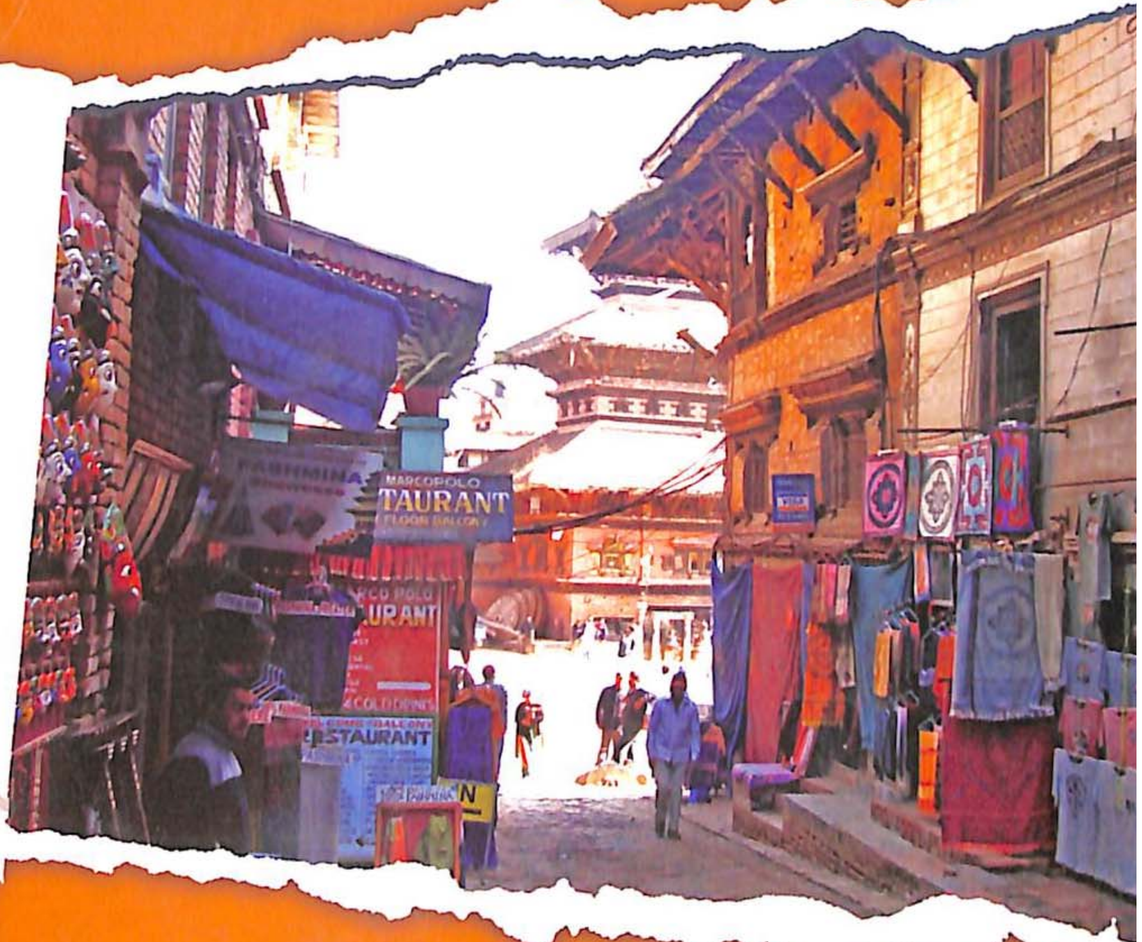
RECOGNIZING DIVERSITY



Society and Culture in the Himalaya

edited by CHETAN SINGH

OXFORD

39

RECOGNIZING **DIVERSITY**

Society and Culture in the Himalaya

Studies of mountainous regions invariably tend to be contextualized as that of the highlands or mountain people in opposition to the 'other'—the lowlands or plains' people. Breaking away from the trend, this volume examines the remarkable diversity of social, religious, and political institutions within the Himalayan region.

Though generally associated with orthodox Brahmanical tradition, the region is home to heterodox cults and non-conformist social practices. The contributors examine key issues of diversity in environment, marriage customs, gender relations, ethnicity, the status accorded to women, religious practices, dietary habits, and folk tradition in the Himalaya. They emphasize that while certain customs are broadly representative of a shared Himalayan culture, there is no single underlying rationality for the entire region.

