jammu and Kashmir, situated between 32° 17' N and 36° 58' N latitudes and 73° 26' E and 80° 30' E longitudes, the total area of J&K is 222236 sq. Km of which 78114 sq. Km is under Pakistan and 37555 sq. Km under China [17]. In addition, 5180 sq. Km area of J&K was given away to China by Pakistan.

As per 2011 census J&K has 125.41 lakh population. Interestingly, the population of J&K is more than the individual populations of as many as 157 UN member (World Population Prospects, the 29 Revision) [18] nations and inhabited dependent territories. While J&K's area is larger than that of 173 countries (CIA publication) [19] globally.

The number of population and size favors the sentiment of the local population who want a separate homeland. And for those who defy it needs to answer the questions like: If these nations with so little area and population can survive, an independent Kashmir too can exist.

Security concern

Now let's talk about the most debated apprehension: security concern. People have been arguing that as per the UN resolution, there

is NO provision for Independent Kashmir. Besides, both India and Pakistan will fight the idea tooth and nail. An independent Kashmir will also be up for grabs geo-politically as it will share its borders with other countries like Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and China. Add to this a strong US presence in the region and the state becomes vulnerable to big-power rivalry and exploitation.

A neutral opinion on these can be argued in a proposition: The Independent Kashmir has the potential to act as a buffer state lying between two hostile nuclear powers i.e. India and Pakistan. Rather than escalating tension on borders as is the case now, the buffer state's existence can prevent conflict between all the countries sharing boundaries. Take the case of Uruguay that served as a demilitarized buffer-zone between Argentina and the Empire of Brazil during the early independence period in South America. Similarly, The Far Eastern Republic was a formally independent state created to act as a buffer between Bolshevik Russia and Imperial Japan. Also, Poland and other states between Germany and the Soviet Union have sometimes been described as buffer states. Many such practical examples exist globally.

Besides, the high mountains that surround the whole Kashmir will act as natural defense system and will be a viable from security point of view of the state.

Secular state

It needs no mention that the state has a secular nature which the local population have exhibited time and again. Recently, when the whole Kashmir valley witnessed a curfew for more than 100 days (still the curfew is going on as I am writing this paper), the Kashmiri Muslims have defied restrictions to attend the funeral of a Kashmiri Pandit family. According to a report by Indian Express [20], published from New Delhi, on July 17, 2016: "The residents of Sheikh Mohalla in Maharaj Gunj rushed to help Deepak Malhotra and his family perform the last rites of his mother, who passed away on Saturday morning, a police official said." This should say a lot about Kashmiris and the existence of religious harmony in the region. So why is it considered a breeding ground for 'Islamic Jihadist'?

A Kashmiri novelist, Dr. Nitasha Kaul, in an article in *Open Democracy (Kashmir: A Place of Blood and Memory)* [21] says 'India is demographically a Hindu majority state, and for all its talk of 'unity in diversity', it is intolerant towards its minorities. That discrimination and intolerance flourishes in Pakistan or China or the West is no justification for ignoring this fact in India. For instance, there is a violent ongoing repression of the tribals, there is recurrent and extreme state brutality in Kashmir, there have been orchestrated pogroms against the Muslims (Gujarat 2002), violence against the Sikhs (Delhi 1984), the Christians (Orissa 2007-08), add to which, there is a constant ongoing broad-ranging discrimination against people in terms of their religion, caste, class, gender, sexuality.' She also talks about historical religious harmony the region possesses which nobody talks about. 'The biggest myth of recent times is that of seeing Kashmir historically in terms of Muslims versus Hindus, instead of Muslims and Hindus. Kashmiris did not see themselves in these terms until they were classified as such by the political games of the later part of the twentieth century. The centuries-old tradition of '*Kashmiriyat*' bears testimony to the identity of Kashmiris as a people who did not let their religious affiliations overwhelm their ethnic and regional commonality.' In so many ways, Kashmir was 'special'. The Kashmiri political voice and consciousness was different from that of the rest of India. The Kashmiris of an earlier generation-up until the 1980s-saw themselves as 'Kashmiris', in spite of everything. Kashmiris as a people have historically shared language,

mannerisms, speech inflections, customs and even some festivals such as the springtime '*Badaamwari*'.

