Does the global issue of water resources attract adequate attenuation in the British Media: A comparison between the UK and Indian media coverage of the issue?

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1. Introduction

The issue of water resources is a topic that with every passing day, occupies more attention of scientists, technicians, and politicians, in general, many of the world's inhabitants. The scarcity of this vital fluid forces reiterating a call for moderation of consumption by the population worldwide, without whose technical cooperation efforts undertaken by some organisations would be insufficient. Of the total water available on earth, only 1% is fit for consumption by human beings which occupies rivers, lakes and the ground water. Besides water as found in nature, to be used without risk for human consumption, needs to be treated, to remove particles and organisms that may be harmful to health. And finally be distributed through pipes to houses for risk free consumption (Coghlan, 2006).

This paper discusses the prolonged debate on execution of a vicious cycle to obtain pure water between water and civilization in two separate parts of the world: 'Britain' and 'India' and investigates the truth that water resources do not really attract media headlines despite the fact that millions of people die worldwide due to unsafe drinking water. This paper provides a great deal about the forces that influence media operation and also presents a comparison between the water policies at the time of colonial India, which is generally referred as British Raj with that of today's scenario in India and Britain.

The paper further presents an analysis of recent policies implemented in Britain for usage of water. It includes the concept of considering water as a commodity and not as a basic human need for life and throws light on corporate ownership of this vital fluid. Finally it describes the forces that govern the media and own the news.

2. Background

The increasing need to achieve the balance that ensures hydrological sufficient supply of water to the population will be achieved by harmonising the natural availability of the resource extractions using water efficiently. Water, objectively, is a common natural good, vital and irreplaceable. It happens that we live in a historical period in which the dominant mode of production and globalisation today literally transforms everything into a commodity, to the most sacred and vital. Inalienable human rights are reduced to human needs. To satisfy them, the law of demand and supply, owns the market. Just who can pay rights as consumer, regardless of their socioeconomic status. It is a betrayal of the ideals of modernity (Evans-Pritchard, 2008).

The supply of freshwater is declining worldwide. In the current situation, every single person in five has no access to clean water. Almost one in three do not have adequate sanitation. Currently more than 1,200 million people, mostly in Latin America, Africa and Asia, suffer from a shortage of vital element to some degree. More than 2,600 million people, 40% of the world population, have no access to sanitation and over 1,000 million still get their water from unsafe sources, according to a report from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF) released in Geneva.

Furthermore, more than 2,200 million people in developing countries, mostly children, die every year from diseases associated with lack of clean water, adequate sanitation and hygiene. In addition, almost half of the inhabitants of developing countries suffer diseases caused, directly or indirectly, by consuming contaminated food or water, or disease-causing organisms that grow in water. With adequate supplies of drinking water and adequate sanitation, the incidence of some diseases and death could be reduced by 75 per cent.

The report of the United Nations agencies predicts that by 2015, the entire population of the world will have access to drinking water, but 500 million people, mostly in rural areas of Africa and Asia, will continue to remain without sanitation services. This problem has

been a threat to human development in many countries and WHO and UNICEF are committed to further investment in infrastructure and emphasis education regarding hygiene and unsanitary environment that hinders the economic development.

World population, despite declining birth rates driven in many countries, is increasing. To keep the current annual increase, and there is no indication that this would change by now, in two years there will be 7,000 million humans living on Earth. It is expected that in 2025, the demand of fresh water will be 56% higher than the supply. In such a situation, water can be the catalyst for greater geopolitical conflict of the century for water rights as necessary for human life (Bunn, Reidy & Davies, 2010).

According to the United Nations Population Fund, within 25 years one in three people on Earth will have little or no water. These internal problems soon be transformed into international conflicts, when further accentuate the difference between wealthy countries in terms of water resources and those that do not have large reserves, all framed in an economic system that has been unable to efficiently allocate the resource.

While trading is becoming an object of global greed on one hand, the irony is that there is an acute scarcity of freshwater accounting to only 0.7% of the 1% water fit for human consumption. Today there is a frantic race between large multinationals to privatise water, water resources and transform it into a commodity with which they can make enormous amount of money. Care has been taken to demolish the humanistic and ethical understanding that access to water is a fundamental human right. It has managed to reduce it to a need as any other, the satisfaction to be found in the market. What was actually declared at the Second World Water Forum in 2000: the water is no longer an inalienable right but a mere human need (Evans-Pritchard, 2008).

