

## Towards Preservation Of Kashmir's Historical Ecology: Role Of Transferable Development Rights [TDR] In Reorienting Urban Growth

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### Abstract:

*The valley of Kashmir possesses unique features in terms of ecological sensitivities and heritage values. It is a valley enclosed by mountain systems on all sides with limited passes which ensured the limited interaction with the outside world in the past. However, given the developmental pressures of rapid urbanization of the contemporary era, the valley is facing challenges in preserving its environment and heritage. With an unprecedented loss of built and natural heritage in the last couple of decades, new ways shall be adopted to check the loss and make ways for a holistic policy framework where the local stakeholders shall be given a share of benefits along with the responsibilities for the protection of heritage and environment of the valley. This paper will explore the prospectus and methods of Transferable Development Rights as a policy framework for the protection of the environment and heritage of the valley.*

**Keywords:** *Transferable development rights, Heritage, Environment, Urban Sprawl.*

### Background:

The valley of Kashmir lies in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir in the Northern region of India. Surrounded by the Greater Himalayas on the northeast and the Pir Panjal range on the southwest, the valley is enclosed on all sides by the Himalayan Mountain ranges with only a few geographical passes allowing access to the valley. The valley has been accessible through Zoji-la Pass from the regions of Ladakh and Tibet, Pir Panjal Pass through the regions of mainland India via Rajouri – Poonch and Punjab, Banihal Pass through the region of Jammu, Sinthan Pass through the region of Kishtwar and a Pass through Uri gorge for accessibility to the region of Muzaffarabad. The valley has been an important centre of learning and knowledge throughout its history owing to its strategic geographic location on the Silk-route and with a setting of natural defence system by the mountain ranges and the climate systems, it has remained impregnable to invasions in its history leading to the flourishing of high culture in medieval times. Adapting to the cultures of mainland India, Central Asia, Persia and Tibet, the inevitable evolution of syncretic traditions is evident in its vernacular built heritage, which is also a reflection of its geo-morphological exclusiveness. The mention of 12-storeyed wooden houses by Kalhana in Rajtarangini in ancient times is one of the many citations of architectural opulence achieved by the civilization of the valley. However, the present-day built heritage is reflective of the heights achieved in architecture through the medieval ages where Sultan Zainul Abideen of the Shahmiri dynasty (15<sup>th</sup> century AD) has been known to be a great patron of arts and developmental works for the welfare state of Kashmir. The valley of Kashmir, often referred to as the Switzerland of the East, is abode to some of the most aesthetically pleasing Himalayan landscapes. Composed of the lacustrine bed surrounded by towering peaks, the valley can be categorized into four distinct geomorphological features, viz., the mountain systems, the karewas, the wetland systems and the riverine systems. Each of these systems presents unique ecological sensitivities and characters but together they are responsible for the shaping of life in the valley of Kashmir.

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