

Ethical Aspects of Sharing International River Water: The Case of Teesta River

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All riparian states have the right to use international river water. This right is equally recognized for all riparian states on the basis of ethical principles and laws on international water sharing. However, sharing of river water has become one of the issues of conflict between neighboring states. Various claims and counter claims are heard of and in order to resolve these issues many cooperative bilateral treaties have also been signed. But politically induced treaties that neither include provisions for economic benefits nor follow ethical principles on humanitarian grounds of the riparian states are not likely sustain for long. Continuity of such treaties is indispensable for the sustenance and development of the riparian states and ethical principles and humanitarian grounds should be the basis for these treaties. Nowadays, it is observed that states situated at the upstream control the water flow of rivers for their own benefits without considering its consequences on the downstream state. As a result inhabitants of the downstream countries suffer untold miseries. Nevertheless, there are some good examples of international water sharing. In this paper, I discuss these examples along with the case of sharing of the Teesta River water between India and Bangladesh. Some policy proposals are also made in this regard. The paper emphasizes the necessity of upholding morality and ethical principles in formulating and implementing policies regarding sharing of international river water. Riparian states must cooperate and be sympathetic for the cause of one another.