

Editorial

Digital Humanities and Ubiquitous Scholarship on Himalayas: The Third Pole of the World

Interdisciplinary Journal of Digital Humanities and Ubiquitous Scholarship (IJ DUS) is a leading interdisciplinary Journal for research and writing drawing upon contemporary debates and intellectual practices from **digital humanities and technology-aided learning**. We aim to provide a platform for scholars to showcase their research and foster a community that shares a passion for exploring the realms of literature, art, history, language, philosophy, culture and environment among others, through a digital lens. Our mission is to uncover the innovative ways in which technology is revolutionizing scholarship and education not just in humanities but across streams and disciplines.

NEP 2020 states that, “With various dramatic scientific and technological advances, such as the rise of big data, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, many unskilled jobs worldwide may be taken over by machines, while the need for a skilled workforce, particularly involving mathematics, computer science, and data science, in conjunction with multidisciplinary abilities across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, will be increasingly in greater demand”. **Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes 2022** mentions “Flexibility to switch to alternative modes of learning (offline, ODL, and Online learning, and hybrid modes of learning)” as one of its main features. In pursuit of this spirit of National Education Policy and Undergraduate Credit and Curriculum Framework, the first issue focuses an important area of humanities and interdisciplinary approaches: **Himalayan natural and cultural heritage. Delhi University and other institutions offer papers like Ecology and Culture, Sustainable Ecotourism and Entrepreneurship, E-tourism, Environmental impact and Risk Assessment, Environmental Auditing, Floriculture, Viewing and Capturing Diversity in Nature, Horticulture, Environment Ecology, Geography of Himalaya, Hydrology and water Resource Management, Himalayan Geology, Geotourism, Environment in Indian History, Cultures in Indian Subcontinent, Politics of Nature, Environment Science**. This issue not only broadens the horizons of the above-mentioned curricular content, but also prepares students for undertaking research in allied and important areas as prescribed in their graduation and post-graduation course.

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The **audio-visual format of the chapters** is a **digital humanities innovation** that will immersively engage the readers. In the post-pandemic on-line regime of teaching and learning, this format of research sharing will prove to be significant in pedagogic and conference scenarios. This issue is a **product of INSERCH (Initiative for Sharing Ecological Responsibility and Conserving Heritage) organised second on-line International Conference in the Natural and Cultural Ecosystems series on 'Neath the World's Roof: Cultural Landscapes of Himalayan Communities in The Subcontinent**. The Conference explored the myriad Himalayan cultural landscapes in terms of the ways that various communities have inhabited them and continue to do so, their interaction with the environs, factors that have been seen to work for the habitat and the inhabitants as well as those that have exacerbated their vulnerabilities. Bringing seminal voices from the Conference, **this issue of IJDUS aligns research with learning** making important perspectives available for students and teachers alike. The digitised perspectives are thus available for blended and self-paced learning breaking free from the barriers of time and space. The objective of this issue of IJDUS is to focus on Himalayan cultural landscapes and to explore some important moments of anthropic interventions that have impacted the regions in significant ways. This issue shares concerns, deliberates solutions and steers opinion on a path that will bring the much-needed healing and succour first to the long-suffering Gaea and therefrom to the creatures which are born and nurtured of it.

The **key focus areas** that emerge from this issue are Himalaya as the Third pole of the world, oral, Indigenous culture and Syncretic cultures of the Himalayas; Inspirational and Spiritual influence of the majestic mountains; languages, narratives, deities, religions, livelihoods; architectural, agricultural and sacred practices of the Himalayas and travel and adventure tropes based in the Himalayas. The issue spans Ladakh, Tibet, Chamba, Uttarakhand, Kumaon and Kashmir. The issue highlights Pan-Himalayan cultures, its legends and myths, and the need to preserve Tibetan languages and religions. The very visible effects of Chinese interference and climate change on the Tibetan plateau, direct impact of Himalayas in the geopolitical and environmental matters of the world, Himalayas as sites of many transnational and global practices of human sociability and continuity and changes in Himalayan cities are some issues that stand out from the chapters for active consideration by lovers and scholars of the Himalayas. We also see the tug of war with human with the environment, impact of anthropogenic interference in the region, exacerbated

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fragility of the region due to various developmental projects relating to roads and hydel power, significance of water, endemic species and biodiversity in the region as causes of concern. **Some solutions** that emerge are sustainable architecture and green practices that are deeply ingrained in Himalayan culture and traditions, need for innovative ideas, monetising of assets for conservation and problem solving in the Himalayas and unexplored economic opportunities in Himalayan neighbourhoods and intelligent management as door way to options and opportunities in the realm of employment and livelihoods. Intervention of women in the preservation of the Himalayan folk lore and cultural practices, repopulating deserted or ghost villages across, creating sustainable livelihoods, continued belief in the local mountain deities in the Himalayas, celebration of the sacred in the mountain Himalayan communities is also an important point to note.

In Ch.1 titled ‘Images from Beyond the Mountains’, Ms. Johanna Van Gruisen mesmerises us with her photo essay on the culture of Laddakh. Through images of rural activities and wildlife of the region (especially of the Changthang region), she shows and documents some of the past ways and the natural environment of the region. Recent decades have brought changes, good and bad, but to move forward sustainably and to secure a future, it is important to understand and build on the successful natural and cultural ways of the past.

In Ch.2 titled ‘Traditions and Cultures of Water Conservation in the Himalayas’, Dr. Govind Singh has shared their work and research on water conservation, anthropogenic impacts on Himalayan biodiversity, need for love, understanding and empathy for the hardy mountains, and organic and sustainable agricultural practices. Drawing deep into the historical traditions of building and temple construction in the Himalayan regions, Dr. Singh demonstrates the water conservation techniques with special reference to the traditional water reservoirs often called Naulas which were often a part of the temple complex. He emphasises on the fact that people in the hills were very conscious about conservation of water as it was scarce especially for drinking and cooking purposes. Right in the beginning of the chapter, he draws a connect between the river system of the Indus in the Himalayas from which India derives its name and its organic relationship with the land and people of the country and that India is the one of the few countries in the world where river is considered to be holy thereby emphasising the fact how life and livelihoods of the people is deeply connected with the Himalayas and its river systems. Taking the example of recent water crisis in the

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hills, he emphasises the fact that how important it was to conserve water in the Himalayan region in particular and how traditional systems were able to cater to the water requirements of the Himalayan **Communities**.

In Ch.3 titled ‘Exploring the Ecosystem of Sustainable Livelihood: Mobility by and for Rural Women in the Kumayun Region’, Architect Tanya Lal explores the ecosystem of sustainable livelihood mobility by and for rural women in the Kumaon region. As design expert she has used her skills for social innovation on a project of Govt. of Uttarakhand named Integrated Livelihood Support Project which helped in creating sustainable livelihood environment for the rural women in Uttarakhand. Through her interaction with the rural women folk, her group was able to understand the various constraints and challenges and opportunities for overcoming these. Her field visits in the Almora district, made her understand the plight of women most of whom have been left back by the migrating male population and who are burdened with earning their livelihoods through agriculture as well as several other non-agricultural activities like handicraft and other ancillary activities. She calls them the Superwomen of Uttarakhand who are part of several local federations and Self-Help Groups, NGOs etc. present in the area. She discusses, at length, the role and functioning of some such groups like Umang, Himadri Hans handloom and the Forest Essentials, Himjoli etc. It is interesting to note that the packaging bags of Umang contains the story behind the product and its origin. Her take from the project emphasises that through these initiatives, women of Almora have been able to alleviate their economic condition, they are striving towards equality and are sensitive towards environment and ecology.

In Ch.4 titled ‘Folk Songs of Uttarakhand: A Narrative of Mysterious Cult of Devi Devta’, Dr. Charu Arya gives her first-hand account of the experiences about various social practices of the people of Uttarakhand. It is an intense presentation to show how traditions, rituals and the folklore have impacted many of the beliefs of the people of Uttarakhand. Drawing a sociological profile of the region, she talks about various Devis and Devtas, beliefs and rituals associated with them and the influences these Devis and Devtas had on the lives of the people of the region. Especially her elaborate description of the Golu Devta and his influence on the contemporary society exhibits how deeply these cults of gods and goddesses influence the lives of the society. She also emphasises the fact that even in modern times when many people have moved out of the region and are leading

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modern lives, many of them still have a lot of faith on these Devis and Devtas and often they come back to their ancestral homes to perform Poojas and other rituals.

In Ch.5 titled ‘A Tale of Four Cities – Geography, Geopolitics and Grand Narratives’, Dr. Anupama Jaidev elaborates on the theme with special reference to the cities of Lhasa, Kathmandu, Thimphu and Gangtok. In her opening remarks, she points out that these four cities especially the city of Lhasa and Kathmandu have a very well documented past which makes it easier for us to understand the sequence of continuity and changes these cities have witnessed over a period of time many of which are political in nature. These cities are bound by at least one common thread – their geographical location is the mighty Himalayas with many similarities in terms of cultures and habitats.

In Ch. 6 titled ‘Geospatial Analyses of Cultural Heritage Landscape: A Case Study of Kangra Fort in Himachal Pradesh’, Mr. Gaurav Kumar Pal, presently working as Junior Research Fellow at National Institute of Advance Studies on ISRO funded project, emphasises the role of GIS and satellite imaging in understanding built heritage and its surroundings even in remotest areas. Taking the case study of the Kangra Fort in Himachal Pradesh, he points out how changes in landscape and climate and the earthquake of 1905 impact the fort structure and its elevation. He concludes his presentation by showing Google Earth images and DEM model of the site and hopes that GIS and satellite imaging will throw new insights into our built heritages.

In Ch. 7 titled Snow Leopard: The Ecological, Cultural and Political Ambassador of Asia’s High Mountains, Dr. Koustubh Sharma trains his lens on the Snow Leopard. Dr Koustubh Sharma talks about how Snow Leopard Trust had helped in the conservation of snow leopards and his own experiences about working with them. He also emphasized the importance of ‘Partnership as a key to successes’. He illustrates how the snow leopard is the Ecological, Cultural and Political Ambassador of Asia’s High Mountains.

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Chief Editor.