

# **Himalaya Hai To Hum Hain\***

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## **Abstract**

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*Himalaya, the 'abode of snow', is home not only to an imposing geological, geographical and biological diversity but also to a multitude of flourishing human concerns and constructs, from hunting-gathering communities to agrarian societies and their settled cultures and also to the economies of modern trade and industry. This mountain system has created and fostered a distinctive ecology that has become the basis for the existence of the natural as well as cultural systems of South Asia.*

*From the east to the west, Himalaya stands like a sub-continental arc. In so many ways, it is dynamic and active. Its rich soil and water, in spreading abundant fertility and life in the plains below, transform the landscape extraordinarily; its communities and their cultures, which arrived and settled over millennia, have in turn spread out in many directions.*

*Our existence is deeply connected to and with Himalaya. Its geology teaches us about continental drift, the disappearing of the Tethys Sea, or about its own rising height, still ongoing, or yet about its own peculiar nature, which hides within itself dynamism, tension and many earthquakes. With its peaks, passes, glaciers, moraines, rivers, confluences, gorges, pastures and meadows, its geography is akin to the myriad faces of nature. Its glaciers and rivers have been called the water towers for the 21st century. Its lofty peaks make a formidable barrier for the monsoons, resulting in heavy rainfall on the windward side. These mountains, indeed, produce and control the climate of South Asia.*

*The expanse of its vegetation and its forests are like green lungs that absorb the ever-rising atmospheric carbon. Its flora is the basis for a variety of medicines. Its wilderness has given natural expression and embodiment to a plethora of floral and faunal species, from birds, fish, and butterflies to Yarsha Gumba.<sup>1</sup> The abundance of raw material that it provides is the basis for mining,*

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*metallurgical, oil, timber and drug industries. Its wilderness has been a meeting point for natural and spiritual energies, and within a broader cultural context, it is still the main attraction for pilgrims and tourists. The mighty snowy peaks, the grim passes and the forbidding glacial vistas fascinate and beckon the adventurers and explorers.*

*For these reasons, this mountain region, which is spread across many countries, is being rapidly encroached upon. This very day, the resources of Himalaya are being exploited. They are being destroyed in many different ways, and at an unsustainable rate, much beyond at which they could be naturally regenerated or re-established. Hydroelectric projects, mining, pressure on biodiversity, the out migration of mountain communities and finally the impact of globalisation, privatisation, consumerism and climatic changes are serious concerns, with deep implications on the future of the Himalaya; issues – and their various ramifications – need to be thoroughly and critically investigated.*

*The highest and most sacred mountain range of the earth has been hijacked by the incomplete model of development created by our political economy.*

*There is a need to understand the fact that if Himalaya continues in its place, well-protected and cared for, it will also sustain our own lives and cultures. Only then will Himalayan communities live on and so will its birds and animals. Without Himalaya neither is poetry possible nor can the dialectics of nature be understood. Without it, we will not be able to fathom our own lives. So, if many people today are crying Himalaya Hai to Hum Hain (our existence is possible only if Himalaya is there) and expressing their anger through different forms of resistance, we must realise that this is a moment of reckoning and a chance to right the wrongs.*

*Himalaya was a source of inspiration for poet—philosopher Rabindranath Tagore too. He travelled to various regions of Himalaya and wrote some of his finest poems and stories there. On the 150th anniversary of the poet-teacher, taking due inspiration from his poem ‘Where the Mind is Without Fear’, we must take a hard look at the distressing condition of Himalaya and make a serious attempt to find answers to the questions of its health and harmony.<sup>2</sup> Through this lecture, an attempt is being made to understand the ecological, social, economic, cultural, spiritual and geo-political importance and centrality of Himalaya.*

### **The Himalaya: Creation and Creator**

Even if we do not pursue the seemingly fantastic geological tale of the Indian sub-continent’s drift from far away Africa towards Asia, and how the eventual collision of the two landmasses led to the formation of the mighty Himalaya around 50 million years ago, let us still

broach open the present dialogue by considering the single biggest outcome of that upheaval, the Himalaya as it stands athwart the long stretch from Afghanistan to Northern Myanmar with a complex geology and geography. This expanse of the Himalaya encompasses countries like Afghanistan, Nepal and

Bhutan, parts of Pakistan (Northern Areas), India (Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal, Uttarakhand, Darjeeling Hills, Sikkim, and the north-eastern states) and north-western Myanmar. Large regions of Tibet, today an autonomous province of China, are also part of the Himalayan complex.<sup>3</sup>

Kalidas's *Devatātma* and 'measuring rod of the earth' and Allama Iqbal's *Faseele-Kishware-Hindustan* is indeed the backbone of a living body, rising from the plains to the north, transforming itself into a variety of hills and mountains. These are like the ribs of the Himalaya. Numerous micro-societies and cultures live in the thousands of its valleys. These areas are extraordinarily rich in mineral deposits and biodiversity. They are also home to the sources of three large river systems.

'What lay before where the Himalaya is today?' is indeed an interesting question. If it was the Tethys Sea then what was here before it? Was this all a natural consequence of the dynamics of the planet earth? Has the earth always kept changing its form? These questions take us back at least to how a part of Gondwanal and broke off from Africa and drifted to where the Indian subcontinent lies today.

While today, the Himalaya is being considered a natural-cultural heritage of all humanity, it has in fact vibrated and pulsated, rhythmically and perpetually, in the conscious as well as the sub-conscious minds of different Asian societies. This vibrant rhythm is born of the snowy peaks and lofty mountain ranges, which are ever a part of the huge expanse from the northern fringe of Sindhu-Ganga-Brahmaputra

plains to the plateau of Tibet.

This vibrant rhythm belongs to thousands of glaciers, to innumerable rocks—from the very weak to the very strong, and to the faults and thrusts that have developed across them (among these, MCT-Main Central Thrust, MBT-Main Boundary Thrust and THF-Trans Himadri Fault are already well known) as well as to the inherent geo-energy (manifest as earthquakes, landslides, volcanoes and thermal springs). It belongs to the lakes, streams, flora and fauna. To the human beings, who are creators and representatives of hundreds of communities, societies and their cultures. A number of religions and faiths have been nurtured here. Himalaya has also been an ideal place for mythological stories and dreams. Before getting bound up in the faiths and beliefs of humans, their political and economic systems, its vibrant rhythm is the expression of a highly dynamic geology, and a geography that still rises as it flows down.