The volume underlines how diverse religious and cult practices of the region created a society that embraced pluralism and nurtured a rich, vibrant folk tradition. It also illuminates the broad aspects in which Himalayan societies are markedly different from the adjacent lowlands of South Asia.

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Foreword

The books on the theme of 'Diversity' being published jointly by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla and Oxford University Press, New Delhi have two personalities—they can be seen as standing alone, complete volumes in themselves and also as being connected in a significant way with each other. Individually they explore a selected area of study in some detail, and in a multidisciplinary frame, but also do so with the objective of inhabiting, both analytically and empirically, a chosen 'capacious concept'. The idea of using a 'capacious concept' to connect the various collections, or the other way around perhaps, of using a series of specific studies to illumine the shadowy and unoccupied spaces of a 'capacious concept', emerged from a recognition that in our public discourse there are concepts which are often used, even much relied upon, but are not ones which have been adequately subjected to rigorous analytical scrutiny. The nuances and many features of the concept hence remain unavailable for the public discourse. Yet these are concepts integral to public discourse and therefore questions, such as the following, need to be asked: What are the many uses and meanings of the concept? How is it connected with, and different from, other similar concepts? Does it belong to a family of concepts? Does it have a different resonance in India, allowing for an area of considerable overlap with its use in other locations, but also an area which is distinct? How do the nuances that are introduced enrich the global debate, perhaps even change it and may be even significantly altering it?

The capacious concepts chosen for the series, 'diversity', 'violence', 'boundary', etc., are not ones that belong to the high table in our social and political theory. That is exactly why they have been chosen. Implicit in the choice is a belief that they belong at the high table, that having them there will bring new understandings of the multilayered social transformation taking place, that the public discourse will acquire new depth if it will have access to the new conceptual and empirical spaces that have been offered by these books. These volumes are the product of a set of seminars that have been carefully planned to achieve this goal of combining intense investigation of a specific aspect, by particular authors,

which when collected together illumine a chosen area. This will give depth to the under-explored concept. The collection is not a set of random papers of a general seminar. They are carefully invited contributions which when read together help us understand better a chosen field.

The Indian Institute of Advanced Study is grateful to the editors who have joined with the institute to carry forward its mandate of supporting reflections on the 'human condition'. We have been able to make bold and to set out and explore new vistas because we have had the benefit of such partnership with senior scholars and experts in the field. This allows us to believe that over several years these volumes will become an important reference for scholars and policymakers who have to make fine distinctions in argument and policy and who have to contribute to a comparative understanding of societies in the process of transformation.

The present volume is a collection of articles that is fairly representative of the entire Himalayan region and has some interesting contributions on Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Nepal, and Bhutan. Many of the articles adopt a historical perspective when examining the diversity of social and religious institutions within the region. Some of the institutions that have been discussed are themselves quite distinct and seem to differentiate Himalayan societies from those of the Indo-Gangetic lowlands. Contributions in this collection show that certain socio-religious practices, usually regarded as characteristically 'Himalayan', are, in turn, remarkably diverse not only in certain details but also in substance. There exist in the Himalaya layered diversities of an impressively complex nature. It is a complexity that has often been veiled by an inclination amongst scholars to search for and depict important similarities within the region. A constant tension has, therefore, existed between two levels of representation—the broadly regional and the specifically local. While such tensions are certainly not exclusive to the Himalaya, this volume examines some of the diversities that exist within a region that is itself considered as being atypical in several ways. From this collection we get not just valuable insight into the diversity of the Himalaya but also questions as to the causes of this diversity, causes which may have to do with locational contingencies as well as causes that may be illustrative of the diversity of the human imagination as communities create meanings in their social world. This is what is so wonderful about this collection and these books.

Peter R

Indian Institute of Advanced

Introduction

Recognizing Himalayan Diversity

Chetan Singh

UNDERSTANDING MOUNTAIN REGIONS

A discussion of diversity in the Himalaya needs to consider its larger context. The study of mountain societies has usually carried with it some implicit assumptions. To begin with is the commonly held view that mountainous physiography was itself reason enough to delineate highlands as distinct geographical regions. Appended to this view is an underlying supposition that mountainous terrains exert an extraordinary influence on humans and therefore nurture societies that see themselves as quite distinct from those located in lowlands.[1] Even unconnected and distant highland cultures are sometimes viewed as having more in common with each other than with their neighbours in the plains. In short, mountains and mountain people across the globe are, in some manner, considered unambiguously different. Their difference from non-highland regions has come to be perceived as the basis of similarities.

