

Summary Writing- 7

The Devastating Impact of the Ilisu Dam Project on Hasankeyf and Its People

The Ilisu dam project in southeast Turkey, though aimed at generating hydroelectric power, is expected to cause irreversible damage to both the ancient city of Hasankeyf and the surrounding region. One of the most significant losses is that of the city itself. Hasankeyf, which has stood for more than 12,000 years and is considered one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited places, is now set to be submerged beneath the waters of the dam. As a result, a treasure trove of human history, encompassing numerous civilizations such as the Mesopotamians, Byzantines, Arabs, and Ottomans, will be permanently erased.

The flooding will destroy hundreds of historical landmarks and thousands of human-made caves. These include archaeological structures, artefacts, and underground homes that provide a rare and invaluable record of the past. According to historians like Professor Hakan Ozoglu, Hasankeyf is not just a historical site but a "laboratory" that holds physical evidence crucial to understanding ancient civilizations. Losing it means losing access to knowledge that could shape our understanding of human development.

In addition to cultural loss, the dam project poses serious threats to the environment. Environmentalists warn that biodiversity in the area will suffer dramatically. Many plant and animal species, including some that are vulnerable or endangered, may not survive the transformation of the natural habitat into a reservoir. The river ecosystem of the Tigris will be altered drastically, upsetting the balance that has supported both wildlife and human communities for generations.

The project is also expected to displace nearly 80,000 people from their homes. Residents who have lived in Hasankeyf for generations, farming and herding animals, are being forced to abandon their way of life. Many are being relocated to a newly constructed settlement three kilometres away, but this alternative is far from ideal. Not all families qualify for housing there, especially those who married after the government's arbitrary cut-off year of 2014. As a result, several families are being forced to live in overcrowded homes with extended relatives.

Traditional livelihoods are being destroyed. For example, local shepherds, like Eyup Agalday, are no longer allowed to keep livestock in the new area and have begun selling off their animals. This change has uprooted entire lifestyles and caused emotional and financial distress. Agalday himself must now leave behind his cave dwelling and move into an unfamiliar urban setting where he feels he does not belong.

The economic impact extends beyond herding. Farmers like Hediye Tapkan are also unsure of their future. The fertile lands they currently depend on for grapes, figs, and bread-making will soon be flooded. Tapkan, like many others, has no idea where her family of seven will go next. Their productive farmland, essential for both subsistence and small-scale income, will be lost forever.

The relocation has already begun, and the sense of community is being dismantled. Each day, families pack their belongings onto trucks and leave behind homes, traditions, and deep-rooted connections. The new settlement lacks the cultural richness and emotional ties that the old Hasankeyf offered.

Furthermore, this forced migration is psychologically damaging. The uncertainty, the separation from ancestral lands, and the dismantling of identity tied to place and tradition are all contributing to a deep sense of loss among residents.

Despite the promise of clean energy, the cost of this dam is immense: it threatens a region's heritage, displaces thousands, harms biodiversity, and disrupts traditional ways of life. While a few families may gain access to electricity, countless others will lose everything else that gave their lives meaning.

(a) Summarise the negative impacts of the dam project in 150 words.

(b) Interviewer's Question:

You are a government officer working in Turkey, Jamie Lannister. You are being interviewed as the representative of the marketing department.

Question: People are heavily protesting against the construction of this dam and they believe it will only result in destruction.

What is your opinion and why?

Jamie's Answer: