

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

plains, plays a vital role not only in the ecological and geopolitical framework of South Asia but also in its cultural imagination and literary output. This volume notably succeeds in representing the Himalayas as both a lived and imagined space.

The anthology is structured into three major thematic sections: *Himalayan Culture: Lives and Literature*, *Himalayan Adventure: Travel and Discovery*, and *Himalayan Ecology: Concerns and Conservation*. Beyond traditional academic essays, the collection also includes two interviews, a book review, and a conference report—a formal eclecticism that mirrors the thematic and disciplinary diversity within. Contributors range from scholars of literature, environmental science, education, and history, to data scientists, photographers, documentary filmmakers, architects, poets, journalists, and activists—forming a rare and commendable confluence of voices.

A key thematic thought line in the volume is the idea of *mobility*, approached from varied perspectives. Prof. Sangeeta Mittal's essay on the Hindi travelogues of Rahul Sankrityayan redefines travel writing not merely as exploration but as a philosophical journey rooted in human evolution and local engagement. Ishita Pundhir's essay, meanwhile, examines migration patterns from Uttarakhand as symptomatic of inadequate infrastructure and poor living conditions. Dr. Indrani Dasgupta offers a broader conceptual analysis of travel, migration, and circulation as paradigmatic of modern and postmodern existence.

Literary portrayals of the Himalayan experience are exemplified in Dr. Nabanita Deka's study of Ruskin Bond's fiction, which reflects on the fragile interdependence of man and nature. Similarly, Mridula Sharma investigates the poetics of Agha Shahid Ali, noting how Ali's work resists the cartographic reduction of Kashmir to contested borders, instead portraying it as a site of generational trauma. This essay contrasts sharply with the cultural anthropological survey by G. H. Mir and Audil Umar Lone, which provides a lighter yet informative account of dietary and dressing customs in Kashmir, albeit with less theoretical engagement.

Other noteworthy contributions include Gaurav Kumar Pal's archaeological exploration of Kangra Fort using GIS and remote sensing techniques, Praveen Kumar's critique of anthropogenic threats to the Himalayas despite their spiritual reverence, and Shweta Dhiman's in-depth analysis of hydroelectric projects' environmental impact. Govind

Singh's study of traditional water systems in Uttarakhand draws connections between ecological practices and sacred architecture, while Nikita Verma's article stands out for its analysis of walkability and urban planning in Himalayan towns, positioning pedestrian culture as both environmentally sustainable and socially cohesive.

A distinctive strength of the anthology lies in its intersectional approach, which successfully bridges ecological, literary, technological, and socio-cultural insights. Interviews with biologist Koustubh Sharma and photographer-conservationist Joanna Van Gruisen deepen the volume's ecological engagement, offering personal perspectives on the challenges of wildlife conservation amidst climate change. Debomsita Paul's anthropological essay linking Nepal and Bengal through the cults of Gorakhnath and Matsyendranath adds another layer of regional connectivity to the volume's cultural scope.

The anthology's ambition is matched by its intellectual diversity. It carefully balances romanticized perceptions of the Himalayas—as sites of spiritual retreat and poetic inspiration—with critical discourses on environmental degradation, forced migration, and developmental overreach. In doing so, it reframes the Himalayas not merely as a passive backdrop but as an active, contested, and constantly evolving entity in academic and public discourse.

In conclusion, *Himalayas: The Famous Yet Fragile Roof of the World* is a notable addition to Himalayan studies. Its multidisciplinary, multi-genre approach makes it valuable not only for scholars of South Asian literature, history, and environmental studies but also for policymakers, ecologists, and general readers interested in the future of this fragile mountain ecosystem. The anthology does have some unevenness—especially in terms of theoretical depth across essays—but its overarching contribution lies in its plurality. It reasserts the Himalayas as a metaphor, a method, and a material reality all at once.

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