Because of the presumably close relationship between man and environment in the mountains, it is not surprising that anthropologists—dealing with the human response—were the first to attempt a comparison between different mountain societies. Perhaps, the assumption was that comparable ecological conditions would evince similar social responses. Predictably, the most impressive highland formations were chosen for comparison. In one of the earlier studies, Rhoades and Thompson attempted a broad comparative overview of the Alps, the Himalaya, and the Andes.[2] In all the three mountain ranges they found a striking similarity in agro-pastoral transhumance, in the existence of fragmented landholdings at different altitudinal levels, and in the institutional allocation of both private and communal control over land and natural resources. More significantly, there existed a remarkable resemblance in the manner in which even small communities were engaged in the constitution of local authority and in matters of governance. Some important differences, too, were documented. But, most significantly, it was the impact of the natural environment that was seen as the most 'dramatic and direct' in these mountainous regions.[3]

Even as such comparative studies grew and cultural similarities came to the fore, the increased engagement with mountains across the world made their ecological significance ever more apparent. Mountains became exemplary indicators, as it were, of the complex relationship between humans and their physical environment.[4] When Guillet first set out to compare the Himalaya and the Andes, he had before him several earlier models that had attempted to grapple with the problem of the man–environment interface in mountains. After briefly assessing these, he concluded that because social relations and material life were intimately linked to the 'production process', appropriate generalizations about the link between environment and culture too could be derived from it.[5] Unfortunately, history, political economy, kinship, value systems, religion, and several other aspects were not included in this overview.[6] Admittedly, Guillet's primary objective was 'to show parallels in ecological adaptation in the Andes and the Himalayas'.[7] An argument designed essentially to achieve this limited objective failed, therefore, to consider other important factors. This imbalance was partly redressed in a subsequent article where the 'importance of incorporating history and political economy into human ecology' was recognized even though the general tenor of the argument centred on 'montane productions strategy'.[8] In fact, the exaggerated importance accorded to the concept of ecological adaptation in explaining the actions of mountain people may come to be increasingly questioned—as has been the case in the context of Alpine history.[9]

Indeed, it would be naïve to suggest that because mountain societies are perceived to be 'different', it would be possible also to evolve a single theoretical model explaining this 'difference'. More realistic, perhaps, has been the search for comparability on specific but significant facets of mountain societies. In this context, ecological, environmental, and livelihood issues have tended to occupy considerable space.[10] Questions pertaining to nomadic cultures, urbanization, religion, and the sacredness of mountains, among other concerns, have also attracted some curiosity.[11] The search for comparability has also usually been an exploration for commonalities. International research agendas are structured along lines that highlight—perhaps rightly—the similarity of concerns connecting mountain people.

THE HIMALAYA

Studies of specific mountain areas have almost invariably been contextualized within an integrated picture of highlands in opposition to an

'other'—the lowlands. The Himalaya, too, have been viewed in this manner. Fifty years ago Berreman had contended that the inhabitants of the lower Himalaya—stretching from Kashmir to eastern Nepal—shared common cultural and historical traditions. This vast mountainous territory could, therefore, be considered a 'culture area'.[12] He enumerated several characteristics that distinguished the Paharis (hill people) from the inhabitants of the plains. These included, among others, the nature of inter-caste relations, marriage customs, the status accorded to women, religious practices, and dietary habits.[13] Berreman believed that because of a shared milieu:

> '...even infrequent or seemingly casual contacts among Paharis may be more effective in accomplishing communication than more frequent contacts between Pahari and non-Pahari. The reason is that Paharis meet one another to a large extent on common cultural ground and on terms of equality. They understand one another not only in language but in total behavior patterns.'[14]

Even though they occupy a position of considerable significance in the popular imagination of most South Asian societies, the Himalaya have remained marginal in almost every other respect. There was, for long, almost complete lack of knowledge about the region. This was partly because it was never drawn into the vortex of mainstream political processes of South Asian history and was often the refuge of exiles and rebels. Economically, of course, the mountains were quite inconsequential to empire building when compared to the fertile north Indian plains.[15] In fact, one might even suggest that the perception of the Himalaya being secluded and forbidding is an essential ingredient of the image in which these mountains have been cast. It was only traders, ascetics, or incorrigible adventurers who probably found it meaningful to enter such inhospitable territory.

