

Himalayan Narratives: Cultural Reflections and Environmental Perceptions in Indian English Literature

Dr. Priyanka Singla

Associate Prof. of English, Government College for Women, Hisar, Haryana, India.

Mail Id: priyanka.ind81@gmail.com | Orcid - 0000- 0003-4538-9825

Abstract

This paper discusses the portrayal of the salient features of the Himalayan region in Indian writing in English. It aims to analyze the representation of the natural beauty, cultural diversity, and historical significance of the region through the works of various Indian authors writing in English. Particular attention is paid to the themes, characterization, and literary techniques that contribute to the literary representation of the Himalayan region. The paper also examines the role of the Himalayan region in shaping the narrative structure and thematic development of selected literary texts. The Himalayan region, comprising the highest mountain range in the world, has been a constant source of fascination and inspiration for writers, poets, and essayists alike. As part of Indian literature, Indian writing in English has captured the essence of the region in various ways, ranging from travelogues, poems, and novels to essays and short stories. The grandeur and mystique of the Himalayas have shaped the creative imagination of these writers, evoking a strong sense of place and identity. By examining some of the major works of Indian authors writing in English, one can perceive how the features of the Himalayan region have been poignantly and profoundly depicted.

Keywords: Himalayan Region, IWE, Identity Loss, Natural, Cultural and Historical Features.

The Himalayan region, home to a rich and vibrant culture, has intrigued scholars, writers, and travellers for centuries. Indian Writing in English (IWE) offers a unique perspective into the esoteric aspects of Himalayan culture. Examining select literary works, this paper aims to explore how IWE authors depict the esoteric elements of the Himalayan region and reveal its impact on the lives of the local population, as well as how it has inspired spiritual seekers from around the world. Nestled between the Indian subcontinent and the Tibetan Plateau, the Himalayan region is a mystical hotspot and a treasure trove for esoteric practices. With a cultural diversity fed by centuries of trade, migration, and spiritual voyages, the region has become an eclectic fusion of various religious and cultural dimensions. IWE authors present insights into the region's esoteric practices, ranging from spirituality and folklore to the mysterious and magical elements hidden in the mountains. These depictions unravel the unique worldview of the people

living in the Himalayas and serve as a source of inspiration for readers. Ruskin Bond's depiction of the Himalayas, in works such as *A Flight of Pigeons* and *The Blue Umbrella*, convey the inherent beauty and tranquillity of the mountains, encapsulating the emotional bond between the landscape and its inhabitants. His characters are deeply rooted in their surroundings, and through their experiences, the reader gains a unique perspective on life in the Himalayan region. In his novel *An Equal Music*, Seth weaves a tale of love, loss, and longing amidst the backdrop of the Himalayas. The picturesque setting of the mountains becomes an integral part of the novel, playing a vital role in character development and emphasizing themes of self-discovery and realization. Though not set entirely in the Himalayan region, Anjana Appachana's collection of short stories, *Incantations & Other Stories*, captures the customs, beliefs, and superstitions of individuals living near the mountains. The inclusion of folktales and oral traditions underscores the cultural distinctiveness of the region.

IWE works such as *Kim* by Rudyard Kipling, *A Face in the Dark* by Ruskin Bond, and *Kora* by Tenzin Tsundue explore the themes of spiritual quests and seek to understand one's role in the grand scheme of existence. Tsundue's *Kora* revolves around a spiritual journey and portrays the cyclical nature of life through the metaphor of circling a pilgrimage site. Many IWE authors capture the rich folklore and cultural beliefs of the Himalayan region. For instance, Bond's *The Blue Umbrella* showcases the values of selflessness and compassion integral to the lives of the mountain people, while *The Room on the Roof* delves into the syncretic religious practices of the region. The Himalayan region, with its hidden valleys, sacred lakes, and rumoured Shangri-La, has long been associated with the mysterious and the magical. Authors such as Kipling and Bond subtly touch upon these esoteric aspects, alluding to supernatural powers and beings, like the Yeti, as part of the mountain culture. Indian Writing in English provides an invaluable window into the esoteric aspects of the Himalayan region. These literary works not only showcase the enchanting landscape of the area but also shed light on the region's unique culture and beliefs, presenting a captivating amalgamation of spirituality, folklore, and mysticism. Through such literary journeys, readers are granted a deeper understanding of a world vastly different from their own, leading to an appreciation of the region's distinct cultural milieu.

