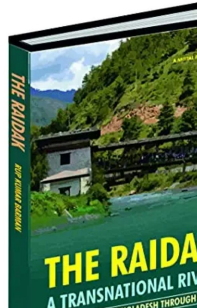


Book Review



Rup Kumar Barman: *The Raidak: A Transnational River: From Bhutan to Bangladesh through India* (New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2021, pp.xxx + 130, Price:600/p INR).

Dr. Juthika Barma¹

The South Asian countries (like Bhutan, India and Bangladesh) are full with rivers of multiple topographies. There are several transnational rivers which are flowing from Bhutan to Bangladesh through Eastern and Northeastern India. These rivers have been appeared as the central points of bilateral and multilateral relations since a couple of decades [because of construction of dams and hydro-electric power projects on them and for their indiscriminate exploitation]. In such a background, Dr. Rup Kumar Barman has constructed a brief history of the *Raidak* River in his recently published works titled *The Raidak: A Transnational River: From Bhutan to Bangladesh through India* (New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2021, pp.xxx+130, Price: 600/p INR).

‘*The Raidak: A Transnational River*’ is a daring attempt of Dr. Barman to present the *Raidak* River in the discourse of nationalism, cultural and environmental studies on Bhutan, India and Bangladesh. In Bhutan, the *Raidak* is known as the *Wang Chhu* which is flowing from Upper Bhutan through Thimphu and Chukha to the Indo-Bhutan border. Dr. Barman

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has demonstrated the origin and evolution of the Bhutanese civilization and culture while depicted the course of the *Wang Chhu*. He has also focused light on the 'nation building process' and economic development of Bhutan along with the immigration people to the *Wang Chhu* basin. This work shows that the political, economic and sociocultural history of Bhutan cannot be constructed without having proper acquaintance on the *Wang Chhu* basin.

The *Wang Chhu* enters to India through Bhutanghat with two bifurcated streams called the *Raidak I* and *Raidak II*. The *Raidak II* meets the *Sankosh* at the Assam-West Bengal state boundary. On the other hand, the *Raidak I* meets the combine course of the *Torsha*, the *Kaljani* and the *Jayanti* (or the *Gadadhar*) near the Indo-Bangladesh border and form the *Dudhkumar*. The *Dudhkumar* has emptied its course to the mighty *Brahmaputra* in Bangladesh. Being an integral part of the *Brahmaputra* system in Bangladesh, the *Dudhkumar* is closely interconnected with the national history of Bangladesh. The journey of two *Raidaks* as well as a brief political history of the region have been analyzed by the author with a new perspective in the second and third chapters of the work.

It is fascinating that Dr. Barman has highlighted the cultural trends of the *Raidak* basin from the Indo-Bangladesh Border to the confluence of the *Dudhkumar* and the *Brahmaputra*. The fourth chapter of *'The Raidak: A Transnational River'* has illustrated each notable villages and towns located at the *Raidak* basin starting from the *Raidak Forest* under the *Buxa Tiger Reserve* of *Alipurduar district* to *Balabhut* of *Cooch Behar district*. Dr. Barman has also explained the demographic and cultural changes at the *Raidak* basin due to the growth of tea plantations and immigration of various communities.

History of construction of dams and utilization of water flow of the *Raidak* is a significant aspect of the book under review. Exploitation of the *Raidaks* (*Raidak I* and *Raidak II*) as economic resource, economic changes of the *Raidak* basin as well as the environmental disruption in the *Raidak* have been critically examined by Dr. Rup Kumar Barman. However, he has not properly emphasized on the economic aspect of the Bangladesh part of the river (i.e. the *Dudhkumar*).

'The Raidak: A Transnational River' is no doubt a new addition to the discourse of river studies of South Asia. It shows that the *Raidak* is not merely a river of Sub-Himalayan

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Bengal, it is truly transnational in terms of origin and course, economic and political dimensions and to understand the cultural relations between a river and its people.