Another author, Rahul Pandita [22] in his book 'Our moon has blood clots: the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits' writes at a time when the rest of India was ravaged with the violence of Partition, Mahatma Gandhi saw the only ray of hope in Kashmir. When Mahatma Gandhi could see a ray of hope in Kashmir, today's leaders in India should be able to see it as well.

Landlocked nations

A lot has been written on J&K being a landlocked region however, thorough research presents an altogether different case. Kashmir acted as a significant trade transit linking undivided India with Central Asia through the Silk Route. A book, 'Central Asia and Kashmir: A study in the Context of Anglo-Russian Rivalry' by Warikoo [23], writes about how due to its geographical proximity to Central Asia and linkage with the Silk Route system, Kashmir acted as an important transit emporium in the bilateral Indo-Central Asian trade. The restoration of old trade links and opening of new trade links will certainly boost the economy of Independent Kashmir.

Besides, Kashmir due to its physical contiguity with India and Pakistan, water resources, physical access with the Great Silk Route has a great geo-political, economic, strategic and military importance for both countries; argue researchers Kalis and Dar in "Geo-political Significance of Kashmir: An overview of Indo-Pak Relations" [24] published in IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science.

Scholars take

India is holding onto Kashmir by paying through nose and a time will surely come when there will be no option left for India but to break the golden chains. As rightly said by the famous novelist, Arundhati Roy, in her article, 'Land and Freedom: Kashmir is in Crisis' published in The Guardian [25] India needs *azadi* (Freedom) from Kashmir just as much as-if not more than-Kashmir needs *azadi* from India.

Similarly, Philip Spratt, an English journalist, editing a Bangalore journal MysIndia, wrote in 1952 that India should abandon its claim over Kashmir, and allow Sheikh Abdullah to realize his dream of independence. Spratt wanted the Indian army to be withdrawn from J&K and all loans to the state written off. Spratt wrote, 'Let Kashmir go ahead, alone and adventurously, in her explorations of a secular state'.

Even Indian historian and writer-Ramachandra Guha, in 'India After Gandhi' writes, "Spratt's solution was tinged with morality, but more so with economy and prudence. Indian policy, he argued, was based on 'a mistaken belief in the one-nation theory and greed to own the beautiful and strategic valley of Srinagar'. The costs of this policy, present and future, were incalculable. Rather than give Kashmir special privileges and create resentment elsewhere in India, it was best to let the state go."

Similar views were recently expressed by the chairman of the Hurriyat Conference (M), Dr. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq [26], in an open letter to the people of India on the Kashmir issue published in The Hindu which stated, "Indeed, the Kashmir conflict is a direct threat to your prosperity. With more than 800 million people in India still living on less than \$2 (INR 120) a day, surely the estimated \$37-47 billion a year that goes as military expenditure (which is 2% to 2.5% of GDP) could be put to much better use towards initiatives to lift more and more people out of poverty. If the Kashmir issue is resolved, not only would this costly arms race come to an end, it would open up the multipliers of

economic cooperation and trade. Certainly, ensuring lasting peace and stability is the greatest foundation for your future prosperity, economic growth and development."

Recently, in a report by Kashmir Life, a weekly published from Kashmir, Professor Noam Chomsky [27], the legendary American philosopher and intellectual, has said that the Indian Army should leave Kashmir in the face of 'horrible atrocities' committed in the region. "Indo-Pak conflict is ridiculous for both," he said. "Both nations should agree to a federal structure which gives more or less Independence to Kashmir."