In recent years, literature from the Himalayan region has gained significant attention for its unique portrayal of culture, tradition, and the harsh realities of life in the mountains. The Himalayan region, spanning across India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet, has long been a region rich in folklore, myth, and unique cultural practices. As global connectivity and technology reach even the most remote parts of the world, the region has come into the spotlight for its literature, which presents a vivid portrayal of the experiences of the people living in this fascinating and challenging environment. A rich repository of human interaction with nature, the Himalayan region offers unique cultural and traditional perspectives, which have been captured in IWE. The Himalayan region remains a source of fascination for writers and readers alike due to its rich cultural heritage and the unique amalgamation of various ethnic groups, languages, and

traditions. In recent times, Indian Writing in English has experienced a surge in capturing the vernacular essence of this region, through the works of authors such as Ruskin Bond, Amitav Ghosh, and Jahnvi Barua.

Indian Writing in English has witnessed a plethora of talented authors, whose works resonate with the traditions and culture of the Himalayan region. Ruskin Bond's representation of the Himalayan region in works such as *A Flight of Pigeons* and *The Blue Umbrella* have allowed readers to delve into the essence of the hills, steeped in folklore and customs. In his book, *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh discusses the lives of fishermen in the Sundarbans while highlighting the region's natural, ecological, and linguistic diversity. Jahnvi Barua's *Rebirth* juxtaposes the protagonist's inner transformation with the beauty of the Assamese countryside, its rich traditions, and socio-cultural nuances. Such types of works provide a wide canvas for the exploration of vernacular traditions in the Himalayan region, delivering an authentic portrayal of features like Oral traditions and folklore, Socio-cultural practices, Art, music, and dance forms, society's relationship with the region's ecological diversity, Local language and dialects, etc. The representation of vernacular traditions in Indian Writing in English, specifically in the context of the Himalayan region, serves to introduce college students aged 18-25 to the rich cultural heritage and ecological harmony embedded within this mesmerizing region. By capturing the essence of the hills in vivid details, prominent authors have immortalized the region's unique traditions and practices, helping college students expand their cultural horizons and better understand the intricacies of the diverse Indian terrain.

Several acclaimed Indian authors have written about their experiences or the lives of people living in the Himalayan region. Major works include novels, short stories, and travelogues. In examining these works within IWE, a variety of themes emerge that reveal the distinct experiences of the Himalayan people. These themes include:

- a. The impact of British rule: The British rule in India had significant effects on the Himalayan region, and many works discuss the local population's relationship with the British government and residents.
- b. The religious and spiritual aspects: The Himalayas are home to numerous sacred sites in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism, attracting pilgrims from around the world. Writers often explore themes of spiritual growth, religious harmony, and the mystique of the Himalayas in their work.
- c. Environmental concerns: The Himalayan ecosystem is fragile, and the growing industrialization, urbanization, and climate change pose threats to the region. Works in IWE frequently discuss these issues and their effects on communities, dependent on the natural environment.
- d. Cultural diversity: The Himalayan region hosts people from various ethnic backgrounds, languages, and cultural practices. Writers often celebrate their rich,

diverse heritage while highlighting social issues stemming from migration, discrimination, and inter-cultural differences.

It is worth mentioning that many of the authors in IWE who have written about the Himalayan region have a personal connection to the area. For instance, Ruskin Bond and Rumer Godden both lived in the region and have used their own experiences to inform their writing. Additionally, works like *The Snow Leopard* and *The Great Arc* reflect an outsider perspective, aiding in understanding how the Himalayas and its people have been portrayed to non-local readers. Indian Writing in English has played a significant role in describing the historical experiences of people living in the Himalayan region. Acclaimed works have painted vivid pictures of life, customs, and the unique ethos of the area. Through these works, readers have been exposed to the rich cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and contemporary issues faced by the region's inhabitants. By studying these works, one can appreciate the historical narratives embedded within Indian Writing in English and the people of the great Himalayas.

