

Himalayan Studies: Literature, Society and Globalization

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Himalayan Studies: Literature, Society, and Globalization is a vast trajectory in and beyond academia. Himalayan studies constitute not just a geopolitical area or any spatial analysis only. It is an in-depth study of the cultural and ritualistic patterns, daily activities, and the inheritance and retention of the indigeneity of the villages and communities in the Himalayas. There has been a major change in terms of development before the independence of India, and the post-independence phase in the lives, education, livelihood, democracy, pluralistic principles, economy, education, and in the role, status, and hierarchy of the people. Economic studies, social and literary studies, gender and sexuality studies, caste structure, policymaking, ethnicity, social experience, and myriad other factors are responsible for inculcating an open-endedness in the study of the Himalayan region. Along with that, there is also the growing fear of deforestation, consumerism, and construction due to tourism on a large scale that has affected the overall socio-political and cultural fabric of the Himalayas. Volume V, Issue I of Litinfinitive Journal tries to find out this symbiotic and often contesting relationship among the several factors that determine the present and future of Himalayan Studies. It will be appropriate to contemplate upon what Arjun Guneratne has opined in his edited volume *Culture and the Environment in the Himalaya*:

“Given that cultures are not unitary, homogeneous phenomena, universally shared by all members of a society, it might reasonably be asked whether we can speak of cognized environments in any meaningful sense. The alternative, however, is a radical particularism at the level of the individual, which is equally untenable.” (Guneratne 3)

He further adds that:

“I draw on two concepts to reconcile the notion of a cognized environment with the fact that culture is not a unitary or homogeneous set of meanings: that of communication and of cultural scales.” (Guneratne 3)

It is a study of this cognized environment in the Himalayas that forms a pivotal point in the current issue of the journal. The first paper, *Yoga ‘Walmart’ in the Himalayas: A Case of Wellness Centres in Dharamshala*, by Isha Jha and Uttam Singh analyzes a large number of wellness and rejuvenation centres in Dharamshala, a city in Himachal Pradesh. They have discussed the concept of the backup economy, the state productivity and economic support and how these wellness centres form an integral part of Himalayan tourism. The retreats are not the only way through which the owners

accumulate money, but they also have other decent sources of income that give them a steady sense of livelihood. The paper also focuses on the tenets of a neoliberal economic system and how the newfound stakeholders of neoliberalism are gradually catching up to the expectations of a culturally-superior market of entrepreneurs. The second paper of the issue, *Gendered Identity in Community and Crafts of Himalayan Weavers* has two authors. Dhriti Dhaundiyal and Surekha Dangwal discuss the quintessentially dynamic role that women play in the villages of Uttarakhand. Since there is a paucity of many commercial outposts, it is about the flourishing of the community handicrafts that enable the villages to sustain on a large scale. Women weavers in the Uttarakhand region earn a lumpsum amount of their livelihood by doing knitting and weaving works, thereby challenging, and subverting the inherently dominant ideas of the patriarchy and contributing not just on a domestic but also a commercial scale to the household and the economy. In this process of community weaving, the women of Uttarakhand are not just getting the right community support for indigenous work, but they are also contributing to the overall economic input of the state, by connecting to shops, retail marts, and customers.

The third paper of the current issue is by Puspa Damai, and his paper is titled *Cannibal Himalayas? Jamaica Kincaid's Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*. This work by Kincaid, although essentially compartmentalized as travel writing, has multiple layers to it. It is about the explorations that the author makes in the course of her travel to Nepal, highlighting the discourse of both a postcolonial displacement and a study of the space narrative in the depiction of the garden. Damai, in his paper, discusses cannibalism in all its plausible senses that are available, by concentrating on the act of consuming or eating canonical works produced in literature, and simultaneously, resisting, breaking, and dismantling the legacy left by the forefathers of colonialism. The paper is an analytical depiction of what cannibalism is, what are the forces of cannibalism that we find in Kincaid's work, and how the trope of cannibalism is used in the book.