The struggle is between those who believe that water should be considered a marketable commodity (such as wheat and coffee) and who express that is a social good about the right to life. The scope of national sovereignty and the legal tools are also part of this fight. The problem is that water is a resource that is scarce and 1,200 million people lack

access to clean water, to which should be added a further 2,400 million people lack access to adequate sanitation. The problem is not the lack of fresh drinking water but rather poor management and distribution of water resources and methods. This is a reflection of two growing phenomena on the planet: the privatization of water, where the big multinationals are making their economic power in many third world countries, in a business that is known is highly lucrative. Whereas the steadily decreasing availability of water to the poor, if not urged by social movements, would face a profound transformation.

4. British Media and Water Resource Issues

Unlike war and terrorism, the scarcity of water does not make the headlines in today's media despite the fact that it claims more lives globally than any other 'terrorist act', wars and guns. Unlike natural disasters it is not treated as an international event, despite more people die from drinking unsafe water than the world's natural disasters combined. This crisis, which is silent, just like the sobbing tears of the poor sufferers across the world is tolerated by those who have the resources, technology and the political powers. Despite of all these alarming factors, it doesn't find its way to the headlines of our mainstream media.

According to Jay Thadeshwar (2012), the top most discussed topics in 2011 on the internet included Justin Beiber and One direction. Such reports reflect the level of awareness that is being spread by our media regarding the alarming issue of water scarcity. Generally, the issues of concern for media, particularly, the Mainstream Media (MSM), include various unknown facts about life in the universe but how many times do we turn on the news channel or radio and watch or listen to a story about the people suffering from water scarcity? In a situation, when 2,200 million people in developing countries, mostly children, die each year from diseases associated with lack of clean water, adequate sanitation and hygiene and about 128 million people lack safe water only in India, how many times have we heard these statistics on news? So, why is the news not pointing out this issue as it should be? What are the reasons behind the lack of interest in water scarcity in British Media (Rinat, 2005)?

Very often, issues pertaining to water shortage have had been raised by few journalists in their reports but the frustrating part that these kind of reports lost their space in the media and the topics, no more being raised. For a decent amount of time, the reporting on water issues was the central place in local media in Britain. There were several news stories, features and reports that presented the statistics, but then it started to get neglected as more 'interesting' topics like war and terrorism emerged. Due to the lack of importance given to this issue by the media, many policies have been neglected that were related to the developmental projects for water scarce places. However, with all this neglecting and

vanishing of the issue from electronic media there have been some important aspects of water issues that were discussed by print media. The two major characteristics of water coverage in recent years have been dramatization of the extent and the consequences of water scarcity along with the thread of this story, which unfortunately not considered interesting enough by media, the discovery of old water problems that occurred after the serious droughts in some areas of world including India (Kalshian, 2005).

3.1. Journalists and the Water Debate

One of the issues that journalists have always mentioned in the coverage of the water issues is the range of opinions, along with other things, their social class, language of reporting, place of work, and the ownership of the newspaper. For instance, there are some who are critical about the public water agencies and candidly expressed their opinions about such corporations and government polices and there are those who keep the diplomacy as their main aim and formulate their stories according to what the officials want to hear. It is also observed that lack of clarity and understanding in journalists about the water issues stays piecemeal (Rinat, 2005).

4. Cycles of Water Coverage – The Indian Media

India is the second most populous country in the world, with more than one billion people in 2030, will be the first world's most populous country, even witnessing spectacular economic development with annual growth of 8% of GDP, which implies new needs energy, raw materials, water, etc. By achieving a higher per capita income per capita and a spectacular increase of the population will cause a rapid collapse of the water (Agnihotri, 1996).