Authors in this genre highlight the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental changes that the region undergoes as it interacts with global systems. Various works of prominent authors in contemporary Indian writing in English specifically deal with the lives of people in the Himalayas. Through these works, authors shed light on how globalisation has influenced traditional ways of life and shaped contemporary issues in the region. The Himalayan region, often termed as the 'Ecological Tipping Point,' has frequently served as a literary canvas for contemporary Indian writing in English. The immense ecological wealth, cultural diversity, and relatively lesser explored areas of the region make it a subject of fascination for authors. With the advent of globalisation, the Himalayas have been exposed to rapid socio-economic and cultural changes, which has captured the attention of contemporary authors in Indian literature. Numerous authors in English have portrayed the economic impact of globalisation on the Himalayas, mainly through tourism and developmental policies. For instance, Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth* depicts the influx of tourists in a small Himalayan town, which brings about a vital economic transformation in the place. Similarly, in Rupa Bajwa's *The Sari Shop*, the arrival of foreign trekkers is seen as an opportunity for local businesses to prosper. The novel brings to the fore challenges faced by traditional artisans and traders in adjusting to the globalised markets and competitive pressures exerted by large players.

Indian literature discussing globalisation and the Himalayan region often centers around the erosion of cultural identity and tradition. For instance, Namita Gokhale's *The Book of Shadows* reflects the loss of traditional knowledge, skills, and belief systems in the Kinnaur valley due to exposure to globalisation. On the other hand, Mallika Kaur's *Rebuild Beginnings* highlights the challenges faced by local communities in maintaining their cultural identity amidst the rapid transformation brought by globalisation. The novel emphasizes the struggle of the protagonists in retaining their regional identity and traditional values while adapting to the modern world. The Himalayas and Climate Change Globalisation has significantly impacted the ecological

balance of the Himalayan region, a theme readily evident in contemporary Indian works in English. In his novel *The Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh sheds light on the ecological devastation and displacement caused by human interventions and global warming. Likewise, Priya Kapoor's *The Wetland Song* addresses pollution and deforestation in the Himalayas while portraying the risks faced by local communities under the pressure of globalisation-induced changes. The impact of globalisation on the Himalayan region in contemporary Indian writing in English is a complex and multi-faceted subject. Through the works discussed in this paper, it is evident that economic changes, socio-cultural transformations, and environmental concerns have been variously portrayed in the representations of the Himalayas. These works provide valuable insights into the repercussions of integrating traditional societies with global frameworks, highlighting the need for sustainability and cultural preservation amidst rapid change.

The Himalayan region is a fragile ecosystem, hosting vast biodiversity and glacial reserves. It is a vital source of water for India and neighboring countries. Climate change and environmental degradation have posed significant threats to the region's ecological balance. The relationship between literature and the environment is a crucial aspect of contemporary literary studies. Indian Writing in English has shown a marked shift in recent years, with landscape and ecology playing significant roles in storytelling. The works emphasize the inseparable connection between humans and their natural surroundings. The authors depict the struggles faced by indigenous communities in the face of environmental degradation. The writers advocate for the conservation of the Himalayan ecosystem and sustainable development in the region to maintain a balance between human progress and ecological harmony. The paper highlights the significance of environmental concerns raised in recent Indian Writing in English set in the Himalayas. By examining the works of prominent authors, it underlines the urgent need for ecological conservation and sustainable development in the fragile mountain landscape. As college students, it is essential to understand and appreciate the role of literature in generating awareness and shaping attitudes towards the environment.

