

Karukku as a tool of resistance despite including recollections of unjust discriminations.

The present volume of essays compiles together diverse scholarly musings on a contemporary area of academic research encompassing texts in various literary genres in different Indian languages. This work can be of special interest to researchers working in the field of Dalit studies, Dalit literature and Dalit women's writings.

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Nikhilesh Dham and Bain Malik (Eds.), *Posthumanism and Literary Insights: A Critical Introduction*. Aakar Books, 2025, 320 pp., Rs. 995, ISBN: 978-93-5002-876-6.

Reviewed by Indrani Das Gupta

Nikhilesh Dhar and Bapin Mallick's edited volume, *Posthumanism and Literary Insights* (2025) is a recent addition to the expanding body of works in the field of posthumanism. Dhar and Mallick's critical volume engages with the materialist and philosophical underpinnings of posthumanist discourse, and outlines how this framework intersects with caste, gender, cityscapes, genres like science fiction, speculative, and cybernetic narratives. Like many other books in this evolving field, such as Cary Wolfe's *Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the "Outside"* (1998) and *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003), Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* (2013), Christine Daigle and Matt Hayler's edited volume *Posthumanism in Practice* (2023), among others, this volume does not attempt to rigidly define the structural and conceptual terrain of posthumanism. Instead, acknowledging its slippery and dynamic character, Dhar and Mallick's volume posits posthumanism as a critical intervention tool in the long debate between humanism, anthropocentrism, and anti-humanism.

Posthumanism is not merely a rupture from humanism or an alignment towards anti-humanist thought. Rather, the post-human approach in literature and culture is linked to the philosophical discussions on the very nature of humanity. The discussion and debate as to what underpins human-ness, and what sets humans apart from other entities and phenomena in the cosmos has flourished for centuries. From Pico Della Mirandola's examination of man's immense potentiality to Rene Descartes's association of cognitive potentiality to embodiment to Immanuel Kant's valorization of reason as the principle underscoring human superiority to William Wordsworth's notion of a poet as a "man speaking to men" to Michel Foucault's 'temporality of man,' our understanding of human subjectivity and identity has undergone multiple transformations. However, over the last few decades of the twentieth century, advancements in biotechnology, digital technology, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence, coupled with devastating ecological and climatic shifts, have profoundly transformed our socio-political, cultural, and ethical understanding of human subjectivity. These dramatic biotechnological and ecological changes have necessitated a revaluation of the essence of humanity and humans' place in the world, thereby leading to the emergence of posthuman thought in the public imaginary.

The posthuman framework operates as a critical tool for negotiating ideas, institutions, and beliefs borne out of the long-standing traditions of humanism, and shaped by the cultural legacies of Enlightenment in conjunction with the twin projects of imperialism and global capitalism. As the introduction of Dhar and Mallick's volume explicates, posthumanism challenges the Enlightenment notion of liberal human autonomy and the pre-eminence of the principle of 'universalism.' Inspired by poststructuralist and postmodernist ideas, posthumanist thought disrupts binary dualisms that structures human thought and expressions and challenges human exceptionalism to foster a more connective and relational ethos to operate across different species—animals, plants, humans, and machines.

Using posthumanist thinking and perspective as a methodological tool to reflect on the every day, lived experiences represented in literary texts, the twenty-two chapters in Dhar and Mallick's volume articulate new ways to examine classic texts. The study of these classic texts, such as Rabindranath Tagore's "Subha," "Muktodhara," "Raktakarabi," Samuel

Beckett's *Endgame*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, among others, critiques the conventional reading of 'Man'—able-bodied, upper-caste, upper-class, male, and Western-oriented (usually white). Following in the wake of other works in this disciplinary terrain, such as Donna Haraway's "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" (1985), Katherine Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999), Dhar and Mallick's work explores the interconnectedness and the convergences between virtual technologies, human bodies and memory, and maps the shifting nature of urban environments and human identity.

Dhar and Mallick's edited volume's selection of topics to showcase the range of applications of posthumanism is commendable. While the essays in this volume do not aim for originality and novelty, they do offer rigorous and succinct explanations of the relevance of the post-human, post-anthropocentric, and post-dualistic thought in a world riven by hierarchisations, violence, and exploitative power dynamics. Whether it be in drawing our attention to a fluid, shapeless, liminal "posthuman geography" represented in the works of Easterine Kire or Italo Calvino, or dismantling the normative understandings of the 'body,' debunking the need to 'rectify' the disordered body, problematising the age-old caste discriminations and hierarchies still found in modern societies, fostering interspecies relationality, or reconceptualising fashion through a non-human centric perspective—this volume encourages readers to challenge formulaic understanding of genre, urban realities, and social categories like gender, class, disability, etc. In its critique of the foundational assumptions of society, Dhar and Mallick's critical volume outlines an ethos of entanglements and interdependence between species, genres, etc., to chart new pathways of ethical justice and social activism.

However, the one major limitation with this edited work is that several essays are lost in a mesh of theoretical jargons, and the analysis emerges as secondary to the literature review. Like in Arnab Dasgupta's chapter, posthumanism is explained by another methodological tool—"Object-Oriented Ontology." In Swarnendu Dam's chapter, the caste critique is diluted due to the presence of multiple theories. Additionally, reductive and simplistic analysis blunts the sharpness of the critique of posthumanist discourse. For instance, in Attrira Goswami's essay, "posthuman horror" is merely described as an "explicable other," and

in Manoj Kumar Limbu's essay, the analysis of the interdependence of species appears mechanical. Another flaw in this otherwise valuable volume is that the tension between posthumanism and transhumanism is not taken into consideration, and which inevitably makes the readers lose focus of the posthuman openness towards the 'other.'

Despite these shortcomings, Dhar and Mallick's edited critical work offers meaningful and alternative ways to examine literary and cultural texts, and by implication, the wider socio-political landscape. This volume will serve as a valuable asset for young scholars, researchers, and academics to think differently and to challenge the 'essentialisms,' which shape the understanding of our socio-cultural institutions, policies, and ideologies.

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Niraj Kumar Singh and Sangeeta Mittal (Eds.). (2025). *Himalayas: The Famous Yet Fragile Roof of the World*. Aakar Books, 244 pp., Rs. 795, ISBN 978-93-5002-892-6.

Reviewed by Tarika Prabhakar

The edited anthology *Himalayas: The Famous Yet Fragile Roof of the World* (Singh & Mittal, 2025), published by Aakar Books, is a timely and compelling academic contribution to the ongoing intellectual exploration of the Himalayan region. This publication emerges from a conference dedicated to the multidisciplinary study of the Himalayan region—a terrain that remains geographically immense, strategically crucial, culturally diverse, and environmentally vulnerable. The Himalayan Mountain system, framed between the Tibetan Plateau and the Indian