International independent agencies

The International Crisis Group-an independent, non-profit organization, working to prevent and resolve deadly conflict-in one of its reports on Kashmir 'Steps Towards Peace: Putting Kashmiris First' [28] mentions how 'India and Pakistan have consistently subjected Kashmiri interests to their own national security agendas and silenced calls for greater autonomy. With the start of their composite dialogue-comprehensive negotiations to resolve all contentious bilateral issues, including Kashmir, launched in February 2004-both appeared willing to allow more interaction across the line of control (LOC) but failed to engage Kashmiris in the process. As a result, they did not take full advantage of opportunities to enhance cross-LOC cooperation by identifying the most appropriate Kashmir-specific confidence-building measures (CBMs), and bureaucratic resistance in both capitals resulted in uneven implementation of even those that had been agreed.'

The United States Institute of Peace-an independent, nonpartisan organization that works to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict around the world-in one of their reports on LoC trade talks about economic coloration (Promoting Cross-LoC Trade in Kashmir: An Analysis of the Joint Chamber) states that "one of the most promising recent developments has been the formation of the Federation of Jammu and Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Joint Chamber), the first formal joint establishment across the Line of Control, which is poised to play a central role in future efforts at increasing economic collaboration."

Again, Conciliation Resources in its report 'Bridging Divides: towards effective disaster preparedness and response in Kashmir' [29], argues that preparing for and allowing collaborative responses to take place across the Line of Control which divides Kashmir would make disaster responses vastly more effective. It would save lives and facilitate confidence building among diverse constituencies and stakeholders, contributing to peace-building in Kashmir and to the peace process between India and Pakistan.

Education

As per the National Census 2011, literacy rate of Indian administered Kashmir is 68.74% with 78.26% male literates and 58.01% female literates. Similarly, for Pakistan-administered Kashmir the literacy rate is 74% [30] which is pretty decent.

At present, Azad Kashmir have five public universities, two private universities, two public medical colleges and one private medical college. Higher education or research institutes in Jammu and Kashmir include the National Institute of Technology, Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Government College of Engineering and Technology-Jammu, Government Medical College-Srinagar and Government Medical College-Jammu. University-level education is provided by University of Kashmir, University of Jammu, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology

of Srinagar, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Institution of Technicians and Engineers (Kashmir), Government Degree College for Boys Anantnag, Central University of Kashmir located at Ganderbal and Central University of Jammu located at Raya Suchani in the Samba District of Jammu.

Given the present infrastructure, status and facts, the population of Independent Kashmir is literate enough and better placed in terms of education as were India and Pakistan at the time of their independence.

Trade imbalances

It has always been argued by some that due to the high trade imbalance, imports exceed exports in J&K, food security is thus an important issue. Let's see how India and Pakistan are surviving. According to a research firm, Trading Economics, India recorded a USD 6.27 billion trade deficit in May of 2016 [31]. Balance of Trade in India averaged -2118.52 USD Million from 1957 until 2016, reaching an all-time high of 258.90 USD Million in March of 1977 and a record low of -20210.90 USD Million in October of 2012. India has been recording sustained trade deficits since 1980 mainly due to the high growth of imports, particularly of crude oil, gold and silver. In recent years, the biggest trade deficits were recorded with China, Saudi Arab, Iraq, Switzerland and Kuwait. India records trade surpluses with US, Singapore, Germany, Netherlands and United Kingdom.

Pakistan meanwhile recorded a trade deficit of 227733 PKR Million (Data by Research firm: Trading Economics) [32] in May of 2016. Balance of Trade in Pakistan averaged -26918.32 PKR Million from 1957 until 2016, reaching an all-time high of 6457 PKR Million in June of 2003 and a record low of -279186 PKR Million in August of 2014. Pakistan has been running consistent trade deficit since 2003 mainly due to high imports of energy. Since 2012, China has emerged as Pakistan's largest trading partner replacing the United States. In recent years, the biggest trade deficits were recorded with China, India, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Malaysia. Pakistan records trade surpluses with the USA, Afghanistan, Germany and UK.

If these two nations who are holding the parts of Kashmir and calming the state in totality can feed their population with these trade deficits and survive for all these years, Independent Kashmir too can subsist.