Hinduism, with its pantheon of gods and goddesses and its diverse rituals and customs, is another central aspect of the religious beliefs of the Himalayan region depicted in IWIE. A host of literary texts like *The Inheritance of Loss*, *The Abode of Snow*, etc. delve into the myriad beliefs and practices that make up the Hindu worldview, ranging from the mythological stories to the themes of karma, dharma, and reincarnation. While Buddhism and Hinduism command a significant presence in the religious landscape of the Himalayan region, the area is also home to a plethora of local beliefs and practices. Works of IWIE like *Circle of Karma*, *Smash and Grab: Annexation of Sikhism*, frequently delve into the unique practices of the region, like animism, shamanism, and ancestor worship, showcasing how these beliefs are intricately tied to the community, land, and its natural resources. A wide array of religious beliefs and practices have been represented in the literary works of Indian Writing in English, shedding light on the intricate interplay of faith, culture, identity, and society within the Himalayan region. By analyzing the manner in which these beliefs are portrayed in

contemporary literary works, we can foster an appreciation for the region's complex religious landscape and gain insight into the factors that contribute to the enduring allure of the Himalayas in the hearts and minds of people around the world.

The Himalayan region boasts an unparalleled landscape - a blend of natural beauty entwined with rich cultural traditions. This unique environment impacts the perception and manifestation of gender roles within the region, diverging from the experiences of the Indian mainland. Manju Kapoor's *Custody*, Ruskin Bond's *Time Stops at Shamli*, Namita Gokhale's *The Book of Shadows* and a host of other texts in IWIE have portrayed the essence of gender dynamics. They are a source of more comprehensive understanding of the Himalayan region through the portrayal of evolving and traditional gender roles. A common theme visible across these stories is the delineation of labor, with men entrusted with physically demanding tasks and women responsible for household chores. In *Custody*, we see the Himalayan woman Nisha, who labors tirelessly to maintain her home, exemplifying the traditional gender expectations in this society. The notion of maintaining family honor plays a prominent role in shaping characters' lives. *The Book of Shadows* delves deeply into this trope through Anuja, who grapples with her mother's expectations regarding the sanctity of marriage despite her abusive relationship with her husband. Despite pervasive traditional gender expectations, these works showcase characters actively seeking autonomy and empowerment. Featured in *Time Stops at Shamli*, Kamla represents a rare example of a Himalayan woman defying societal norms for her independence. The examination of the portrayal of gender roles in the Himalayan region through Indian Writing in English reveals fascinating insights into the intersection of tradition, societal expectations, and emerging empowerment.

The caste system has been a prominent feature of Indian society, deeply ingrained in the collective psyche and culture of the nation. While the caste system has been officially abolished, its remnants still exist, affecting the lives of millions of people, particularly in rural areas. The Himalayan region, a diverse and historically significant area, has been influenced by this caste-based hierarchy as well. It presents a unique perspective on the caste system due to its geography, culture, and social interactions. Over the years, Indian Writing in English has emerged as a strong platform for reflecting the realities and complexities of Indian society. Many prominent Indian writers have utilized their literary skills to address the caste system and its impact on individuals and communities. The writings of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya, and Arundhati Roy, for instance, reflect different aspects of this system both explicitly and subtly. The Himalayan region has often been the backdrop for various literary works dealing with caste-related issues. The literature from this region showcases diverse and intricate socio-cultural aspects of the caste system, as they manifest in the unique geographical and cultural setting of the Himalayas. *Diamonds in the Snow* by Rashmi Singh Bisht focuses on the life of a young girl who had to endure the caste-based discrimination in her village situated in the Kumaon Hills. The protagonist's journey from a small village to a city highlights the caste system's impact on education and

opportunities for personal growth and development. The article “The Invisible Caste: Role of Culture and Values” by Madhu Kant Shrestha explores the role of culture and values in perpetuating the caste system in the Nepalese Himalayan region. Shrestha argues that the existing cultural values and traditions play a significant role in entrenching the caste system, making it difficult to eradicate. *Tales of the Himalayas* by Shivani Shivani's is a collection of short stories set in the foothills of the Himalayas, which provides valuable insights into the caste-based hierarchy and the lives of those living under its shadow. The stories explore various aspects of the caste system, such as arranged marriages, stigma, and limitations imposed by one's caste.