The problem of water crisis is burgeoning in pace with the economic development. Sprawling cities and a huge, thirsty agricultural area have meant new demands for public health services and poorly managed. The combination has caused the water too scarce in some places, contaminated in others, or it reaches a fateful abundance for the millions of people suffering from floods every year. Today the water threatens the ability to strengthen their poor Indian farms, maintain economic growth and make its cities healthy and habitable. Water has become a serious problem. The Hindu water system depends basically on the Ganges and Indus rivers. Hindus have 2.240 m per person / year, which decreases each year due to two reasons, first to its high population growth and secondly for economic development that the country is undergoing. Arguably India is close called water stress (D'Souza, 1998).

Indian water resources have been affected by international conflicts. For example, the disputes on Ganges date back almost since independence in 1947. In 1951, the Indian government announced that arise Farakka Dam on the Ganges, in the province of Bengal, near the Pakistan border east. The aim is to transfer by means of a channel, river water and the port Hoogli Calcutta Hindu danger that the slime it unusable. They need enough water to wash the silt of the harbour, but this hurts Pakistan. Indian media has covered this issue but it was more as a political issue rather than an environmental concern.

In view of such an alarming situation, it is interesting to see how the Indian media has covered this issue. Beginning of 1990's was an era of sensible and insightful reportage. The news about big dams and government policies were highlighted in those years when

there was a group of people who were running anti-dam campaigns that symbolised a fundamental challenge to the development. This became the first lesson for Indian media in the political-economic development and it was this time when environmental reporting came of age. The coming years saw many spectacular reports of the issues of water and reports were not only limited on national level but sent to international forums to present the situation in India. The big conflict between caste, communities and rural and urban sectors of the country, the issues was widely highlighted by the media in and outside India (Kalshian, 2005).

But this fever of fine reporting and socio-economic coverage of the water resources was soon vanished as the water sector was privatised. Then the main focus of the media was not the water issue itself but the privatisation was being touted as the key to solving India's worsening water shortage. Nevertheless, even when the environment reporting is decaying today, water continues to enjoys media attention in India, mainly not because of the fact that majority of India's rural area is dying of thirst but because the urban middle class is facing water problems.

5. Water scarcity: What remains unreported in media

This section presents a detailed amount of fresh water scarcity worldwide. In the first part, it deals with the problems in the under developed countries of the world and presents data about availability of water. In the later part, the essay tries to relate the problem with the west in order to consider the issue of water resources as a global concern. Finally it leads to show how the mainstream media has widely ignored the issue and investigates its possible reasons from the already available research.

5.1. A threat only for poor countries?

The poor countries stand to lose almost every time. As dog's skinny, all fleas are back, and their economic dependence on other countries even more vulnerable to water crisis: the amount of water used to produce food and goods imported to developed countries exacerbates the shortage padded already, warns a new report. The study, by the University of Cardiff (Wales), part of climate change and water stress that will cause consequences on the planet says that two-thirds of the water used in the UK comes from outside its borders (So, 2011).

Assessing the situation in which we find ourselves, and the water crisis looming, the conclusion is clear: the situation is unsustainable, given population growth and climate change. "We must take account of how our water footprint is impacting the rest of the world," marks Professor Roger Falconer, study author and director of the Centre for Hydro-Environmental Research at the University of Cardiff. In addition, the damage affects UK itself therefore not to cut this, long term will face "shortages of energy, food and water," says Professor Peter Guthrie. Their forecasts are based on projections that indicate that within two decades, global population will be rise beyond 8 billions, global demand for food and energy will rise by 50% and the need for fresh water by 30%. However water-borne diseases and lack of basic sanitation is killing 4,000 children in every 24 hours. Dirty water means a greater threat to human life than war or terrorism. Preventable child mortality is just the tip of the iceberg. At any time, about half of the population of the developing world is suffering from water-related diseases. The statistics behind the crisis really show a bleak picture. In the twenty-first century and amid a

growing global economy thriving, 2.6 billion people lack access to the most basic latrine. More than one billion people lack safe drinking water (Jury & Vaux Jr. 2007).

Unequal access to water conclusively shows disparities that divide our world. In Britain, the average consumption of a person is 160 litters of water every day. The sanitation gap is even more daunting. Kibera Kenya, with a population of 750,000, is one of the largest informal settlements in Africa. More than 90% have no access to a latrine and, absent any other alternative; people defecate in plastic bags which are then thrown into the street or ditches. Kibera is a microcosm of what happens in the developing world (Lall, 2008).