The Asian societies share an ancient and deep bond with Himalaya. Various communities have witnessed myriad facets of the Himalayan landscape, cheerful or gloomy, lush green or barren, captivating or terrible. Few realise that Himalaya is not simply a lavish, seasonal retreat for the rich, nor solely a sanctuary for the pilgrim, an arena full of glory for the mountaineer, or the birthplace of mighty rivers, but it's also a region where several cultures and societies thrive in its natural diversity, and where the common humans are concerned about the preservation of their environment and traditions as well as for the betterment of their

lives. This abode of Gods belongs to the humans first, and to the Gods later. The humans founded and laid down their beliefs as well as their Gods upon this natural expanse. This is a much ignored fact, due to the mesmerising, almost hypnotic, beauty of Himalaya.<sup>4</sup>

Majestic and exalted, overarching the mythologies of old and looming over today's geo-political reality, Himalaya is, nevertheless, young and fragile. The geologists are only now getting to know its inner workings. Himalaya is still rising (at the rate of 2 cm per year) and the Indian plate is relentlessly pushing against the Tibetan (or Eurasian) plate. Apart from pushing the Himalaya further up, this process frequently gives rise to earthquakes and landslides.<sup>5</sup>

A number of thrusts and faults criss-cross across the Himalaya, the reason behind its restless disposition<sup>6</sup>. Himalaya is steeped in a resentment fuelled by the geo-tectonic activity underneath. The colours of the Himalaya, the whites, greens or blues, hardly reveal the inner narrative. Of late, its green exterior has diminished and the scars from numerous landslides and large-scale erosions are visible on its face. The bursting of the glacial lakes, fast-paced melting of the glaciers, deforestation, forest fires, floods, large-scale erosion, the transport and deposition downstream of thousands of tons of sediment/soil, and the flooding and submerging of large parts of the northern plains: all this has become more or less an annual spectacle. This is partly a natural process; the rest is man-made. By itself, this is an expression of the natural processes at work in the Himalaya; our political and

economic setup, which has given rise to the indifferent, unrelenting modern civilisation, has helped accelerate and multiply the contributing factors.

Nonetheless, the natural beauty and splendour of the Himalaya glows unabated, and the aforementioned processes are not unnatural. Himalaya, as nature itself, is well-versed in the art of self healing and regeneration; its flora, the woods, plant cover and undergrowth, try their best to check the erosion and retain its rich soil cover. The geography of the Himalaya rises up from the northern plains – tarai–bhabar–doon–Shiwalik–duar (bhabar of Bhutan), and, progressing tentatively, reaches its lofty pinnacle before descending upon the plateau of Tibet. In the higher reaches, betwixt the peaks lie those ancient passes<sup>7</sup>, which have for centuries been the sole passages for transport between India and Tibet, and which have seen in their day not only the songs and caravans of nomadic and trading cultures, or the transhumance of pastoral societies, but also the progress of countless pilgrims as they made their way to Tholing, Tirthapuri, Kailas-Mansarovar, Lhasa and other places in Tibet. The routes connecting India with the main Silk Route also passed through here.

The expanse of the rocky terrain was divided up by the rivers into catchment areas, and waters originating from the two sides of a ridge may meet again faraway downstream in the plains. Complex geography, hostile or favourable conditions, gave rise to lifestyles—expressed in the patterns of food and clothing, song and dance—that were bound by necessity and

feasibility. The way geology influences geography, and geography informs the food habits, songs, dances and dress of its people can be seen and understood in the Himalaya. This geography often helped create and foster the dignity and honour of those who took shelter here or otherwise lived on here.

The lustre of its vegetation is dependent on form and gradient of the terrain, the composition and spread of the soil, rock and snow cover. These, in turn, temper the form and spirit of the lakes and rivers. As the rivers flow out from the glaciers in the Tethys Himalaya, it is difficult to believe that these are innate, self-regulating and self-sufficient natural systems. The terrain here does not allow them to become aggressive. This is the Himalayan River in its infancy. It is here where we can hear a river babble and stammer its way through the first tentative sounds.

Through what the geologists have termed the 'central crystalline zone', the rocky and boulder-hewn terrain counterpoints the river, catapulting it into its youth. The river becomes angry and aggressive. This duel between rock and water can be seen throughout the Himalaya. This is the most challenging age for the river. On occasion, mountains hurtling down rocks and boulders obstruct the river's flow, and try to make a lake out of it. But the river invariably refuses to be tamed. Man calls this anger of the river as 'flood', and the mountains' efforts to check its flow as a 'landslide'. Further down, the rivers gradually settle down into a more regulated rhythm, and meet their tributaries at various confluences (sangam). Throughout, they nurture

habitable spaces, where humans can settle, till the soil and raise livestock. Human settlements in the Himalaya developed in such places.

In the Plains, we actually see the aged river, tired and enfeebled by the faint memory of her homeland in the mountains. To make it worse, man flushes his industrial and urban wastes into it, and draws out canals from it. Once reverberant and flamboyant in Yamunotri, upon seeing the same river pick its way through the backyard of Taj Mahal, it's impossible to believe that this is the same Kalindi, which spent her childhood amidst glacial snow and hot springs (during the year 2010, Yamuna did prove itself to be a river, not a mere urban drain). When Sutlej, originating from the north western corner of Rakastal (which also receives surplus waters from Manasarovar) in Tibet, is dammed by humans in Himachal-Punjab, it seems as if they want to enslave the rivers as well. Arising from the western wing of Mt. Gurla Mandhata, the river Karnali (which becomes Ghaghra after its confluence with Mahakali/Sharda, and is known as Saryu in Ayodhya), having been witness to the victory and subsequent defeat of the Dogra army chief Joravar Singh in 19th century Taklakot, and to the destruction of monasteries by the Red Army in the 20th century, has also beheld the demolition of a mosque in Ayodhya in more recent times. Whether this river still remembers Lord Ram or his empire is a question yet to be asked by any extreme nationalist.

The river Sindhu (Indus), eponym for India, becomes Mehran in Pakistan, and takes the songs of Tibet, Ladakh

and the Karakorum to the Arabian Sea. Indus isn't merely the chief of the five rivers of Punjab (the others being Sutlej, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum), it also drains such tributaries as Nubra, Shyok, Kabul, Chitral and Gilgit. These are the rivers by which must have once stood the first few caravans of those migrant humans, who later formed Indian society. Today, all these rivers lie in two or three countries, and finally flow into the Arabian Sea. The havoc and destruction these rivers caused in Ladakh and Pakistan last year, is an indication of their changing temper.

The course of the river Kosi, which flows to India from Tibet–Nepal, has been shifting over the centuries, due to geological and geographical reasons, but equally due to human intervention. It may sound surprising to many that the waters arising from the north eastern and north western glaciers of Chomolangma (Mt Everest), which is situated in Tibet, and where Mallory and Irvine lie buried since their fatal Everest expedition of 1924, finally merge into the Kosi through the Arun and Bhotkosi rivers.

We even have two rivers that are considered masculine and sonly – Brahmaputra (Sangpo of Tibet) and Rangit. The Brahmaputra, which originates from the eastern slopes of Mariam La, very close to Lake Mansarovar and Mt. Kailas, flows through Tibet at altitudes between 11000- 10,000 ft. above sea level, and while it does attain a more disciplined flow in Assam, it has yet to be tamed. It took man thousands of years to bridge the Brahmaputra, but now China and India have already started controversial

projects to dam the Brahmaputra or its tributaries. Rangit originates from western Sikkim and disappears into the Teesta, as does Teesta itself into the Brahmaputra.