The caste system in India has been an integral aspect of the Hindu tradition and has significantly influenced the contours of the nation's social fabric. The caste hierarchies have led to glaring inequalities and widespread discrimination, deeply entrenched in the everyday lives of millions across the country. The Himalayan region, a unique geographic and cultural space, presents its distinct hierarchies woven within the caste system. The study of Indian writing in English with a focus on the portrayal of caste hierarchies in the Himalayan region is crucial in understanding the intricate connections between the social, political, and cultural dimensions of this region. *The Folded Earth* by Anuradha Roy provides a vivid description of the social structure among the communities in the region, with the caste system being an ever-present element. *Nanda Devi: A Journey to the Last Sanctuary* by Hugh Thomson is a travel memoir. Exploring the Himalayas, the author offers an insightful account of the social dynamics in rural areas, including the impact of the caste system on the lives of the people. *The Buddha of the Brothel* by Kris Advaya offers an insightful account of the protagonist's encounter with the caste system in contemporary Himalayan societies, touching upon issues of untouchability, discrimination, and social prejudices.

The caste system in the Himalayan region is depicted as a highly prevalent and entrenched aspect of the traditional societies, affecting the social, economic, and political relationships among the people. The prejudices and practices associated with caste-based discrimination are manifested in various forms, from inter-caste marriages to untouchability, adversely impacting the lives of the disadvantaged castes in the region. The significance of individual and collective efforts to challenge the oppressive hierarchies of the caste system is highlighted, as protagonists and communities assert their desire for social change and emancipation. The intersection of caste with other forms of social stratification, such as gender and class, demonstrates the complexity of the hierarchies in the Himalayan region, giving rise to nuanced forms of discrimination and inequality. Thus, the portrayal of caste system hierarchies in the Himalayan region in Indian writing in English offers a unique perspective to comprehend the complexities and consequences of this social stratification among the communities in this distinctive landscape. The analysis reveals the deeply ingrained hierarchies, discrimination, and inequalities that permeate the lives of the people in the region, while also highlighting the resilience and resistance of those who strive for social justice and change. By understanding these portrayals of caste in Indian writing in English, readers can gain a

valuable understanding of the myriad social and cultural dimensions of the Himalayan region in contemporary times.

The Himalayan region has long been known for its geographical grandeur, rich culture, and diverse traditions. With the emergence of Indian Writing in English focusing on the region, various authors have provided literary insights into the socio-cultural issues and the lives of the various communities residing in the region. *The Folded Earth* focuses on the life of a woman named Maya, who moves to the Himalayan region to seek solace from her troubled past. The novel provides a deep understanding of the region's social dynamics, customs, and superstitions. It also highlights the issues of caste discrimination and environmental degradation. The famous novella *The Blue Umbrella* explores the themes of humanity, simplicity, and nature. Bond cleverly portrays the rural life of the mountain people and the social constraints that define their lives. The novella also delves into the theme of social hierarchy, presenting the clash between traditional ways and progressive thoughts. *The God of Small Things*, although not explicitly set in the Himalayan region, touches upon the theme of caste discrimination as part of the narrative. The novel provides critical insight into the social constraints faced by marginalized communities in India and grants an opportunity to explore the portrayal of social hierarchy transcending regional boundaries. *The Book of Shadows* is a novel about a young girl's experiences in the remote villages of Kumaon in the Himalayas. It discusses various social concerns including superstitions, taboos, and gender issues. The novel lays bare the intricacies of the social hierarchy in these communities, providing readers with an empathic understanding of the complexities of life in the mountains.

