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| Journal Name: | [**South Asian Journal of Parasitology**](https://journalsajp.com/index.php/SAJP) |
| Manuscript Number: | **Ms\_SAJP\_140567** |
| Title of the Manuscript: | **Parasites Affecting Native Freshwater Fishes in Punatsangchhu, Bhutan** |
| Type of the Article | **Original Research Article** |

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| **PART 1: Comments** | | |
|  | **Reviewer’s comment**  **Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated or assisted review comments are strictly prohibited during peer review.** | **Author’s Feedback** (It is mandatory that authors should write his/her feedback here) |
| **Please write a few sentences regarding the importance of this manuscript for the scientific community. A minimum of 3-4 sentences may be required for this part.** | This manuscript investigates the diversity and ecological associations of parasites in native freshwater fish species in the Punatsangchhu River system in Bhutan. While the study addresses an under-researched geographical region and aims to fill a notable gap in parasitological data, the manuscript suffers from critical methodological limitations that  severely undermine its scientific rigor and its suitability for publication in a peer-reviewed international journal. | Thank you for your constructive feedback. I acknowledge the concerns regarding methodological limitations. I have ensured that the methods are described transparently, and I have clearly discussed the limitations in the manuscript to contextualize the findings appropriately. Despite these constraints, the study provides the first baseline data on fish parasites in the Punatsangchhu River**,** an area that has been understudied in Bhutan. |
| **Is the title of the article suitable?**  **(If not please suggest an alternative title)** | The title of the manuscript — "Parasites Affecting Native Freshwater Fishes in Punatsangchhu, Bhutan" While the title refers to “fishes” in the plural form, implying a multi- species investigation, the actual study includes only one species (*Schizothorax richardsonii*) in any meaningful way. | **T**he manuscript title has been revised to; **Ecological Assessment of Parasites and Environmental Drivers in Native Freshwater Fishes of Punatsangchhu River, Bhutan.** |
| **Is the abstract of the article comprehensive? Do you suggest the addition (or deletion) of some points in this section? Please write your suggestions here.** | The abstract has not been critically evaluated due to the serious methodological deficiencies in the study design. | Yes |
| **Is the manuscript scientifically, correct? Please write here.** | The manuscript contains significant methodological and scientific weaknesses that undermine the validity and reliability of its findings. These are given in the general/Comment  section. | Yes |
| **Are the references sufficient and recent? If you have suggestions of additional references, please mention**  **them in the review form.** | Yes | Yes |

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| **Is the language/English quality of the article suitable for scholarly communications?** | The manuscript contains serious linguistic deficiencies that substantially affect clarity, scientific tone, and readability. |  |
| **Optional/General** comments | 1. Although the study ostensibly includes two fish species (Schizothorax richardsonii and Pseudecheneis sulcata), the latter is represented by only a single specimen. In ecological and parasitological studies, such underrepresentation is statistically or biologically inadequate. Under these circumstances, including P. sulcata is scientifically inappropriate. 2. The analysis is based on only 44 individual fish, which is insufficient to draw generalizable conclusions about parasite prevalence, distribution, or ecological relationships. Parasite diversity and host-parasite interactions can vary significantly even within a small spatial range; therefore, a larger and more representative sample set is essential. 3. All fish were sampled only during the winter season. This is a significant limitation, as parasite transmission and detectability are significantly influenced by temperature and seasonal cycles. 4. By limiting the study to a single, biologically restrictive season, the authors miss the opportunity to generate ecologically meaningful insights. 5. In its current form, the article does not meet the methodological standards. | Thank you for the feedback. We would like to clarify that the primary objective of our study was not to assess host specificity or conduct comparative parasitological analyses across different host species. Rather, the focus was to document the diversity of parasites present in native freshwater fishes within the Punatsangchhu River. Given the limited occurrence of P. sulcata during the sampling period and the exploratory nature of the study in a region with no prior parasitological records, we considered it valuable to report the parasite data obtained from this single specimen.  These limitations have been addressed in the added **recommendation section** of the manuscript. |

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| **PART 2:** | | |
|  | **Reviewer’s comment** | **Author’s comment** *(if agreed with reviewer, correct the manuscript and highlight that part in the manuscript. It is mandatory that authors should write his/her feedback here)* |
| **Are there ethical issues in this manuscript?** | *(If yes, Kindly please write down the ethical issues here in details)* |  |