Economic opportunities

Agriculture has been the mainstay of J&K's economy. More than 70% of its population depends upon agriculture for their livelihood. Even though the contribution of agriculture to GSDP is only 17.49% it has forward and backward linkages with other activities particularly the agro based activities.

As per Census 2011, out of 100 main and marginal workers, 41 are engaged in agricultural activities. Similarly, Agriculture is a major part of Azad Kashmir's economy. There are mineral and marble resources in Azad Kashmir close to Mirpur and Muzaffarabad. There are also graphite deposits at Mohriwali. There are also reservoirs of low-grade coal, chalk, bauxite, and zircon. Local household industries produce carved wooden objects, textiles, and dhurrie carpets. There is also an arts and crafts industry that produces cultural goods such as namdas, shawls, pashmina, basketry copper, rugs, wood carving, silk and woolen clothing, patto, carpets, and silverware. Agricultural goods produced in the region include mushrooms, honey, walnuts, apples, cherries, medicinal herbs and plants, resin, deodar, fir, maple, and ash timber.

Similarly, J&K has abundant potential crops like Apple, Almond, Mango, Walnut, Cherry, Apricot, Plum, Kiwi, Litchi, Olive, Citrus, etc. which have high commercial value. High growth in horticulture sector can contribute to the generation of gainful and permanent employment to a sizable number of people. Kashmir's agriculture has an international identity. Saffron, an agriculture produce, is cultivated in Pulwama and Budgam districts. J&K ranks 1st in India in the qualitative production of saffron.

Besides, J&K has 27781 km length of rivers/streams facilitating fish farming of more than 40 million tons. Fish production is continuously increasing. During the year 2013-14, 2 lakh *quintals* fish production was recorded and revenue receipts from fisheries were INR 513.11 lakh (0.77 million USD). Both production as well as export of handicraft goods have made a substantial performance over the years. The production of handicraft goods reached INR 2017.82 crore (302.67 million USD) during 2013-14 from INR 821.53 crore (123.22 million USD) in 2003-04 recording more than two-and-a-half-fold increase during this period. Similarly, export of handicrafts increased from INR 595.00 crore (89.25 million USD) in 2003-04 to INR 1695.65 crore (254.34 million USD) in 2013.14 i.e. it has increased by about three times during this period. In the export figures, share of woolen shawls was highest 34.19% followed by carpets 32.55% during 2013-14.

In addition, for J&K tourism is not only a growth engine but also an export growth engine and employment generator. The sector has a capacity to create large scale employment, both direct and indirect, for diverse sections of society from the most specialized to not so specialized work force. J&K has a great promise for development of tourism in view of its inherent potential.

Energy is one of the key drivers of the economy. J&K is richly endowed with vast water resources having hydel power potential. The estimated hydel power potential of J&K is 20,000 Megawatts. Out of the identified 16475 MW power potential, only 2813.46 MWs or 17% has been exploited so far. A former chairman of the State Engineering Corporation, Engr. Hussain Ahmad Siddiqui Azad Kashmir mentions that the state has tremendous potential for hydro-power generation, estimated at over 18,000MW.

Also, the J&K is endowed with tremendous mineral resources covering an area of 13334 sq. Kms out of which 60% are reported to be commercially viable for mining.

With all these resources at the disposal of the united Kashmir (J&K, Azad Kashmir and the part held by China), the Independent Kashmir would be easily able to sustain the state economically.

Final Word

Based on the available literature, findings and observation, the author has found positive scores on all the select parameters, be it historical perspective, area and population, security concern, secular state, landlocked nation, scholars-take, trade imbalances, education, international independent agencies' take and above all economic opportunities. To sum up the findings the paper concludes by an adage: Let united Kashmir (J&K, Azad Kashmir and the part held by China) be independent for the greater good of whole South Asian region.

Note

J&K and Indian administered Kashmir and similarly Azad Kashmir and Kashmir administered by Pakistan are interchangeably used.

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