

PREFACE

Over-exercise of 'Nature' for creating man's own world has become a consequent boomerang to his sheer existence which, of late, has made many of us to think for the right way of dealing with the environment. Though it is not the desire, nor possible either, to put back the natural environment to its original position by halting the advancement of civilization but it is a dire need to rethink how much should we let our hands spread over the nature so that life-sustaining processes are not hampered for the sake of our own survival. Defilement of environment has gone to such a critical stage where normal processes of natural environment have been greatly struck down. So at the present time it should not be beyond our conscious effort to arrest the worsening situations through the practice of adopting the protective measures so as to enhance the recouping processes of present day fragile eco-system.

The Rakti Basin in the Darjeeling Himalayas can be taken as an example of such problem where indiscriminate, over-exploitation of natural resources (starting from the forest to land) has been taken place with the onset of human civilization followed by the initiation of tea-gardens, establishment of a safe and systematic govt., military installations & profitable hill tourism. Thus the natural vegetation of the Basin has been

severely declined to less than one fourth of its original state. Lands have been misutilized by unscientific settlement constructions and unplanned agriculture. As a result so many unwanted happenings like erratic rain, devastating floods, severe soil erosion & catastrophic landslide problems have become frequent to collapse the social & economical set up of the local inhabitants.

Therefore, immediate conservation measures & well planned managements by investigating the grown up problems of the basin resources have become very much essential to bring up the Basin from a degrading eco-system.

A number of case studies on the eco-degradation problems of this region have been attempted by both personal & govt. levels. But they have been hardly possible to achieve the goal because of a great lack of the detailed & systematic approach.

As such, the present researcher has been investigating into the problems of management of the Rakti Basin since 1985 & the present dissertation is the product of this long pursuit.

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Sudip Kr. Bhattacharya.

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(Sudip Kr. Bhattacharya)