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## **‘Diversion of Netravati not possible if Gundia is taken up’**

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*The scheme will provide drinking water and irrigation to many districts*

*Modifications to Gundia project suggested so that Netravati scheme is not hampered*

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Chickaballapur: If the State Government goes ahead with the proposed 200-MW hydroelectric project at Gundia, it will dash the decade-long hopes of the people of the parched central and eastern Karnataka districts of getting drinking water and irrigation facilities.

Lakhs of farmers from the arid Kolar, Chickaballapur, Bangalore Rural and parts of Ramanagara, Tumkur and Chitradurga districts which have no major rivers and irrigation facilities, were hoping that they would get adequate drinking water and irrigation facilities once the proposed Netravati gravity diversion scheme was implemented.

However, if the Gundia power project takes off in accordance with the present technical specifications, it will be practically impossible to take up the gravity diversion scheme, said senior irrigation expert G.S. Paramashivaiah who headed a technical committee on the scheme for Gravity Diversion of the Netravati River to Drought-affected Villages of Karnataka.

According to the technical report and master plan for the Netravati diversion scheme, water can be diverted through gravity flow, and thus there is no need to pump it. If the Gundia hydroelectric project becomes operational, water will have to fall to great depths to generate power from where it will have to be again pumped up to Bangalore Rural, Tumkur, Kolar and Chickaballapur districts which are at a higher elevation. “It requires a huge quantity of power to pump the water to these areas and we do not have so much power,” Mr. Paramashivaiah told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Paramashivaiah said he had apprised the top brass of the Energy Department and KPCL of the matter and had suggested some modifications to the hydroelectric project so that it would not hamper the Netravati diversion scheme. But the Government was firm on implementing the Gundia project without any modification, he said.

The Paramashivaiah committee report contends that the west-flowing Netravati river waters have been draining into the sea, and this water should be diverted to the dry districts. The plan is to build 37 small dams and two garland canals, 300 km long, along the western face of the Western Ghats.

Various groups and prominent citizens from Chickaballapur and Kolar districts have urged the Government to ensure that the Gundia project does not come in the way of the Netravati

diversion scheme.

Environmental activist and London-based ophthalmologist Madhu Seethappa of Chintamani said that if the Gundia project was implemented and reservoirs were created 725 metres above sea level, a fresh-water source would be permanently blocked. Implementation of the Gundia project would be the last nail on the coffin of the Netravati diversion scheme, he added.

R. Anjaneya Reddy, convener of the Chickaballapur-based Sir M.V. Janapara Vedike, said the Government should accord priority to drinking water and irrigation needs of the arid districts instead of power generation.

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