

NadiSutra

E. Theophilus and Zanskar

24th November 2014

A 2000 km canoe ride to tell a river's story



Timeline

November 2014 to February 2015

Start Point - Banbasa Barrage on the Mahakali / Saryu River (Uttarakhand, India) on the 24th of November 2014

Current Status - Near Kakdwip Island - (West Bengal) 17th February 2015

Expected End Date - 18th February, Sagar Island, West Bengal

A 2000 km canoe ride to tell a river's story

A father-son team, of E. Theophilus (Theo) and Zanskar, will follow the river Mahakali, 2000 km on a kayak, they will follow 'their' river, to see and experience firsthand the progressions from the glaciers to the ocean, and to bear witness, both through images and the written word, to the radical changes being wrought on the river system, to see and experience the effects of interlinking on the entire river system, and beyond. This river, the Mahakali, in the near future, is proposed to be diverted into the longest and most radical link.

A long, winding and confusing path

Apart from being right in the river, the team will interact intensely with fisher-folk and others who live along the river continuum, and attempt to gather and interpret their experience of the changes they have witnessed over time with the dams and diversions that have built up along the river. The urgency for a 'baseline' narrative, of the view of people living along and depending on the river is also critical in the context of the impending re-plumbing of the entire Ghagra-Karnali river system that flows into the Bay of Bengal, but is due to be bent around to link with the Yamnuna in Haryana, then on to the desert-lands of Rajasthan, and if anything is left, to the Arabian sea.

If only the fish can talk

A parallel stream in the story of the river is that of the impact of such radical changes on aquatic life in the river. The team proposes to do this, among other things, by following one particular fish (an eel *Anguilla bengalensis*) and one freshwater crustacean (*Macrobrachium gangeticus*). While the *Anguilla* eel travels thousands of km in freshwater and thousands more to an ocean deep near Sumatra to breed, the Ganga shrimp crawls up thousands of km as well and floats back down to the estuary during its life cycle. Both are quite resilient, and are capable of clambering onto land to cross smaller barrages and obstacles, and a change in their historical and present ranges therefore make good proxy indicators for the assessment of impact on life in the water.

The river tells its own story

The team calls their journey 'NadiSutra', both in terms of listening to the narrative of the river, as well as to string together the many stories along its continuum. The story will start around November 24, 2014 and end in approximately 2 months. A canoe with two people will leave the upper reaches of the Mahakali, where the river meets the plain,

and paddle down around 2000 km, following the voyage of the river herself, to where she meets the Karnali, the Ganga and then on to the ocean, at Sundarban.

Follow their journey live!

Track their path, see the photographs, hear the sounds and read the commentary. Join them on this unforgettable journey. <https://nadisutra.wordpress.com/page/2/>