While a mystique has evolved around the Himalaya linking them to mainstream beliefs of formal Hinduism in South Asia, this extensive mountain range is simultaneously considered (perhaps rightly) home to heterodox cults and nonconformist social practices. Over the last four or five decades, numerous anthropological studies have reinforced this perception. Fisher pointed out that scholars have tended to emphasize particular distinguishing characteristics of Himalayan societies. These characteristics, interestingly, are the ones to which Berreman had called attention in 1960. A considerable part of this research has, therefore,

propped up typecast images of shamanism, polyandry, ecological determinism, and other peculiarities considered representative of mountain societies. There has also been an academic preoccupation with the study of isolated village communities, ethnic groups, and the caste–tribe engagement.[16] The singular effort of trying to differentiate the mountains from the plains has encouraged the emergence of a somewhat oversimplified picture, even though a broad differentiation of cultural zones within the Himalaya is also recognized.[17] It goes without saying, however, that the Himalaya are manifestly more complex. Equally multifaceted are the social and religious institutions that have been stereotyped by scholars and made emblematic of Himalayan societies.

DIVERSITY

Even if we admit that mountain societies share 'common cultural ground', it does not necessarily follow that they have identical aspirations and ways of thinking. Studies of 'non-Western societies' often generalize and impose a kind of uniformity on them. Peasant societies, too, are frequently subjected to a stereotyping that emphasizes 'typical characteristics' that serve to differentiate such societies.[18] While stereotyping gives the false impression of being useful in categorizing different kinds of societies, generalization conceals the multiplicity of social groups, practices, and world-views that form part of these societies.

Though he emphasized a broad Pahari distinctiveness and recognized large cultural zones in the Himalaya, Berreman also pointed to variations even in fairly small territories within the mountains. He argued that these distinct cultural areas had evolved because varying degrees of isolation resulted in 'greater opportunity for development of locally variant cultural forms'.[19] There was, in his view, a causal connection between culture areas (and the change they underwent), on the one hand, and their varying degrees of isolation, on the other.[20] Internally, therefore, the Himalaya have always remained politically and culturally fragmented.

Even where recognizable political unity has been achieved, internal diversities have persisted. About Nepal (covering about 900 km of mountain territory), for example, Fisher argued that though the country had existed as an integrated political entity for more than two centuries, it encompassed 'ethnic groups speaking literally dozens of mutually unintelligible languages, following a wide variety of religious beliefs and rituals, with different kinship and marriage systems, and dramatically contrasting ecological adaptations'.[21] This is definitely true for the rest

of the Himalaya. Layered diversities of an impressively complex nature can sometimes cause tension between different levels of representation: ranging from the broadly regional to the specifically local. While such divergences are certainly not exclusive to the Himalaya, this volume examines diversities that exist within a region that is itself acknowledged as being atypical in many ways.

This book consists of four sections: (I) Environment and Human Response; (II) Gender, Society, and Ethnicity; (III) The Many Ways of Religion; and (IV) Expressions of Folk Tradition. From the preceding discussion, it is evident that these sections correspond to the broad areas in which Himalayan societies are seen as differing markedly from those of the adjacent lowlands of South Asia. The essays engage with some of the key institutions and traditions associated with these differentiating areas; but more importantly they also illustrate the diversity within them. That certain customs are broadly representative of a shared Himalayan culture is not reason enough to assume that they function according to a single underlying rationality everywhere. Enormous internal variations have evolved historically within Himalayan societies and these still persist. This is made quite apparent by many of the chapters that follow.

