

An Anthropological understanding of water related issues in Khetri Copper Mining region, Rajasthan, India

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Abstract: Water has become the central point of discussion behind many controversies pertaining to mining projects at national as well as international levels where issues related to its appropriation, pollution and depletion of natural water resources spring up. All these problems raise important questions for anthropologists to dwell on by analysing the consequences of large-scale mining operations. Fieldwork for the present study was carried out at dual sites- Khetri Nagar, where the Khetri Copper Complex (KCC) mining project is in operation, and Chanwara village, where the Water-Resourcing Unit (WRU) of KCC is located; both the areas fall in the the Jhunjhunu district of Rajasthan (India). This study tries to deal with the question of gradual transformation of this region from being water abundant to water scarce and follows a longitudinal method to closely look at the changes in water availability in the last fifty years since the inception of KCC mines in 1967. This paper examines the reasons for water shortage and also the underlying politics of water sharing between the villagers and mining company. The data for this study were collected through ethnographic fieldwork employing the standard anthropological tools and techniques of data collection namely participant observation, interview and case studies along with secondary data. Results, however, indicated contradictory viewpoints of miners and farmers regarding water scarcity in the region, one blaming the other. We conclude from this study that a holistic understanding is needed to accommodate the interests of different stakeholders considering the rising tension over water sharing between different communities.

Key words : Anthropology, Development, Environment, Mining, Water