A process of rapid urbanization with a crumbling infrastructure of water supply and sanitation in cities allow such as Jakarta, Manila, Nairobi or Lagos overcrowded neighbourhoods there with millions of desperately poor people who face the constant threat of using water infected with human activities. To make matters worse, invariably the poor pay more for water than the rich. In Kibera, one pays three times more per unit of water in the cities of New York or London, and ten times more than in high-income neighbourhoods of Nairobi.

Bridging the gap in water and sanitation is a cause that unites a moral imperative to economic common sense. Expand water and sanitation infrastructure requires large investments of entry, with recovery periods exceeding 20 years. The share of international cooperation devoted to these sectors (adjusted for the inevitable flow to Iraq) has halved since 1997 and has fallen in real terms. Water is not a commodity. It is the source of life, dignity and equality of opportunity. It is too important to leave to the market fought and therefore, governments have the ultimate responsibility for expanding access. The human need should be of the organizing principle, beyond the ability to pay. Coca Cola predicts that its water-in some countries is more expensive than gasoline and is giving greater benefits than their soft drinks in a few years. For it is sufficient to recall the controversy in the UK few years ago, when this crime be recognized that while London was in need of drinking water, mineral water was being sold for 3 Euros per litre.

India has suffered several localized drought in 2010. Nevertheless, pollution and climate change have intensified water shortages across the country. on the fronts of pollution control and combating global warming, the situation might turn worse in the subsequent years. Most of the rainfall in India is during the season of monsoon, between June and September, a period with temperatures so high that much of the moisture evaporates before it can be stored properly. Furthermore, drains should redirect the rainwater into underground aquifers are often clogged with garbage. Thus, 40% of the water carried by the pipes at least in New Delhi is wasted. Many say the government's emphasis is on strengthening the country's emerging economy and improving infrastructure. Maybe it's a narrow view, but all I've seen documentaries on major Indian cities, those in which pile up software companies, have this situation.

Many of the streams and rivers of India are being choked by pollution, making them useless for agriculture. Earlier this year, the south of the country, the researchers studied a river close to 90 factories run by pharmaceutical companies. The river was a breeding ground for ingredients with 21 different drugs used to treat hypertension, gonorrhoea and chronic liver diseases. The researchers estimated that a company had shed 45 kilos of the antibiotic ciprofloxacin on the river in a single day. The research indicates that the two most famous rivers of India, the Ganges and the Yamuna, both are dead. More than a fifth of India's regional districts are overexploited, according to a 2004 study by the Central Ground Water Board, Government of India.

In an analysis of the river Yamuna, it is discovered that the level of faecal Coli form, which is a measure of the dirt, is 100,000 times greater than the maximum allowed. The net supply of capital has a length of 9,000 km, but his condition is total deterioration, which causes the loss level to oscillate about 40% of the water it carries. About 18% of the urban population and 29% of the rural population do not have drinking water. Indian agriculture uses 85% of available water. Just to feed the new population, water demand will increase by 50% by 2025. The industrial centres will need to triple its consumption for the same year. As we see, their water requirements are triggered, at the present time having poor responsiveness (Pramanick/gangu, 2011).

The Ganges River is one of the backbones of its water system, and is the sacred river of the Hindus. Born in the southern slopes of the Himalayas, with 2510 km long, flows into the Bay of Bengal. Much of the water comes from China and Nepal, before entering India. About 40% of its flow comes from the two aforementioned countries and both the Hindus have claimed. Its main tributary, the Brahmaputra was born in China, describing a large arc around Bhutan before entering India and then in Bangladesh, leading along the Ganges in the Bay of Bengal. The river systems of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra cover less than 0.2% of the Earth's land, however, are inhabited by 10% of the world population. The area is prone to floods, droughts and cyclones. Sometimes you are missing the water, while others seem to not go to see land that is not covered by this water (D'Souza, 2003).

5.2. Water Crisis in the West

In Britain, people were getting wealthier through the industrial revolution, but not healthier. While the poor began the exodus from the countryside to the cities they became open sewers, and epidemics of typhoid and cholera regularly swept through cities like New Orleans and New York. In the hot summer of 1858, the Parliament of the United Kingdom was forced to close its doors due to the "Great Stink" caused by sewerage flowing into the Thames. For the rich, it was a nuisance. For the poor, who got their drinking water from the river, it was a devastating decision.