The two chapters in the first section consider the relationship between society and environment, but take on rather different issues pertaining to Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh respectively. Dangwal's contribution explores the long-term transformation that the Uttarakhand Himalaya underwent as a result of colonial rule. A traditional society that had used varied means of generating economic resources—animal husbandry, foraging, agriculture, etc.—was gradually drawn into the vortex of larger economic forces primarily through colonial rule. It was compelled to abandon a diversity of livelihood options and adopt an overwhelmingly agricultural economy. Colonial state policy in Uttarakhand, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, was focused on systematically bringing new areas under cultivation. Simultaneously, another concern began to attract attention and progressively engaged the government. The growing importance of timber prompted colonial officials to establish greater control not only over forests but also over the extensive resources of the commons that Uttarakhand society had till then freely accessed. In effect, the Uttarakhand economy became increasingly dependent on agriculture while the hill peasantry's rights to use a diversity of natural resources were severely curtailed by new colonial laws.

The colonial government's need for large quantities of timber gave to Himalayan forests an unprecedented economic value. On the other hand,

the imposition of stringent restrictions on the use of natural resources by the peasantry was an explicit recognition that such resources were limited and had to be protected. Forest conservation became an important, albeit contentious, part of official strategy to secure future reserves. Government came into direct and long-lasting conflict with the peasantry, herders, and others who sought to assert their rightful claim to the resources they had customarily used. It is against this discordant historical background imbued with mutual suspicion that conservation practices even in independent India need to be positioned. Pandey touches upon the conservation practices of local communities in Himachal Pradesh and the subsequent changes introduced by the forest department in colonial as well as independent India. Present-day Himachal Pradesh has seen the emergence of several initiatives to address the compelling issue of conservation. Realizing the urgency of the situation, several village communities have initiated efforts on their own; others have been aided by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or external agencies. The element of corporate social responsibility, however, is rather limited. Nevertheless, the overall activities for the conservation of natural resources in Himachal Pradesh are numerous and diverse. These are also linked to attempts to increase the sources of income for underprivileged sections of society. It appears, however, that despite the commonality of objectives, there is an obvious divergence of perspectives on how to proceed.

Gender relations, family structure, proprietary rights, and powerful hegemonic factors influencing the life of the hill peasantry are some of the social issues discussed in the second section. On a larger scale, the complicated question of ethnicity is also taken up for examination. Snehi touches upon a range of social practices connected with marriage and divorce in certain parts of Himachal Pradesh. He provides a description of local customs and analyses these specifically in relation to the larger agenda of Indian social reformers. The latter sought to rid hill society of 'social evils' and impress upon it the propriety of adopting prescribed *shastric* principles. The mores that these reformers attempted to abolish were broadly classified under the umbrella term *reet*. Because it involved issues of 'morality' and women's sexuality, a particularly contentious debate followed these reformatory endeavors. Even though the social reformers took the moral high ground, not everyone was agreed that practices under reet were, indeed, as repugnant as they were being made out to be. What complicated matters further was the fact that the practices categorized as reet were themselves very diverse. Be that as it may, Snehi suggests that the custom of reet offered considerable social freedom to

women in Himachal. The customary freedom allowed to women enabled them to participate more actively in various programmes for increasing literacy and bringing about gender equality. In these spheres Himachal has made remarkable progress.

Singh's essay on polyandry examines another gender-related topic that has long attracted the attention of scholars. Earlier studies had seen polyandry primarily as a social response to prevent the fragmentation of the already small landholdings, and also as a means of securing the greater amount of labour that economic production required in harsh mountainous environments. Subsequent studies chose to underplay the primacy of deliberately considered material causes and recognized instead the greater authority of customary ideas and familial affinity. It appears, however, that there is no straightforward explanation for polyandry. Singh argues that while some households chose polyandry on account of their poverty, the larger number of polyandrous households were prosperous and landowning. As was the case in reet, different kinds of marital relationships came to be rather loosely categorized as polyandrous. We also need to acknowledge that irrespective of why some Himalayan societies adopted polyandry, it had important logical implications for property ownership and inheritance. Social institutions often begin to serve purposes that are unconnected to their original inception. Singh suggests that the different kinds of polyandrous family systems may in some manner be linked not only to the social organization of production and ideas of family prestige, but also to the politico-administrative system of the state.