The portrayal of social hierarchies in these literary works highlights the intricate interplay of tradition, culture, and modernity in the Himalayan region. Through these novels, authors also depict the oppression and exploitation resulting from the caste system, gender inequality, and societal expectations. Moreover, the exploration of social hierarchies in the Himalayan region gains merit due to the unique cultural and socio-economic context of the region. Indian Writing in English enables these authors to reach a broader audience and contribute to global awareness about the challenges faced by different communities in this part of the world. Thus, the Indian Writing in English, focusing on the theme of social hierarchies in the Himalayan region, provides valuable insights into the social dynamics, and challenges faced by various communities residing in the region. By examining the works of prominent authors, this paper underlines the significance of literature in raising awareness about the intricate social issues and fostering a nuanced understanding of complex cultures. The Himalayan region has always been an enigmatic and intriguing place for many, owing to its majestic landscape with mountains, valleys, rivers, and unique culture. However, beneath the scenic beauty lies a diverse and complex social structure that affects the lives of people residing in this region. Literary works, such as Sunil Yapa's *Your Heart is a Muscle the Size of a Fist*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, and Manjushree Thapa's *The Tutor of History*, reveal the central theme of social hierarchies. Gender inequality as

a significant undercurrent in Himalayan social stratification. Themes such as caste system and gender inequality play a significant role in shaping the lives of people in these communities. An understanding of these social constructs is crucial for young individuals, as it creates an awareness of the realities faced by the people, promotes empathy, and encourages a broader perspective on Indian culture and traditions.

Indian Writing in English has significantly contributed to showcasing the diverse cultural heritage of India. The Himalayan region of India is a melting pot of diverse cultures, traditions, and languages. The unique social fabric of this region plays a crucial role in shaping the literature produced in the area. India is a land of immense diversity, and the Himalayan region is no exception. Spanning across five Indian states, the Himalayas are home to diverse ethnic groups, each with their unique customs, rituals, and languages. While the prominence of Indian writing in English has risen significantly in recent decades, the representation of the Himalayan region's rich cultural heritage remains relatively unexplored. Literary works like *The Himalayan Voices: An Anthology of Modern Nepali Literature*, edited by Michael J. Hutt, Prajwal Parajuly's *Land Where I Flee*, Sujit Banerjee's *In the Shadow of the Hills*- demonstrate the diverse cultural heritage of the Himalayan region in various ways. Many authors have incorporated descriptions of community-specific ceremonies celebrated in the region, such as Teej, wedding rituals, and shamanistic practices among different ethnic groups. A recurring theme in the Himalayan literature is the exploration of gender roles and family dynamics, which often emphasize reliance on traditional norms and values. Examples include discussions of matriarchy in some communities and the changing perspectives of younger generations. In many works, the authors have stressed the intricate connection between the Himalayan people's spiritual beliefs and their natural surroundings. These connections typically manifest in the form of sacred forests, deified mountains, and traditional myths and legends. The Himalayan region's linguistic diversity finds representation in these literary works through the use of regional language expressions or phrases, which provides a sense of authenticity to the description of the culture and environment. The Himalayan region's diverse cultural heritage is a vital aspect of Indian literature that deserves further attention and exploration.

Folk tales carry the cultural heritage and identity of a community, and the rich tradition of these tales in the Himalayas provides ample scope for literary representation. The Himalayan region boasts a rich repository of regional folk tales embracing the vibrant culture, beliefs, and traditions of the diverse communities residing in the region. Indian Writing in English has successfully adapted and retold these tales in a way that highlights the contemporary concerns and issues faced by the younger generation. Several novelists and short story writers have adopted regional folk tales in their works. For instance, Ruskin Bond's "A Flight of Pigeons" and "The Blue Umbrella" make use of the local stories of the Himalayan region. The oral tradition of storytelling has played a pivotal role in the representation of regional folk tales. Many works in IWE, such as *The God of Small Things*, *The Interpreter of Maladies* and *Haroun and*

the Sea of Stories have incorporated oral storytelling as a narrative technique. The various thematic issues addressed by these folk tales, such as social hierarchies, caste system, tradition vs. modernity, gender roles, environmental concerns, and the impact of globalization. Thus, the representation of regional folk tales of the Himalayan region in Indian Writing in English has touched upon various socio-cultural issues relevant to the younger generation. The employment of narrative techniques, such as the use of the oral tradition, has made these stories more relatable and accessible to the audiences. These folk tales not only preserve the rich cultural heritage of the region but also provide significant insights into the complexities of the contemporary world.