The fourth paper of this issue is titled *Himalayan Narratives: Cultural Reflections and Environmental Perceptions in Indian English Literature* authored by Dr. Priyanka Singla. She writes about the inherently strong yet changing perception of the Himalayan environment in selected Indian English writing. She introduces the Himalayas as a region of irrevocable myths and undeniable forms of esoteric practice and then goes on expanding on the literary outputs of the region, including the indigenous communities and their narratives, oral, written, stories, poems, novels as literary works that hold up a mirror to the conceptualization of Himalayan writings in English.

The current issue also contains two book reviews. Arpana Gurung reviews *Everything the Light Touches* by Janice Pariat. The author focuses deep inside the various fragments of ecocritical perspectives and the characters of the novel that depict parallel journeys throughout and never meeting at intersecting points. It is about retaining the curiosity of the readers that the Pariat does, instead of directing or dictating anything to the readers. Gurung has pointed out eloquently how 'this essence- of a journey, of how human beings are not stationary beings, of how they are constantly moving, evolving, becoming- has been captured by Pariat in a tone that made me ponder on the

possibilities that lie beyond our comfort zone. A lesson from the nongrads, nomads that used to run freely across the mountains and the valleys- foraging, collecting, conserving, and never taking more than is necessary- this way of living – even if not possible today- but an inspiration to start living sustainably, by leaving nature as is and only using as much as is needed’ (Gurung 53). Finally, in this issue, I write a review of George Thadathil’s *Democracy in Darjeeling*, not just a text, but a collector’s item that dwells upon the haloed as well as the less-explored terrains of Darjeeling. Darjeeling has a chequered history of its own, with the colonial legacy holding large to dominate, educate and intensify the process of diverse cultural patterns, and the postcolonial infiltration and rapid globalization affecting the economy, socio-political, religious, and cultural factors in the years after independence. Darjeeling is not just a space that is studied in the book, but it is seen as a palpable entity, growing, and changing over time. It can very well be said to be a time-tested document that is also directed to the youths and the newer generation of learners who want to experiment with their thought processes in the understanding and rehabilitation of Darjeeling as the queen of hills.

So, here we present Litinfinitive Volume V, Issue I for our readers.

I express heartfelt thanks to all our esteemed editors, reviewers, and contributors.

I offer my sincerest thanks to Penprints Publication, for their constant technical support.

Thanking You,

Sreetanwi Chakraborty

Editor-in-Chief
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Reference:

Guneratne, Arjun. *Culture and the Environment in the Himalaya*. 2009, doi:10.4324/9780203864364.

Bio of the Editor - Sreetanwi Chakraborty is an Assistant Professor in Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University, Kolkata. She graduated from Presidency College Kolkata, did her Postgraduation from the University of Calcutta, and obtained her M. Phil from Rabindra Bharati University on *The Sleeping Beauty Wakes Up: A Feminist Interpretation of Fairy Tales*. This was published as a book in 2019, and it received the "Rising Star" Award for non-fiction category at New Town Book Fair, Kolkata. She has been the recipient of the "Charuchandra Ghosh Memorial Award" for securing the highest marks from Calcutta University. At present she is pursuing her Ph. D from Ranchi University. She is the Chief Editor of a bilingual biannual academic journal *Litinfinitive*. Apart from academic publications in reputed national and international journals, her translations and literary articles have been published in Bengali and notable English journals and magazines in India, Bangladesh, and South Africa. Her areas of interest include Indian English poetry, Indian English drama, Feminism and cultural politics, and South Asian Diasporic Studies. She has passed 5th year in Rabindra Sangeet, with distinction and 4th year in classical music from Prayag Sangeet Samiti, Allahabad. She is a trained painter in oil, acrylic, water colour and charcoal. Her novel "*Rhododendrons*" published by Penprints Publication received a huge response in the International Kolkata Book Fair, 2023.