The extent to which the state and its institutions can penetrate and hegemonize a society is an important measure of its ability to gain acceptance amongst its subjects. Till 1907, Bhutan was governed by the *Chhosi,* a dual system of administration in which religious and secular power was combined. Traditional Bhutanese society, therefore, conformed to the prescriptions laid down by the Chhosi, though it is difficult to assess the extent to which this conformity was voluntary. Dimri uses two old literary texts to reveal underlying forms of resistance to the overwhelming dominance of this monarchical–religious combine. The texts under consideration are ballads (*lozey*) articulated in a manner that represents the subaltern viewpoint. They reveal the deep social divisions that mark a society commonly perceived as being simple and compassionate. Dominant mainstream history is challenged by the ballads and they carry an undertone of unhappiness with the political system. Dimri points out that while the discontent of the male subjects is clearly voiced, the grief

and misery of the female sufferers is rather poorly articulated in these lozey. This brings to the fore the element of inequality—embedded in patriarchy—that persists even in relatively free and egalitarian hill societies where women are usually better placed.

Cultural diversity is, at times, accompanied by inequality and social exclusion. This inevitably makes the task of nation-building immensely complicated. Bhattarai's contribution on Nepal highlights the enormous caste and ethnic variety in the country, and the difficulties this has posed to the endeavour of creating an egalitarian society. Prior to the emergence of a democratic polity in 1990, the country's remarkable social diversity had been ignored in favour of the 'mono-cultural' policy of the Nepali State. The absolutist monarchy—based on a Hindu socio-political ideology—had projected itself as the embodiment of an integrated nation and had disregarded the astonishing multiplicity of cultural groups. Apart from the monarchy, Hinduism and the Nepali language had emerged as the two other markers for judging patriotism. It was the struggle for a democratic dispensation in Nepal that finally ushered in a more representative cultural pluralism. This also brought to the fore obvious disparities previously ignored, and ethnicities that had been suppressed, or subsumed, under a monolithic Hindu State. Yet another class of people asserted itself: the utterly deprived Dalits. Each of these different groups began to form organizations to fight for their social rights and a larger share of political power. For many, in fact, this process of organized political mobilization was simultaneously one of identity formation. A case in point was that of the inhabitants of the Madhes who had earlier articulated their grievances through mainstream political parties of Nepal. After 1990, however, they established political organizations in the Madhes itself. But this relocation of political organizational centres can hardly resolve the problem. Important social similarities and a shared historical experience have bound the Madhesi and hill populations together. On the other hand, there exist obvious differences between different social groups living in the Madhes. This has made the creation of an integrated Madhesi identity extremely difficult. Despite the recent spurt in identity politics, there is a realization that a state based on creative pluralism and the acceptance of cultural diversity represents the greatest possible hope for a new republican Nepal.

It has never been easy to discover adequate written pre-modern historical sources in the Himalaya from which we can arrive at an adequate understanding of its different societies. Thakur makes use of petroglyphs found in the cold desert area of Spiti to put together the story

of its pre-Buddhist past. Quite interestingly, areas in or adjacent to the trans-Himalaya have a rich treasure of rock carvings. These depict a wide variety of animals, symbols, human activities, and also some religious structures. Thakur argues that these petroglyphs are unconnected with Buddhism that is presently dominant in the region. The petroglyphs, in fact, reveal an entirely new and different aspect of the higher Himalaya. This has not yet been highlighted because academic discussion on the mountains bordering Tibet has been dominated by an overwhelming concern, particularly amongst European and American scholars, for Himalayan Buddhism. Thakur describes the intermingling of diverse cultural influences over a vast expanse in the Himalayas and Tibet. This included the recognizable influence of Central Asia and the Sakas. This rather bleak landscape saw the spread of Chi'ang tribesmen, the emergence of the Zhang Zhung kingdom, and the flourishing of the Bon religion. The petroglyphs are a survival of this forgotten past. In their artistic content and style they reflect different historic stages through which the region transited: from the pre-Bon beginnings till the virtual disappearance of Bonpo culture after AD 700. The symbols and beliefs of the Bon religion have continued to survive as a subtext within the larger traditions, rituals, and practices of both Buddhism and Hinduism in the region, though not explicitly recognized as being Bon.

Two areas of interest have developed a particularly close association with the Himalaya: ecology and Buddhism. The concern for ecology amongst scholars working on the Himalaya emerges once again from the conviction that environmental factors play an overwhelming role in the lives of people living in mountains. For others, the interest in ecology arises from the anxiety that a deteriorating Himalayan environment will have serious implications for a much larger area extending to the plains. Buddhism, on the other hand, is becoming increasingly popular amongst many social sections in India and abroad. Puri looks at how deep ecology and Buddhism come together in a manner that is crucial for the emerging human–environmental crisis of unprecedented proportions. In this context, 'Engaged Buddhism' has contributed to the evolution of an appropriate environmental ethic. This is an ethic derived from the awareness that universal suffering creates true appreciation of all forms of life and rests upon a sense of universal responsibility towards the world as a whole.