Of all these Ganga forms the largest river system in the context of India. Even today several Indians would not believe that Shipra, which originates in Kalidas's Ujjain, ultimately reaches Ganga via Yamuna, just as the distant waters from Tibet also meld into Ganga through Karnali and Kosi rivers. Similar relationships exist between Padma or Meghna and Himalaya and Trans-Himalaya. The mythological and epic narratives associated with Ganga exalt her into motherhood. Yet there is a mother in every river. No river can be anything less than a mother and man is adept in exploiting her. In what way have we not already violated Mother Ganga? It's a miracle that it still flows! Our conscience has become so small that we are searching for sacredness in the river from Gomukh to Uttarkashi only.<sup>8</sup>

Flanking these rivers and all their tributaries, stand the towering peaks, majestic and proud, highly individualistic and self-centred, that transform man into poet, painter, philosopher or mystic. They converse with each other or with humans alike. They lie ever closer to the sky than us. If one poet has called this the 'depth of the Himalaya', the other invites us to behold 'as the sky reaches down to kiss its peaks'. This distinguishes the Himalaya from other mountain systems of the world. This imposing succession of peaks includes the Nanga Parvat, K-2, Rakaposhi, Nunkun, Kinnar

Kailas, Swargarohini, Bandarpunch, Kedarnath, Chaukhambha, Bhagirath, Shivling, Nanda Devi, Nanda Kot, Pancha Chuli, Chhota Kailas, Api, Nampa, Saipol, Dhaulagiri, Ganesh Himal, Cho Oyu, Lhotse, Chomolangma (Sagarmatha or Everest), Chomolonjo, Makalu, Kanchen Junga, Chumalhari, Namche Barwa and many more beyond these as well.<sup>9</sup>

Each peak has several facets and the glaciers that lie sprawling across them give rise to several rivers. These rivers tumble down and flow out into the plains, before finally disappearing into the ocean. In the end, these rivers return back to their birthplaces as monsoon, cloud and snow. Since the very beginning, the clouds have resented their stark inability to bring back the soil and silt that was borne by the rivers to the oceans. The 'Mountains of the future' will indeed arise from the 'Oceans of today'. Every mountain is decidedly a painstaking feat, millions of years in the making.

These mountains are surrounded by unending tracts of natural beauty. This is the 'Himalayan wilderness.' It has a spirit and a visage for each season. It converses with the sun in one way and with the moon and stars in another. There still remain pristine pockets of Himalayan wilderness that are untouched and yet unsullied by human action. There are places of pilgrimages and adventure; abodes of the Gods; lands frequented by the fairies; valleys of flowers, forests of the white buransh (rhododendron), bhojpatra and juniper; alpine meadows; homelands of bharal, kastura, monal, snow cock and himchitua (snow leopard); thousands of

species of flora and fauna. There are lakes and passes, and trails travelled by our ancestors since millennia. There are some seasonal habitats, with their communities, yaks, sheep, horses, mithun, goats, two-humped (or Bactrian) camels and Bhotia dogs. They have their own culture and economy, their own songs and music. And all life is regulated according to the constraints of this environment.

In this way, where a specific kind of geologic-geographic process has given rise to the Himalaya, the Himalaya has further rendered itself into its present form, while at the same time making the rest of the geography all the way to the oceans.

### **Social- Cultural Diversity**

The sacred Himalaya finds permanent residence in the consciousness of various Asian societies and has been vividly described in their myths and literature. Its natural beauty, geographical complexity and a rich mythic tradition have given birth to various pilgrim destinations here.<sup>10</sup> Various societies and cultures have settled here; while some of them have maintained an interactive existence, many have also chosen a more separate, isolated identity. Perhaps, this is the reason why Himalaya is an unparalleled location in terms of its natural and human diversity.

Different stages of social development can be seen here, with tribal,<sup>11</sup> caste and class-based societies standing alongside each other. While animal husbandry is actively practised in the mountains and agriculture in the valleys, the barter system of trade spreads across the

Himalaya. This has led to the creation of a unique social, cultural and economic system, containing elements brought in by different constitutive communities.

Being the melting pot of several human groups, a juncture of different political systems, and the source of the most important rivers of Asia, the continuously increasing geo-political importance of the Himalaya has ensured that we ought to understand it deeply and comprehensively by engaging with its geology, geography, history, anthropology, sociology, ecology, economics, and indigenous knowledge systems. Today it is necessary that the Himalaya should be studied not only for its myths and folklore but its various aspects should become the object of study for scientific and independent research as well.

Since the Himalaya spreads across so many regions and nations, it should be given a research platform in regional and national studies. Simultaneously, its wholeness and trans-national identity should also be kept in mind. Such an approach would allow Conceptualising the Himalaya as the centre and also the periphery. This will be the beginning of an effort to understand this diverse mountain range more deeply.<sup>12</sup>

The next dimension of the history of the Himalaya is about its various human groups and societies, and their inter-relations. The process of migration and habitation of humans in Himalaya is an interesting one. It is yet to be analysed in great detail as to how the Negroid, the Caucasian, the Mongoloid and other ancient communities struggled, compromised and assimilated each other after arriving in the Himalaya.<sup>13</sup> During

this process, each community tried to learn from and understand the other. They constructed their preliminary culture, developed economic activities and experimented with indigenous science. Thus, practices such as jhum (shifting farming), animal husbandry, water mills, irrigational systems, mining and metallurgy, transportation and bridge making, vernacular architecture, sculpture and mask-making art and so on, were developed under the special ecological and geopolitical pressures<sup>14</sup> of the place.

Today when we look at the blue-eyed Drokapas of Ladakh; the Shaukas (Bhotiyas), Banrajis, Tharus and Bokshas of Uttarakhand; the Banrajis and Sherpas of Nepal; the Lepchas and Bhotias of Sikkim; the Brokapas of Bhutan, Arunachal and Tibet, and the many tribes of north-eastern India, their presence speaks of a variety of human contacts and rich social engagement, which became possible in the Himalaya<sup>15</sup>. Here they tried to absorb the different religious traditions and myths they encountered and also gave them a distinct identity in the form of folk traditions.<sup>16</sup>

The Hindu, Bonpa, Buddhist, Jain, Christian, Muslim and Sikh traditions have certainly associated themselves with the Himalaya due to its unique natural attraction. Many old and mutually disparate societies and cultures have existed in the Himalaya. It seems as though this natural persona of Himalaya gave birth to an endless series of Pauranic stories. Such an intense proximity between the historical tradition and that of myths is not visible anywhere else in the world. Each and

every river, peak, pass, lake and cave has a story and most of the time neither logic, nor the prudence works to explain its meaning.

Our Himalaya and Kalidas's Devatatma is in the north while for the nomads of Tibet, most of whom are Buddhists, the Himalaya is in the south. Quite clearly, the Himalaya belongs equally to the people on either side. Such a wholesome understanding of the Himalaya can be found in many stories of various Gods which circulate in its different language cultures. This includes the oral literature of the Himalaya with a thousand faces.

The Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava traditions of the Indian sub-continent can be clearly seen in the Himalaya.<sup>17</sup> Lord Shiva is an influential God here and the entire area is under his influence. From Amarnath to the Panch Kedars, and further on to Kailas-Mansarovar and the Kathmandu valley, he finds a place of prominence, and makes appearances in various forms such as head (sir), bunch of hair (jata), arm (bahu), back portion of the body (paacabhaga) and navel (nabhi). There was an effort to relate Vaishnava deities with the Himalaya, but Lord Shiva is the indisputable hero and will remain so. Several efforts have been made to relate the traditions of local deities with Lord Shiva also.