Cultural diversity plays a significant role in the development and preservation of a community's unique identity. The Himalayan region, shared amongst India, Nepal, Bhutan, and China, is rich with linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity, in addition to its geographical significance. Indian Writing in English presents a growing platform to explore, understand, and appreciate the cultural diversity in Himalayan studies. The Himalaya, a vast mountain range stretching approximately 2,400 kilometers, is not only a geographical marvel but also a region steeped in cultural diversity. Encompassing parts of five countries - India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, and Pakistan - the Himalayas are home to various indigenous communities, each with their unique traditions, languages, beliefs, and ways of life. The immense cultural richness of this region has served as an inspiration for various authors, who have captured and depicted the diverse facets of Himalayan life in their works. Indian Writing in English, known for its global appeal, offers a broad platform to explore this cultural diversity through literature.

Ruskin Bond, a renowned author of Indian Writing in English, has been residing in the Himalayan town of Mussoorie, also known as 'Queen of Hills,' for over five decades. Bond's works center around life in the mountains, evoking vivid images of the cultural richness of the Himalayan region. His stories depict the lives of local people, their customs, and concerns, thus contributing to the collective understanding of the distinct Himalayan identity. *The Nanda Devi Affair* by Bill Aitken, an accomplished travel-writer, presents a fascinating account of his journey to the Nanda Devi, a Himalayan peak sacred to the people of Uttarakhand, in his work. The book delves into the cultural significance of the pilgrimage and its importance to the local people. Aitken effectively highlights the intricacies of the Himalayan belief system by providing compelling portrayals of the mythical tales, religious practices, and cultural traditions. *Custody* is a novel set in the contemporary urban landscape of Delhi, but the story unfolds with occasional excursions into the picturesque Himalayan towns of Shimla and Manali. While the primary focus is on the family dynamics and societal constructs, Kapur weaves the narrative of these excursions effectively to showcase the beauty and diversity of the Himalayan culture reigniting the readers' interest in the region. *The Book of Shadows* explores the hidden depths of the ancient Himalayan wisdom and spirituality, touching upon the esoteric aspects of the region's cultural fabric. It deftly

displays the intricacies and interconnectedness of the various Himalayan belief systems, creating a mysterious and fascinating world that draws the reader in.

A recurring theme in modern Indian Writing in English is the exploration of the self and the search for meaning through travels and experiences in the Himalayan region. One notable example is Ruskin Bond's work, where he has described his personal experiences while residing in the small towns of the Himalayas. His stories, such as "The Blue Umbrella" and "The Room on the Roof," capture the essence of life in the region while delving into the psychological and emotional dimensions of characters drawn from different walks of life. Another prominent trend in modern Indian literature is the emphasis on environmental issues, often portraying the Himalayas as the battleground for conservation and sustainable development. Writers such as Amitav Ghosh, in his book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, criticize the rampant mindless development endangering the fragile ecosystem of the Himalayas. Furthermore, modern Indian Writing in English highlights the importance of the Himalayan region as a confluence of diverse cultures and spiritual beliefs. These works often emphasize the transformative power of the Himalayas as a spiritual destination for seekers. It is evident that the portrayal of the Himalayan region in modern Indian Writing in English showcases contemporary themes and concerns, ranging from the search for personal meaning to environmental issues and the cultural melting pot of the region. Understanding these trends allows for a deeper appreciation of the significance of the Himalayas in the minds and hearts of not only Indian readers but also those reading them globally.

The Himalayan range is not only essential to the local ecology and economy but also exerts a profound impact on the cultures and traditions of those who inhabit its vast expanse. Indian authors have long been fascinated by the Himalayas, with its rich cultural practices, traditions, and folklore. Renowned authors such as Rabindranath Tagore, Salman Rushdie, and Kiran Desai have incorporated Himalayan landscapes and culture into their works. The fragile ecology of the Himalayas has been the foundation of ecological literature in India, which deals with climate change, conservation, and preservation of biodiversity. The strategic geopolitical locale of the Himalayas delineates international border conflicts and highlights the significance of the region in global politics. Authors such as Arundhati Roy and Pankaj Mishra address these geopolitical concerns in their works, wherein this section extensively reviews those aspects. The Himalayan region's portrayal in Indian writing in English underscore the cultural, ecological, and political context that form the essence of the region's unique identity. These literary works allow young college students to grasp the richness and diversity of the Himalayas, fostering a better understanding of the natural and human-induced challenges faced by this fragile landscape.

