



Reviving traditional water sources for resilient water future: case of Darjeeling City, India

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Abstract Rethinking to revive traditional water sources is the need of the hour, considering the present context of water crisis at both the global as well as local level. Darjeeling city, located in the eastern Himalayan region is endowed with numerous natural springs, and people use these as their daily sources of water for long. However, these indigenous water practices are constantly being threatened by the so-called development process of city-making. Many of the natural springs have already dried up and many others are in shrinking phase of flow. Municipal water supply system, developed by the British in the early nineteenth century is not sufficient for the entire city at present, and not affordable for the people of all classes too. In this circumstance, private water supply and rainwater harvesting have emerged as the alternative sources of water, which again are not so viable for the poor. Majority of people, who are essentially poor face an acute water crisis throughout the year, except a few months of monsoon season. The city administration concentrates only on the insufficient centralised hydraulic infrastructure rather than managing and reviving the natural springs. Using both the quantitative and qualitative methods, this empirical study

critically assesses the present waterscapes of the city considering its socio-physical nature. The article analyses the process of expanding private water market using common water resources with illegal and tacit support from the local administration. It argues for the intervention of city administration and effective community participation to revive the springs for making the city's water future secure.

Keywords Water scarcity · Traditional water sources · Centralised water supply system · Alternative sources · Darjeeling

Introduction

Rethinking to revive traditional water sources is the need of the hour, considering the present context of water crisis at both the global as well as local level. History and dynamics of water crisis may differ based on spatiality and temporality, but the stories of drying-up of natural water sources are almost similar all over the world. Concentrating only on the formal hydraulic system or centralised supply system has emerged as the incomplete idea at the context of considering water as a hybrid resource. Hybrid in the sense, it makes a bridge between social and ecological aspects. The recent philosophy of water does not support dualistic thinking, where different aspects of social, cultural,

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