From Kamakhya (Assam) to Punyagiri (Uttarakhand) and to Vaishnav Devi (Jammu and Kashmir) in the southern strip of the Himalaya, there is a strong tradition of Shakti or Mother Goddess, which seems to hark back to the most ancient time. There are also a few Vaishnavite centres like Badrinath and

Muktinath. Simultaneously, mountain peaks like Chomolangma and Nanda Devi are still standing in between myths and social reality.<sup>18</sup>

Before being embodied by the peak, Chomolangma's identity is that of a local Mother Goddess. The Nanda Devi of Uttarakhand is a part of this genre of mother goddesses; yet, she is also different in ways. Her identity has grown out of her existence as a mountain on the one hand, a mythic character on another and part of a larger social reality on yet another. Probably she is the only goddess who refuses to be confined to the role of a mother; she is also a daughter, a sister and a daughter-in-law. She is the daughter of the Himalaya and also its mother. She is the Kul Devi (goddess of the clan) of Katyuri kings and also the daughter of Chand and Paramar rulers. Her name is attached to as many mountains as those of Lord Shiva. Not only is she the goddess of faith and joy but also of sadness. In fact, Nanda Devi and Latu are popular even in today's society.<sup>19</sup>

Buddhist monasteries in the inner Himalaya, which spread from Afghanistan and Kashmir to Myanmar, are markers of a rich, living tradition. This Buddhist strip is connected to Tibet in both cultural and geographical ways. It is also present on both sides of the highest summits. Old memorials, dating to more than a thousand years, are also present there. The Bamiyan Buddha of Afghanistan, the remains at Takshshila (Pakistan), various monasteries and forts of Ladakh, the Tabo monastery of Spiti and the Lalung monastery of Kinnaur in Himachal, and other Buddhist monuments are the evidence

of a historical past of more than a thousand years. At the same time, they are also the key to understand the demolished architecture of today's Tholing and Chhaprang along with the rest of western Tibet.<sup>20</sup>

The same could be said about all the shrines and monasteries of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh (especially Tawang) and their relations with the monasteries in adjoining Tibet. In Uttarakhand, such a presence is visible in architecture and sculpture, but in terms of social organisation, Buddhism is practised only by the Jad community. However, it is also true that the Tibetans, who came with the Dalai Lama and settled in Uttarakhand, have maintained a strong Buddhist presence in the region.

Folk deities, among them some are moving and Mahasu is the most important, have an attractive tradition here, which is independent of pan-Asian gods and goddesses. In fact, this diversity of folk deities is inherently linked to the human and natural diversity of the Himalaya. The places which were constituted as pilgrim centres through practices of culture and belief-systems were and continue to be the most beautiful places in the world even without memorials, temples, monasteries or gurudwaras. This fact also illustrates the aesthetic sense of our ancient ancestors and their belief in the purity of wilderness.<sup>21</sup>

It seems that the human ego has led to the destruction of this serene wilderness. Nevertheless, the Himalaya is still home to many different communities and cultures, some of which strikingly do not believe in any dominant religion of

the world. Instead, their belief-systems respect the sun and the moon, the trees and ponds, and nature in general. Such a faith, in fact, seems to be the true and original representative of current religious practices, which are often on the verge of madness. Thus, the nature of beliefs prior to institutionalised religions can still be traced in some of the inhabitants and communities of the Himalaya. Despite the differences in religion and culture, their dependence on each other and the advent of a shared cultural legacy is also an important part of this history.

The limits of religion often divide the society by branding mankind as Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, Christian or Muslims. However, it has not been successful in the Himalaya and despite this religio-psychological apparatus, a specific and shared socio-cultural identity has been able to develop here. For instance, the singers of Vaishno Devi and the managers of the Amarnath Yatra are themselves followers of Islam. Simultaneously, it is the Buddhists who make the pilgrimage arrangements for Hindus and others in Tibet. The number of non-Sikh and non-Buddhist pilgrims to the various Sikh pilgrimage sites and Buddhist monasteries in the Himalaya is indeed more than those belonging to the respective religions. Many of the workers and helpers at Hemkunt Sahib and Ritha Sahib were/are non-Sikhs. The doors of Badrinath shrine are opened jointly by the Lambudiri Brahmin of Kerala origin and the tribal head of Mana village. While there is cooperation between Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir, in the North-East, it is the Hindus,

Buddhists, Christians and Muslims who live together. It should also be kept in mind that the Chakmas, who have been migrated from Bangladesh, are also Buddhists.

The situation is altogether different and extraordinary in the Mt. Kailas and Lake Mansarovar region of western Tibet. Ancient Bonpas (the followers of Bon religion), Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and also the modern western and Chinese tourists travel together to this mountain and lake and take part in its circumambulation (*parikrama*).<sup>22</sup> This region is indeed a unique multi-cultural destination. In this part of western Tibet of Communist China, neither are we witness to a scene of Ayodhya nor that of Jerusalem. This region cannot be treated as the prerogative of any one community, religion or belief. In fact, it is a unique example of the original unity of humankind.

The Himalaya has a number of tribes and ethnic groups, who have their own autonomous worlds comprising of a little bit of everything. This has kept their diversity, specificity and also their inter-relations intact. The most surprising and important fact is that the primary concern of Gujjars, Sherpas, Banarajis, Brokpas, Drokpas, Lepchas and the many tribes of north-eastern India-Myanmar border, is still with nature and not with any institutionalised religion. Close to the Vaishnavite traditions of Manipur stand the rich tribal traditions of the Nagas, who have maintained their originality despite being attached to Christianity. A little further are the borders of Arunachal, Tibet and Myanmar where Buddhist culture is still alive. In the pilgrimage sites of

Uttarakhand, there is a strong presence of visitors from other religions.

The memory of Parashuram spreads from Renuka lake of Himachal and Renuka temples of Uttarakhand to the Arunachal-Myanmar border, where Parashuram Kund is located at the origin of river Lohit. Rishi Vyas is constantly invoked in the valleys of the rivers Kali in Kumaon, Vishnu Ganga in Garhwal and Beas (Kulu) in Himachal. Rishi Kanva finds a presence near Kotdwar and so the story of Shakuntala, Dushyant and Bharat. All the rishis had established themselves in the Himalaya. There are also stories of Gautam Buddha visiting the foothills of Himalaya and Jesus Christ visiting Kashmir. Stories of Saiyads and songs of Sufis are on our lips. The tales of Ramayana are limited in Himalaya but those of Mahabharata are extensive and in multiple forms and they spread from Kashmir to Tripura.

The transformation of Pandavas and Kauravas into folk-gods has been possible in Himalaya only. Their so called journey to heaven was also from here.<sup>23</sup> The Pandavas and Kauravas are still revered in the Tons valley of Uttarakhand. The temples of Karna and Duryodhana are located here and gods travel from one place to another with human beings. People do not leave their gods alone or one can also say that the gods do not want to remain away from their people.

The first Jain Tirthankar Rishabhdev (Adinath) breathed his last at Ashtapaad near the southern slopes of Mt. Kailas, while Adi Shankaracharya extensively toured Uttarakhand and Kashmir. It is also believed that Adi Shankaracharya breathed his last in Kedarnath.

His memorial is constructed there. Before the coming of British rule in Uttarakhand the pilgrims used to commit religious suicide at Brahmjhaap near Kedarnath. Nanak had reached Mansarovar via Kumaon and Ladakh-Bukhara and Gorakhnath is still alive in some parts of Himalaya. Huen-tsang (Xuanzang), Fa Hien (Faxian) and many Buddhist preachers as well as explorers travelled back and forth the Himalaya many times. Mani Padma travelled from Bengal to Tibet.