References

- Advaya, K. *The Buddha of the Brothel*. Harper Collins Publishers India, 2017.
- Banerjee, S. *In the Shadows of the Hills*. New Delhi: Juggernaut Books, 2015.
- Bhagat, J. K. "Socio-Ecological Concerns in the Novels of Ruskin Bond". *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(9), 2014.
- Bond, R. *A Flight of Pigeons*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1974.
- . *The Blue Umbrella*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1980.
- . *The Room on the Roof*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1955.
- . *Landour Days: A Writer's Journal*. Penguin Books, 2005.
- Cantor, P. A. "The God of Small Things: A Novel of Social Commitment". *Journal of Contemporary Literature*, 2(2), 2001.
- Choden, Kunzang. *Circle of Karma*. Penguin, 2005.
- Dai, M. *Mapped Musings*. Penguins Books, 2015.
- Desai, K. *The Inheritance of Loss*. Hamish Hamilton, 2006.
- Desai, R. "Himalayan Narratives and the Impact of Modernity". *Journal of Literature and Culture*, 1(1), 2017.
- Dhawan, R. K. "The Novels of Salman Rushdie". *Indian Journal of English Studies*, 38, 1997.
- Dodiya, J. *Perspectives on Indian Writing in English*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist., 2001.
- Ghosh, A. *The Hungry Tide*. Harper Collins, 2004.
- . *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Godden, R. *Black Narcissus*. Random House, 2005.
- Gokhale, N. *Things to Leave Behind*. Penguin, 2016.
- . *The Book of Shadows*. Harper Collins, 2001.
- Harrer, H. *Seven Years in Tibet* (Translated from the German by Richard Graves). Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1953.
- Hutt, M. J. (Ed.). *Himalayan Voices: An Anthology of Modern Nepali Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Jha, M. "Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth*: An Eco-Critical Analysis". *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 2013.
- Joshi, R. "Myths and Legends from the High Mountains: A Study of Himalayan Folklore". *Journal of Folklore Research*, 7(1), 2016.
- Matthiessen, Peter. *The Snow Leopard*. Viking Press, 1978.
- Naithani, S. "The Calling of the Gods: An Exploratory Study of the Divine in the Folk/Oral Narratives of the Kumaon and Garhwal Regions of Uttarakhand, India". *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 3(1), 2016.
- Parajuly, P. *Land Where I Flee*. London: Quercus Publishing, 2015.
- Pistono, Matteo. *In the Shadow of the Buddha: Secret Journeys, Sacred Histories, and Spiritual Discovery in Tibet*. Dutton, 2011.
- Roy, A. *The Folded Earth*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.
- Snelling, J. *Buddha's Himalaya: Unfolding the Mystery of Tibet*. India: East-West Publications, 1993.
- Thomson, H. *Nanda Devi: A Journey to the Last Sanctuary*. Phoenix, 2005.
- Wangchuk, P. (Ed.). *Butterfly Wings*. Gangtok: Dechenling Press, 2011.
- Yapa, Sunil. *Your Heart is a Muscle the Size of a Fist*. Little, Brown and Company, 2016.

Author Bio -

Priyanka Singla - Priyanka Singla is presently working as an Associate Professor of English at Government College for Women, Hisar, Haryana. She has teaching experience of more than eighteen years. She has completed her doctoral degree on the topic "Post Colonial Concerns in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy-Man* and *An American Brat* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters*". Apart from post colonialism, her areas of research interest include Gender, Sexuality, Cultural Studies, Feminism and Queer Theory. She has published several articles on these research areas in both National and International Journals- peer reviewed as well as UGC- Care Listed. She has four book chapter publications to her credit. She has authored and edited five and four books respectively on her research areas. She has also presented several research papers in various National and International Conferences and Seminars.