In the late nineteenth century, governments recognized that diseases associated with water and sanitation could not be contained to the poorest and measures to be taken by the public interest. In the UK, large investments were made in sewerage and purification of water sources with a huge success. No other period in UK history witnessed rapid reduction in the mortality rate. These data are provided by the Human Development Report 2006 on "Power, poverty and the global water crisis" (Maloney & Richardson, 1995).

The issue of water and sanitation crisis urgently requires a Global Action Plan to recognize access to 20 litres of clean water day as a human right whose deficiency causes nearly two million child deaths from diarrhoea each year. Human Development Report, 2006 recommends the adoption of three basic steps:

1. Make water a human right with concrete measures. While a resident of Britain spends 50 litres of water daily just pulling the tanker, many poor people survive on less than five litres of contaminated water per day.

2. Draw up national strategies for water and sanitation. Governments should invest a minimum of one percent of GDP on water and sanitation. Public spending is typically less than 0.5 percent of GDP. Studies show that military spending dwarfs this figure: in Ethiopia, the military budget is 10 times the budget for water and sanitation in Pakistan, 47 times.

3. Increased international assistance: The Report calls for an investment of 4,000 million representing less military spending made in five days and less than half what rich countries spend each year on mineral water. "This investment to be profitable, it would result in time savings, increased productivity and reduced health costs, which at US dollar 8 for every dollar invested in achieving the goal of water and sanitation. We should not forget that the next armed conflicts that threaten the existence of the planet will take place by the water control rather than the gas and oil to find alternative substitutes going in this fight for survival (edie Water, 2010).

The analysis of the problem clearly shows the issue of water resources remained mostly unreported or under-reported despite a prosperous media existence in the country. The answer to this contrast can be found in the findings of 'Environmental Research Letters', which is an electronic scientific journal that covers the environmental science. According to the journal, between 2000 and 2006, the dominating UK tabloid press has lacked specialist journalists to cover the environmental issues. The study included popular newspapers like the Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, The Sun and the Daily Express along with their Sunday editions (Boykoff and Mansfield, 2008).

6. Linking Water resources to the British Economy

Those responsible for the formulation of economic policies tend to address regulatory issues one by one, setting policy objectives in one-dimensional terms. This method poses difficulties, because any policy aimed at a single target usually has unintended consequences and unacknowledged. Those involved in water management and policy formulation should evaluate the full range of government interventions to understand all its economic, social and environmental impacts on a particular sector, region or group of people.

To improve the management of water resources one must recognize the link between this sector and the national economy. Equally important is to understand how the different policy instruments influence the use of water in the different economic sectors, at local, regional and national levels, and in homes, farms and businesses. For too long, many water managers have ignored the connection between macroeconomic policies and their impact, e.g. in technical fields such as irrigation (Rogers, Hurst, & Harshadeep, 1991).

6.1 Water for Profit

Macroeconomic and sector policies that are not specifically focused on water resources can have a strategic impact on the distribution of resources and aggregate demand in the economy. The overall development strategy of a country and the use of their macroeconomic policies-fiscal, monetary and trade-directly and indirectly influence the demand and investment in water-related activities. The clearest example is given by public spending (fiscal policy) in irrigation, flood control or reservoirs.

A less obvious example is that of trade and exchange rate policies aimed at promoting exports and gaining more currency. As a result of currency depreciation may increase exports of high-value crops that consume a lot of water. If other policy changes also reduce export duties, farmers will have an even greater incentive to invest in these export crops and irrigation needs. National development strategies can directly influence the distribution and use of water in other ways. In the case of a strategy for food self-

sufficiency, the state can subside inputs that require lots of water to encourage farmers to produce more rice.
By offering financial incentives to producers of rice, is influencing water demand and private investment in irrigation through pricing policy (So, 2011).