Kalidas, Shankardev, Gorakhnath, Vivekanand, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobindo Ghosh, Sarala Behn, Uday Shankar, Nikolai Roerich, Govinda Anagarika Lama and many other personalities have visited the Himalaya and stayed here. Dozens of explorers and mountaineers such as the Jesuit Antonio De Andrade, Hungarian Soma De Korosi, German Jack Mont, British William Moorcroft, Swede Sven Hedin, Verrier Elwin, George Mallory, Young husband, Edmond Hillary, Chris Bonington, Herzog and many others have visited the Himalaya. Pundit Nain Singh, Kishan Singh, Tenzing, Ang Dorji, Latu Dorji, Chandraprabha Aitwal and Bachhendri Pal etc. are the children of Himalaya. The more they visited the Himalaya, the more they must have felt how little they know it. The number of peaks they had set their feet on must have always been less than those unclimbed, challenging ones. One does not know how many more centuries will be needed to complete the exploration of the Himalaya.

Within these myths and realities lie many small societies and cultures, which are correlated despite being

unknown to each other. Festivities, fairs, songs, dances, musical instruments, implements and social systems are part of this, as are also swords and arrows – original as well as ornamental. Different forms of traditional knowledge exist here and also those of relationships, manners and traditions. While some communities accept polyandry, some others follow polygamy.<sup>24</sup> Widow remarriage is prevalent in some communities but impossible in others. There are many areas and communities influenced by Buddhist compassion, who hesitate to kill even a bird. Vaishnavite traditions are followed in Manipur and in the nearby Naga areas the practice of ‘head hunting’ was common a few decades back. There are customs of burial at some places, cremation at others and feeding the corpses to the birds at yet other places.<sup>25</sup> Alongside all this, sounds of revolt have also been emanating from north-eastern and north-western areas. Tribal areas of Pakistan have been in a continuous state of disturbance. The political and social systems of the Indian sub-continent have not been able to earn complete trust of these communities. Our centralised republics have yet not understood their decentralised lifestyles. The colonial government had at least showed its good sense in recognising them as ‘non-regulated’ areas, but it was a cleverly created safety valve.

These societies and cultures do not exist in order to be administered by one-dimensional central systems. These community-governed decentralised systems have actually not yet been able to make up their minds to fully recognise the centralised democratic governments. The northern areas

of Pakistan, Indian Kashmir, Nepal, Nagaland, Manipur, Assam etc. have continuously remained disturbed areas.

Despite an east-west geographical continuity in the entire Himalaya, north-south social, economic and ecological relations are also prevalent. Relations between the societies of north Indian plains and Tibet evolved centuries ago through the communities of Himalaya and were working up till half a century back in spite of different state systems. After the occupation of Tibet by China, this relationship has disappeared in most areas.

For instance, if we take the example of Uttarakhand, it shares a special relationship with the society and culture of Tibet and the plains of Ganga and Yamuna. It is intense in some places and sparse at others. At the same time, it is also close to the Mahakali region of Nepal and Himachal's Sutluj-Baspa valley. The same argument can be made about Kashmir, Himachal, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and the seven sisters of Northeast. Many layers of humanity can be read and recognised in Himalaya; also, many have been lost and many are still hidden.

The languages and dialects, arts (of cloth, clay, stone, metal, wood, fibre and colour) and other socio-cultural expressions of Himalaya have developed amidst these lifestyles. There are still many uneducated and illiterate societies here, even though circumstances have made them multilingual. Exchange between Indo-European, Burmo-Tibetan, Austric and Dravid language families has been taking place since millennia and can be traced in the Himalayan languages and dialects.

The studies undertaken by linguists like George Grierson and D. D. Sharma help us in understanding this cultural diversity, although it must be noted that the nature and degree of development and modernity today are contributing to their disappearance.<sup>26</sup>

In order to understand the Himalayan culture and its relations with the rest of Asia, it is necessary to understand the tradition of pilgrimage. Himalaya is home to Bonpa, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic and Sikh pilgrimage sites. The rich tradition of pilgrimage sites and routes includes Amarnath, Charar-e-Sharief, Vaishno Devi, Lamayuru, Manimahesh, Tabo, Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath (the chaar dhams of Uttarakhand), Ritha Sahib-Nanakmatta-Hemkund Sahib, Kailas-Mansarovar-Tirthapuri-Tholing, Muktinath, Buddhist monasteries on the northern and southern slopes of Everest, pilgrimage centres in and around Kathmandu, Buddhist monasteries of Sikkim-Bhutan and Arunachal (Tawang), Parashuram Kund, Kamakshya Dham (Guwahati) and Lhasa-Samaye-Sigaste-Gyantse.

All over the country, children are named after the above pilgrimage centres and corresponding gods. Most of the pilgrimages of Himalaya are seasonal and take place between the spring and autumn seasons. These travels also connect people from other parts of Asia with Himalaya. A system of chattis (stopovers) existed along these pilgrimage routes, which now in most of the routes is lost due the construction of motor roads. Local societies arrange for the shelter and food of visitors and one can witness innumerable examples

of such mutual dependence and co-operation. Sights of saints travelling alongside family folks were also very common.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, there are many natural areas shared by societies and cultures in Himalaya. These are inexhaustible markers of social and cultural diversity with many layers of hunter-gatherers, artisans, pastoralists, farmers, traders and service holders. The 'Yeti' could be a figment of Himalayan imagination or it could be a bear of the higher Himalaya, but there are still societies here who continue to depend on hunting and collecting. Jhum cultivation is still a way of livelihood. Nomads and pastoralists still exist here as do also people migrating to the plains, just like their own soil and waters.

Many societies are illiterate here and yet multilingual and age old oral traditions have entered the realm of writing in the last two hundred years. Poet Lokratn Gumani (1791-1846) wrote in Hindi, Sanskrit, Kumaoni and Nepali, while Molaram (1743-1833) contributed to Hindi through his paintings, poems and history-writing. Nepali poet Bhanubhakt (1814-1868) was influenced by Ramayana, while Sufi poetry had a wonderful influence on the Kashmiri language through the works extending from those of Nuruddin Wali (1376-1438) to those of Ahmed Zargar (1908-1984).

Yet, traditions of orality have remained dynamic. Jhusia Damai (1910-2005) had kept the mixed tradition of myths and folk-tales alive till recently, in a composite language form of Nepali, Kumaoni and some Bhot-Tibetan, in which prose suddenly transforms into

songs and songs into dances. Similarly, Mohan Singh Rithagari (1905-1984) and Gopidas (1902-1975) kept alive Malushahi or Ramol Gatha, while Keshav Anuragi contributed to Dhol Sagar and 'Saiyad Vani'. There could be many folk singers in Himalaya today of whom we are not aware and yet continue to represent its oral traditions.

Many healthy, resourceful and dedicated life times are required for understanding the Himalaya. As Krishnanath has rightly said, 'Himalaya also does not know Himalaya'. Only humans can feel the beauty of the Himalaya. The animals who live here, only know the taste of its plants. The birds that fly across it realise its heights. The fish living in its waters, know the minerals they have to depend upon. But only humans have been bestowed with the power to realise its beauty. Although many a time they do not use their abilities and start trampling their own mountains.