Tolerance and pluralism, so characteristic of the Himalaya, drew considerable strength from the richness and variety of folk tradition. Many of the heterodox beliefs of mountain regions stood in obvious

contrast to the orthodoxy that dominated religious practice and social organization in the lowlands. Certainly, there were large, overlapping spheres of faith—such as the centrality of the *Ramayana*—that found acceptance both in the mountains and in the plains. Even here, however, observances and rituals associated with formal Hindu belief exhibited interesting variations. The numerous local traditions of Garhwal linked to the Ramayana are examples of this. A description of the diverse methods by which the Ramayana was enacted even in a relatively small area within Garhwal forms the core of Saklani's essay. Especially remarkable are the distinct territories in which Ram, Sita, or Lakshman separately occupy the position of principal deities. In each of these localities, people of clearly demarcated villages worship Ram, Sita, or Lakshman through public rituals that re-enact the important events of the epic. For this purpose, a local sacred geography associated with the principal characters of the epic has been created. Each re-enactment serves to reiterate the sacredness of the many primary sites around which the story of the Ramayana is woven. Equally diverse are the forms in which the *Ramlila* is presented: some being quite simply folk in their presentation, while others adopt a more formal, classical style.

Another example of diversity of this kind is the numerous ways in which the vibrant festival of Holi is celebrated in Kumaon. Pande argues that geography has influenced the manner in which this festival has acquired regional significance. Holi provides an occasion on which local identities are constructed and cultural forms are used to express common aspirations. Humorous and unconventional songs on a variety of subjects are written and sung during the celebrations. Social norms are audaciously impinged. More importantly, issues of public concern come to the forefront both in the form of songs and in writings in the regional press. Not so subtle satire is a particularly popular form of political expression, though the uninhibited voicing of social and political resentment is equally common.

Satire and humour also form an integral part of the *banthda* of Himachal. This form of folk performance is not explicitly linked to any particular religious festival. Its association with one or the other religious occasion and with several of the Hindu deities, though customary, is not indispensable. Paul argues that like most traditions of folk performance, the banthda is a powerful medium of public expression. Though in recent times it has been used by government to send out messages of social awareness, banthda has in the past been used very effectively to confront persons in power with disconcerting questions.

In many ways this collection of essays is indicative of the state of affairs both in the Himalaya and in Himalayan studies. Despite (or perhaps because of) the peripheral location of the Himalaya, interest in the region has grown amongst social scientists in recent years. The number of books and research papers published has steadily increased. Some of these have ventured to make broad generalizations for the entire region. Most others have preferred to focus upon smaller, stand-alone issues in a particular area. While the body of work on the Himalaya has grown rapidly and our understanding of the region has improved, the primary tension persists. The Himalaya certainly stand apart as a large identifiable region, and mountain societies do have much in common that bind them together. But can anyone speak for the Himalaya as a whole? Are not the diversities within the region too obvious and distinct? This is an incongruity that requires us to simultaneously recognize the Himalaya as an entity and each of its diverse constituents as an identity. An apparent contradiction seems to exist between the macro and micro perspectives, but in the present state of Himalayan studies there are no immediate solutions in sight. For the present at least, this volume and others like it will have to bear the burden of this contradiction.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This issue is examined in the context of the Swiss Alps in Zimmer, Oliver (1998), 'In Search of Natural Identity: Alpine Landscape and the Reconstruction of the Swiss Nation', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 40, No. 4, October, pp. 637–65. To quote Zimmer (p. 659), 'Unlike in France and England, where human beings were supposed to have the upper hand over their natural environment, in Switzerland, at a time of considerable social uncertainty, people sought guidance from a rugged example of nature, which they found in their Alpine landscape. Intellectuals and portions of the intelligentsia portrayed this landscape as a relentless force capable of determining the character of their nation and of its inhabitants—an ideological pattern that I have termed the naturalization of the nation.'

