

WATER, HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN ERODE TOWN, SOUTH INDIA

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Health is largely influenced by a combination of internal environment of the humans and the external environment that surrounds them. Water and health are intertwined, producing the risk of water-related diseases. Erode is the largest urban centre for the surrounding rural backwaters, including a number of small towns, and acts therefore as the service centre. The study area is an area under irrigation by the Kalingarayan Channel, which is 90 km long stretching between the river Bhavani and the river Noyil, both of which are heavily polluted by industries. The channel begins at Bhavani, in fact near the town of the same name and follows closely the course of the river Cauvery until it drains into the river Noyil, near the town of Kodumudi. It has a winding course and the numerous industries along the right bank dumping wastewaters into the channel, making the waters most polluted and useless. Most important of the industries are the tanneries and textile processing units, using chemicals in their manufacturing processes and dyeing for colouring the products.

The water from the Kalingarayan channel is mainly used for irrigation and industrial purposes. The pollution from the tanneries and other industries on its right bank poses a serious problem. Only a few decades ago, the channel water was used for drinking. But as of today, the farmers are aware that the industries pollute the waters of the channel and the polluted waters in turn damage the crops and cause health hazards in the region.

This study probes into the relations between water and health and diseases by answering the three major questions that follow:

- *How is environmental sanitation affected through improper use and disposal of water in the region?*
- *How is the town and its population coping with the water related health hazards, through the available system of health care? and*
- *How to overcome problems of environmental sanitation by citizens and the health care systems efforts?*

The paper discusses health and health care in regard to particular diseases that are a result of the environmental conditions in the area. Also, there is some suggestions and recommendations for the situation from a quantitative analysis of data.