

Water, Sanitation and the Cry of the Excluded

George Kodimattam Joseph & Farhat Naz

Abstract

This paper analyses the significance of the right to water and sanitation and examines the unnerving problem of denying the right to the population living in informal settlements. It is argued that a fair access to water and sanitation is disrupted not only by physical constraints but by socio-political determinants as well. The paper affirms that the right to water and sanitation is so basic that any deprivation of the right obstructs substantive freedom, which in turn, disrupts human capabilities, development, and flourishing. Among other things, the paper evaluates the stigma of social exclusion and marginalization associated with sanitation, the possibility of adopting more inclusive frameworks to ensure the right to water and sanitation, and the prospect of achieving social resilience.

Keywords: Water, Sanitation, Informal Settlements, Slums, Capability, Human Right

Introduction

The present international community recognizes the basic human right to water and sanitation, and a fair access to water and sanitation is the sixth one among the seventeen sustainable development goals. However, for the socially and economically vulnerable groups living in urban informal settlements and working in the unorganized sectors in cities and conurbations in the Global South, access to clean water and sanitation facilities is still beyond reach (Corburn et al. 2020). Since water and sanitation are indispensable for survival, this deprivation makes the life in urban informal settlements and slums miserable. Informal settlements and slums, in general, are manifestations of unsustainable development, and furthermore, expressions of distressing poverty that haunts the Global South. Moreover, local governing machineries are not yet prepared to face the manifold challenges involved in ensuring the right to water and sanitation. Achieving of this ambitious target appears to be a great challenge,

GEORGE KODIMATTAM JOSEPH, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur (IITJ), Rajasthan, India. Email: kjg@iitj.ac.in

FARHAT NAZ, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur (IITJ), Rajasthan, India. Email: farhat@iitj.ac.in