### **Resources of Many Kinds**

But Himalaya is not just about its beauty and its society and culture. Like any mountain range, it is also home to natural resources, which humans have been using since time immemorial. To this is tied the ecological aspect of Himalaya. These resources have been in constant use by societies of hunters, nomads, pastoralists, artisans, agriculturists, traders to the present day non-residents or 'money order' economies, and there is no hope of its stopping in the foreseeable future. The colonial regime had declared these 'life resources' to be 'goods' and the multinational approach of the open

market economy has turned them into 'commodities', with the resources, raw or finished, being silent victims to a relentless, institutionalised plunder. That's why the Himalaya, like other remote regions of the country, has been plagued and tormented by an internal colonialism.

The resources of Himalaya have always been divided into land, forests, water, humans-animals and I would like to add one more - wilderness. Land (soil, minerals, metals and hydrocarbons) is the fundamental or the mother resource. Land bears the pastures, the forests and agricultural fields. The rivers flow on it, and all the glaciers and lakes lie sprawling among its folds. In fact, geology, weather and altitude decide the disposition of the land. Whether it be covered with snow or take the form of a gorge or become an alpine meadow, or else a normal pasture. Humana have brought it to the extent of individual ownership. This is actually agricultural land. Hence they buy and sell it. Today the newly rich and the businessmen have started trading in it.

The Himalaya has been bestowing soil, fertility and water upon northern India by way of its rivers, without being asked to. Man's rashness has hastened the depletion of the soil. This fact can be seen from Dayara region to Moor islands of Bay of Bengal. And it is the soil that saves ourselves from being reduced to soil. In fact, most of the social and ecological movements of the Himalaya are centred round the conservation of soil.<sup>28</sup>

Water manifests itself in all three forms in the Himalaya, solid, liquid and vapour, but the critical mobility

is achieved only in the second form, because it knows how to flow. The experts have started calling the Himalaya as the 'water towers of modern civilisation'. This water quenches our thirst. Some of it is used for water mills and irrigation. The energy flowing in it can be captured and commoditised. The consumer's mindset or the capitalist's acumen can merely envision dams like Tehri, or the business of bottled water, packaged in plastic and sold at ₹10 to 15. They will neither dwell on the future of fish nor be concerned about the fate of ordinary humans.

Meanwhile, the construction of a series of dams is underway throughout the Himalaya, needless to say without the 'honest' cost-benefit analysis and proper assessment of the geo-tectonics, catchment areas and the consequences.<sup>29</sup> The small-scale but sustainable and successful efforts of our ancestors, for the conservation and use of water and snow, practised for thousands of years, are invariably rejected as 'traditional knowledge systems', when they are as meaningful and useful today as ever.<sup>30</sup> Some are even considering the 'linking of the rivers', without knowing and respecting the right of the river to flow.

The forests are just as much an integral and distinctive feature of Himalaya as the snow/ice and water. The 'water towers' lie not just in the glaciers; their roots go deep into the forests. Hunting and collecting, livestock and agriculture, crafts and cottage industries, traditional medicines and trade are all supported by the forests. Forests are critical to the formation and retention of soil. Forests fill the lives of people with song, music, journeys and

a range of arts and implements. They are home to animals and birds. They make possible the extent of biological diversity.

The Himalayan biological diversity has many dimensions to it. The rarest of flora and fauna can be found here. If less than five per cent of the total geographical area can support life in Ladakh, more than eighty per cent of all land in Arunachal Pradesh is crammed with forests.<sup>31</sup> If elephants, tigers and rhinos walk in the foot hills, snow leopards, musk deer, pandas, monals and snow cocks are visible in the higher reaches. A variety of species lives in between. Some fly from north of Himalaya to its south annually and known as 'migratory birds'. Some species are already extinct, and many others are threatened or critically endangered and have been duly included in the red data list of IUCN.

There are some remarkable areas with extraordinarily rich biodiversity in Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Uttarakhand. To put it simply, Himalaya occupies 0.3 per cent of the planet area, while making up 10 per cent of its biodiversity.<sup>32</sup> This fact has now been recognised by the 'enemies' too. The forests of Himalaya and its vegetation have been a ready source of food and fodder, fuel, timber, roots and herbs, manure, cloth, colours, fibre and so on. Agricultural diversity is closely linked to biodiversity.<sup>33</sup> But humans and their modern apparatus, under tremendous pressure from the international economic establishment, want to 'cut', 'dig', 'collect' and 'kill' as much as possible in the shortest time. They want to earn more and

learn nothing. This is a gradual and slow suicide being hatched in the new economy. But for the unsuspecting ordinary folk of the Himalaya, this is nothing short of murder. Climatic and atmospheric changes will no doubt hasten this process.<sup>34</sup>

Humans in the Himalaya are a resource and at same time consumers of all other resources. On the other hand, the wild animals are linked to forests, rangelands and to biodiversity, as the domestic animals are to agriculture, transport and food systems. They can then be termed as 'cash fauna'. If the population of the Himalayan region is estimated at over 50 million, the projection for domestic animals may also go to around 40 million. But the resources of the Himalaya influence the lives of more than 500 million Asians directly or indirectly. For the Himalayan experts, the big task is to make universally available the actual data and statistics on different aspects of Himalaya, so that the widespread guesswork about this large region can come to an end.

There is also a need to understand the Himalayan migrations. For example, how can we approach and understand the concept of 'money order economy' today? While it's meaning has changed for Uttarakhand, to some extent it's still a useful term in understanding the out-migrational economy of Nepal. How to understand the forced migrations of Tibetans and Pundits from their respective lands? How to analyse the migration of labourers from Bihar, Jharkhand and eastern UP to remotest and difficult Himalaya?

The most special, 'niche', resource of the Himalaya is its 'wilderness', its natural beauty and tranquillity. This beauty isn't just the peaks, glaciers, confluences, springs, lakes, valleys of flowers, green and blue forests and perennial rivers considered by themselves, but a combined and juxtaposed whole, much greater than the sum of its parts. At times rain would embellish the scene, at other times snow, fog or hailstorms would add to the beauty. The moon and the sun adorn the wilderness in their own way. Many a times, the stars would descend upon its lakes, and often the rising or setting sun or moon would set its beauty ablaze. How the clouds alight on the meadows to graze, or how the moon with swift manoeuvre becomes the sovereign of the sky, as soon as the sun goes down, all these are such sights to behold that they can only be experienced. The spectacle of the falling snow is also like a silent, meditative dance of an animated grandeur.

In this vast panorama, the flight of a bird, the sighting of a *Monal* (the Himalayan pheasant) or a musk deer, timid tone of a *Kakar* (barking deer) or growl of a *Guldar* (leopard), the slithering of a reptile or a fish leaping out from a lake, break the monotony of Himalaya's imperial splendour, spontaneously inventing sublime flourishes. Amidst all this, communities or their dwellings and architecture, or their songs and caravans, or the smoke rising from their houses in the settlements, all add a very unusual human beauty to the canvas. This endless palette endows their vision with art and poetry, fills in the blank spaces of the modern mind and deconstructs monoculture.

This immeasurable beauty cannot be manufactured by nation-states or multinational companies. This wilderness is the perpetual possession of the Himalaya. Pilgrimage and tourism are very dependent on these assets. A major part of these assets is associated with aesthetics, and visual intensity and 'cutting' or 'digging' is not involved. This 'wilderness' can be the basis for the dust and smoke-free industry of the twenty first century i.e. the people's tourism. And there is tremendous pressure on this resource today.