Apart from the direct impact of such pricing policies on the use of water, the increased demand for irrigation water is also inter-and intra-sector effects, distributive and environmental. The agricultural sector acquires an economic advantage in access to water to the industrial sector (sector effect), the water used for rice obtained an economic advantage over that used for other crops (intra effect) producers rice with more land and access to water are more favoured than those with little land and little water (distributional effect), and the increased use of pesticides and fertilizers affect probably to water quality (environmental effect).

6.2. Water Privatisation

In recent years, large corporations have come to control water in many parts of the world and it is speculated that in the coming years, a few private companies will possess monopoly control almost 75% of this vital resource for life in the planet (Shiva, 2002).

Governments around the world, including developed countries, are abdicating their responsibility for protection of natural resources in favour of the companies, they say, to improve service delivery. Large corporations are not many. The French Vivendi and Suez (ranked in positions 51 and 99 respectively in the Fortune Global 500 in 2001). Germany's RWE (ranked 53), which acquired two major water companies, Thames Water in the UK and American Water Works in the United States. The private intervention gave rise, in some places, an exaggerated increase to the cost of water. In the Province of Tucuman - Argentina-, the company Vivendi faced popular anger and Concession Company in South Africa with the provision had no trouble closing the tap than 80% of the residents of Alexandra Township for non-payment. In Latin America, as it happened in Uruguay, Suez usually is present through its subsidiary Aguas de Barcelona. The company operates or French origin has also operated in Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia,

Mexico, Argentina and Chile, among other countries. The French company Veolia, American Bechtel, the Spanish Aguas de Bilbao, which also operated in Maldonado until 2005 under the name Uragua are just some more of the transnational water corporations. The World Bank plays a key role in promoting privatization-lending money for reforms in the water-system, investing and finally as a judge in the event of a conflict between investors and States (Bakker, 2010).

7. What controls the media?

As the globalization began, the power of money has influenced the world, and media has not been en exception to this trend. In many parts of the world, most of the mainstream media is owned by big corporate. In such a situation, the media serves as a tool to guard the interest of these mighty giants.

Corporate houses strive hard to maximize their profits and avoid investing in journalism. Instead of expensive investigative reporting they often prefer to promote comparatively cheap programs which are popularly defined as defined as infotainment. On the other hand, they rely on official sources for news instead of spending on independent research and investigation. As a result, the democratic spirit of a free media is suppressed and the audiences remain deprived of diversity and issues of greater concern often find it hard to make their way to the mainstream news media.

Sometimes the popular media tries to justify its action as demand of the audience. Their argument is what interests common people should find place in the news. They earn enormous amount of profit from the sponsors for such programs and shows whereas the more serious issues that present the hard reality and criticise those in power leg behind in terms of earning money. In such a situation, the interest of the mass takes over the mass interest and really serious issues do not attract media attention.

8. Conclusion

The apparent abundance of water in the world has seemed in the past that it was an inexhaustible well. It was also the cheapest. In most areas the water was free. This has led man to squander. Watering is done in an overly generous to the point of flooding the soil and cause secondary Sterilization. Leaks in the networks of supply of city water are enormous. Water is considered today as an economic resource of the same value as the minerals, and must be managed rationally. At the origin of this awareness appears a significant decrease of this resource in many parts of the world and, from the mid-seventies, the growth in the cost of energy. It was found that the irrational exploitation of a resource causes surface or underground water deficit and that these deficits tend to appear in new places and often several times a year. It is likely that the deficits are caused by pollution, in all cases involving the urban and economic development. Finally it should be mentioned that as the inhabitants of this planet we must be aware of the depletion of this vital liquid and must take into account and implement the tips and tasks mentioned in this presentation (World Health Organization, 2011).

Considering media's responsibility to inform and educate the mass, the issue of water resources seems to be lost in the sea of rather sensational news. One can argue that the main reasons behind lack of interest by media to take further this issue is its long-term presence and it is almost impossible for media to report such long term stories that involve science and environment for so long when there are bombs and explosion taking place all around the world. Famous media writer and researcher M.T. Boykoff has found that news on environmental issues in general trend to be event oriented and the media covers the water in case of draught, flood or in cases of acute disruption in the water distribution system. The writer further marks that media is more focused on politics, glamour world and rhetoric and almost stories of fear, terror, politics and glamour trail the headlines (Boykoff, 2008).

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