### **Between Silence and War**

In these beautiful and certainly difficult areas of the earth, the Himalaya shows signs of prosperity and also of poverty. The present scenario of the Himalaya, therefore, makes one upset and this sadness is not only felt by more than 50 million Himalayan people but it is also part of a larger national and regional sadness. It has become so pronounced because the flowing rivers speak of it, the mountains insist on it and the forests and minerals, which no longer belong to the people of the region, echo with it. The natural environment, which is the primary context for the dances and songs of the people, are being consistently destroyed. Unsound developmental processes are being forcefully thrust upon the region. Nevertheless, the people have not yet surrendered.

Even amidst this sadness, they are fighting for their forests, soil, minerals, folk culture, and in a way, for their very identity. They have been gauging the conspiracies of supporters of big dams and corporate and captive

tourism, the contractors of mines and road construction and their destructive methodology of work, and the looters of raisin, timber and herbs. This realisation is not limited to some pockets only.

Many active sections of the society are of the opinion that Himalaya cannot be sustained and saved separately. Its environment is linked to its economy and this ultimately brings in the question of political will in a national and international context. The societies of Himalaya have been protecting themselves for centuries, but self-defence has become acutely difficult today.

The Himalayan societies have historically engaged in warfare in order to establish and protect themselves from each other and also from competitive feudal powers. There could be some difference in the degree of endurance that different societies possess, but the human quality to protest exists amongst all. Its form is contingent upon the particular spatio-temporal context in which it takes root, and it thereby spreads socially, sometimes gaining a generous quality and at other times an aggressive one. The stability achieved after the struggles with medieval feudal powers was disturbed with the arrival of Europeans, who heralded an empire of exploitation and slavery. However, this was followed by retribution and resistance.

There was an overall decline of feudal powers in the Himalaya by the last decades of the eighteenth century, with the exception of three, which evolved and become even bigger for some time. These were the Dogra, Gorkha and Ahom empires, which the

colonial rulers could not fully destroy. By the nineteenth century, Company rule had gradually entered in some parts of the Himalaya. In response, individual and collective resistance from the communities of Himalaya also started to get stronger. Most of the social movements in Himalaya were led by peasants and tribes. The form and significance of resistance in the Himalaya can be gauged by studying the revolts of Jayantiya, Kuki and Manipur, the Phulagarhi movement of Assam, the anti-begar (forced labour) and forest movements of Uttarakhand, Dhandhak and Prajamandal movements of Tehri State, Prajamandal movement of Himachal States, Chanaini movement of Jammu and National Conference movement of Kashmir.

Struggles against the feudal and colonial rule have been carried out in all parts of the Himalaya. The movement of Nepali Congress can also to be placed in this context. This era witnessed the emergence of many leaders and revolutionary heroes. Tikendrajit and Hijam Iravot of Manipur; Shivcharan Rai of Meghalaya; Naga Rani Gaidinlue; Vishweshwar Prasad Koirala of Nepal; Govind Ballabh Pant, P.C. Joshi, Chandra Singh Garhwali, Sridev Suman and Nagendra Saklani of Uttarakhand; Veer Ratna Singh, Fakir Chand Bhapa, Yashpal, Satyadev Bushhari and Yashwant Singh Parmar of Himachal and Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir are the names of some of them. The soldiers who refused to fire upon unarmed Pathans in Peshawar and those who enrolled themselves in the Azad Hind Fauz (INA) and the RIN mutineers are also part of this list of fighters.<sup>35</sup>

This tradition did not stop even after 1947. Mass movements continue even today. The resistance in both parts of Kashmir and in north-eastern India has repeatedly turned violent. Movements in Uttarakhand also did not stop after independence<sup>36</sup> and it was only mass movements which finally brought democracy to Nepal. Movements are going on in Tibet and Bhutan as well. In such an atmosphere, sometimes there is a lull and sometimes the situation turns explosive. Nevertheless, it must be hoped that new movements lead to a deepening of democratic foundations. Bhutan has entered into the era of constitutional monarchy. The very idea of GNH (Gross National Happiness) has emerged from this small Himalayan country. Presently Himachal and Sikkim are such states where processes of development are being slowly and peacefully implemented, though these states are also experiencing ecological movements.

It must be remembered that if we thrust externally derived solutions on to the issues of Himalaya, it will only lead to more instability and unrest. In fact, such an understanding is the need of the hour. If the Himalaya and its resources are used only for commercial exploitation, then neither the Himalaya nor the north Indian plain will remain safe. There is no dearth of people, from India and elsewhere, who, on the one hand, willingly declare that the Himalaya is the highest symbol of human civilisation and on the other, do not hesitate at all in destroying its natural wealth and cultural prosperity. In fact, it is these people who are running the system. This is the real scenario

which has placed the Himalaya in a dangerous situation and it is a matter of concern for all of us.

What we need at the moment is a steady middle path with long-term goals for the overall betterment of our larger society and fulfillment of our needs, and not hasty frenzies of development which only benefit a few. Globalisation, privatisation of commons and climatic change are bound to have a direct impact on the Himalaya. However, we are also certain that despite these processes, it will maintain its presence amidst us and will continue to support our existence in various ways. After all, who are we to save the Himalaya? In fact, it is because of the realisation that our own safety is linked to the existence of the Himalaya, and the natural environment in general, that we are talking about its protection. Truth is that Himalaya is being attacked from all sides and its resources are being looted at such a speed that they cannot be simultaneously regenerated and restored. This is our modern civilisation and somewhere we are shirking from facing it. However, we must realise that we have only one Himalaya and we do not want to lose it.

The Himalaya can be likened to the father who is unable to scold his spoilt children and to the mother who is unable to doubt them. In order to save the Himalaya, we must be ready to lose some things which might have a veneer of glitter albeit of a temporary nature.

One should hope that the children of the Himalaya and the rest of humankind will realise this in time! Alongside, it should also be remembered that this understanding is neither available in the international market, nor can

it be developed by the World Bank or any multinational company. This realisation and awareness already exists in the societies and communities of the

Himalaya and we can learn and imbibe it only from there. Hopefully, we and our policy makers will awaken to this fact well in time.

### END NOTES

1. Caterpillar fungus (*Cordyceps sinensis*) is also known as *Keeda Jadi*. Finds a number of uses in traditional medicine of China, Tibet, Nepal and India.
2. The poet stayed at various places in the Himalaya. This includes Shillong, Darjeeling, Ramgarh, Almora and Shimla amongst others. However, at none of these places has a memorial been built. In Ramgarh (Nainital) and Almora even an introductory board has not been installed. In Shimla, his stay is indicated by a board in front of a house near IAS. The Institute can certainly make the presence of this house more meaningful. Gurudev wrote his novel *Yogayog* and the poems *Susamay* and *Devdaru* during his third visit to Shillong in May-June 1927, while staying at the Siddhali House. While this place could have been protected and used properly, it was demolished in July 2010. Similarly, the house in Pandua village of Jagatsinghpur district, Orissa, where Gurudev wrote the dance-drama *Chitrangada*, is in ruins. On the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary, we have before us the opportunity to preserve the heritage associated with him. Let us not miss the possibility that this occasion holds forth.
3. Many experts opine that the Hindu Kush and Karakoram are also part of Himalaya, and according to some it lies between the rivers Indus and Brahmaputra or between the Mts. Nanga Parvat and Namche Barwa. Then its length is considered as varying between 2,070-3,000 km., breadth between 250-400 km, with an overall area of 600,000 sq. km., and population of 5 crores (see : Burrard, S.G., Hayden H.H., Heron, A.M., 1934 (1970), *A Sketch of Geology and Geography of the Himalaya Mountains and Tibet*, New Delhi; Wadia, D.N., 1953, *Geology of India*, London; Heim, Arnold and Gansser, August, 1939, *Central Himalaya : Geological Observations of the Swiss Expedition 1936*, Zurich; Gansser, A, 1964, *Geology of the Himalaya*, New York; Zurick, David and Pacheco, Julsun, 2006, *Illustrated Atlas of the Himalaya*, Kentucky).
4. For this see another lecture: Pathak, Shekhar, 2003, *Mata Himalaya Pita Himalaya*, Bahuvachan 11, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Hindi Vishwavidyalaya, Delhi / Vardha.
5. The highest 14 mountains of the world are located in the Himalaya and also the deep gorges of Kali Gandaki, Satluj or Brahmaputra rivers (Zurick, David and Pacheco, Julsun, 2006, *Illustrated Atlas of the Himalaya*, Kentucky : 3-4).
6. KHATRI, K.N. 1987. *Great Earthquakes, Seismicity Gaps and Potential for Earthquake Disaster along the Himalaya plate Boundary*, Tectophysics 138; Bhatt, Chandi Prasad, 1997 (1992), *The Future of the Large Projects in the Himalaya*, Pahar, Nainital; Valdiya, K.S., 1993, *High Dams in the Himalaya*, Pahar, Nainital; Gaur, V.K. (Ed.), 1993, *Earthquake Hazard and Large Dams in the Himalaya*, Delhi.
7. Pamir, Karakoram, Khardung La, Jauji La, Baralacha, Kunjum La, Sipki La, Mana Pass, Niti Pass, Kingri Bigri La, Untadhura, Lipu Lekh, Tinker La, Nathu La, Jalap La, Dongkya La, Letavasa Pass, Tunga La etc. are situated between the two valleys of the

Himalaya or between the Himalaya and Tibet. Older trade and pilgrim routes passed through these. Most of the passes are situated on lower ridges of mountains (5,000 to 6,500 m) or along the rivers.

8. Among these rivers, Sindhu, Ganga and Brahmaputra make up 4.28, 25 and 33.71 per cent respectively by volume of India's river water, and drain 9.8, 26 and 7.8 per cent respectively of India's total area. In this way, their combined basin is 43.8 per cent of India's total surface area, and supply 63 per cent of India's fresh water.
9. The heights of various peaks is as follows – Rakaposhi (7,788m), Nanga Parbat (8125m), K-2 (8,811m), Gasherbrum (8,068m), Nunkun (7135m), Kinner Kailash (6500m), Swargarohini (6,252m), Bandarpunch (6,102/6,316m), Kedarnath (6,940/6,830m), Chaukhamba (7,138m), Bhagirathi (6,856m), Shivling (6,543m), Nanda devi (7,817m), Nanda Kot (6,881m), Panchachuli (6,904m), Rajrambha (6,537m), Aapi (7,132m), Manaslu (8,163m), Sheeshapangma (8,013m), Dhaulagiri (8,167m), Annapurna (8,091m), Cho Oyu (8,201m), Lhotse (8,516m), Chomolangama or Sagarmatha or Everest (8,850m), Makalu (8,481m), Kanchenjunga (8,585m), Kunla Kangri (7,600m), Namche Barwa (7,800m).
10. See Bernbaum, Edwin, 1990, 1992. *Sacred Mountains of the World*, San Francisco, 2-23, 206-248.
11. Kalash, Balti, Bakarwal, Janskari, Gaddi, Gujjar, Jaunsari, Shauka, Tharu, Boksa, Banraji, Bhotiya, Byansi, Magar, Gurang, Tamang, Nevar, Sherpa, Rai, Limbu, Lepcha, Drokpa, Monpa, Abor, Mismi, Apatani, Naga, Mizo, Khasi and Jayantiya are the well known among them but there are also other tribes and communities.
12. See: PATHAK, SHEKHAR, *Himalaya Ka Itihas: Mithak Se Yatharth Ki Ore* (History of Himalaya: From Myth to Reality), Presidential Lecture of Uttar Pradesh History Congress at its 14th Session on 27 September 2003, in Sinha, A.K. (Ed.), 2005, pp 1-33, *Dimensions in Indian History*, New Delhi.
13. MAJUMDAR, D.N. 1946. *The Fortunes of Primitive Tribes*, Lucknow; Dabral, Shiv Prasad, 1968, *Uttarakhand Ka Itihas*, Part I and II, Dogada; Pathak, Shekhar, 1988, *Kumaoni Society through the Ages*, Kumaon: Land and People, pp 97-110. Michael Witzel has carried out a new and multifaceted study in this regard; this issue needs to be probed and understood even further. See: Witzel, Michael, 2005, *Central Asian Roots and Acculturation in South Asia*, in Linguistics, Archaeology and the Human Past, Ed. Toshiki, Osada, pp 87-211, Kyoto, Japan.
14. PANDE, GIRIJA, GEIJERSTAM, JAN AF. (EDS.). 2002. Tradition and Innovation in the History of Iron Making, Nainital; Geijerstam, Jan af., 2004, *Landscapes of Technology Transfer: Swedish Iron Makers in India (1860-1864)*, Jernkontorets Bergshistoriska, Skriftserie (Sweden); Cautley, Proby Thomas, 1854, *Ganges Canal*, CEC Press, Roorkee; Agrawal, Anil and Narayan, Sunita, *Dying Wisdom*, CSE, Delhi; Olschak, Blanche C., Gansser, Augusto, Buhner, Emil M., 1987, *Himalayas*, New Delhi; Saklani, Pradeep M., Nautiyal, Vinod and. Nautiyal, K. P, 1999, *Summer: Earthquake Resistant Structures in the Yamuna Valley, Garhwal, Himalaya, India*, in *South Asian Studies*, Volume 15; Bisht, Krishna, 2002, *Recarving the Wood: Report on the History and Revival of Wood Carving in Uttaranchal*, Delhi.
15. ROBERTSON, GEORGE S. 1987. 1896. *The Kafirs of the Hindu-Kush*, Karachi; Srivastav, S.K. 1958, *The Tharus - A Study in Culture Dynamics*, Agra; Loude, Jean Yves/ Lievre Viviane, n.d., *Kalash Solstice*, Islamabad; Peissel, Michel, 1992 (1967), *Mustang: A*

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28. In the entire Hindukush-Himalaya range, pastures make up 39 per cent of the area, forests 21 per cent, protected areas 11 per cent and agricultural land 5 per cent. The income of 47 to 83 per cent of people in this region is 2 USD per day, while it is 1 USD per day for 17 to 36 per cent (Sharma, Eklabya., 2004, *ICIMOD News Letter 45, Kathmandu*) Per capita land for farming in Indian Himalayas is 0.29 hectares (Ya, Tang and Tulachan, Pradeep M. (Eds.), 2003, *Mountain Agriculture in the HKH Region*, ICIMOD, Kathmandu: 7).
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