2. Rhoades, Robert E. and Stephen I. Thompson (1975), 'Adaptive Strategies in Alpine Environments: Beyond Ecological Particularism', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 2, No. 3, August, pp. 535–51. This sweeping comparison was in contrast to the 'tunnel vision' perspective that marked the work of earlier Alpine researchers. The latter focused on specific cases and small communities, and their reluctance to make comparisons prompted Rhoades and Thompson to term their approach as 'ecological particularism'. See p. 536.

3. Ibid.: 548.

4. Guillet, David (1983), 'Towards a Cultural Ecology of Mountains: The Central Andes and the Himalayas Compared', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 24, No. 5, December, pp. 561–7.

5. Ibid.: 562–3. The approaches that he has examined include 'geoecology', 'vertical control', 'cultural adaptation', and *alpwirtschaft*.

6. It is now recognized that the 'static and equilibrium view' needs to be discarded and the interaction between ecological and social sciences should become more dynamic and flexible. See Scoones, I. (1999), 'New Ecology and the Social Sciences: What Prospects for a Fruitful Engagement?' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 28, pp. 479–507 (especially pp. 479, 484–6), who points to certain potential areas of 'new ecological thinking'. He further indicates how this is beginning to influence the spheres of ecological anthropology, political ecology, the old nature–culture debate amongst other areas of research.

7. Guillet, David (1983), 'Reply' to comments by Ricardo A. Godoy, Christian E. Guksch, Jiro Kawakita, Thomas F. Love, Max Matter, and Benjamin S. Orlove in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 24, No. 5, December, p. 571.

8. Orlove, Benjamin S. and David W. Guillet (1985), 'Theoretical and Methodological Considerations on the Study of Mountain Peoples: Reflections on the Idea of Subsistence Type and the Role of History in Human Ecology', *Mountain Research and Development*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Special Issue: 'Convergences and Differences in Mountain Economies and Societies: A Comparison of the Andes and Himalaya', February, pp. 3–18 (see especially pp. 10, 15–16).

9. Mathieu, Jon (1999), 'Alpine History, AD 1200–1900, Some Remarks on Methods and Models', in Rudolf Habelt (ed.), *Universitatsforschungen zur prahistorischen Archaologie*, Bonn, Vol. 55, 1999, pp. 303–8. Mathieu argued that 'Even livestock economy and *Alpwirtschaft*, despite being cited as prime examples of adaptation, are subject to historical relativity' (p. 308). See also Mathieu, Jon (2000), 'From Ecotypes to Sociotypes: Peasant Household and State Building in the Alps, Sixteenth-Nineteenth Centuries', *The History of the Family*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 55–74, where he suggested that, 'Of the two contexts—ecological, the one, and hierarchical-social, the other—which, according to Eric R. Wolf, held the key to understanding differences in family structures, the latter is far more important' (p. 73).

10. An important statement of concerns for mountains in general was first made in Peter B. Stone (ed.), *An Appeal for the Mountains: Mountain Agenda* (1992), Berne: Institute of Geography, University of Berne. The more detailed companion volume is *The State of the World's Mountains—A Global Report* (1992), London/ New Jersey: Mountain Agenda, Zed Books. See also Messerli, B. and J.D. Ives (eds) (1997), *Mountains of the World. A Global Priority*, New York/London: The Parthenon Publishing Group.

11. Rao, Aparna and Michael J. Casimir (eds) (2003), *Nomadism in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press. A large number of articles in this volume deal with pastoral populations in the mountain areas of South Asia. The question of urbanization in the Andes, Alps, Pyrenees, and the Himalaya has been taken up in *Histories des Alpes* (2003). A comparison of religion and sacredness of mountains has been taken up by Bernbaum, Edwin (1990), *Sacred Mountains of the World*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books; Bernbaum, Edwin (1997), 'The Spiritual and Cultural Significance of Mountains', in B. Messerli and J.D. Ives (eds), *Mountains of the World. A Global Priority*, New York/ London: The Parthenon Publishing Group, pp. 39–60; see also *Mountain Research and Development*, Vol. 26, No. 4, November, Special Issue: 'Religion and Sacredness in Mountains: A Historical Perspective', 2006.

12. Berreman, Gerald D. (1960), 'Cultural Variability and Drift in the Himalayan Hills', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 62, No. 5, pp. 774–94, argued that the people of this area 'are considered by themselves and by others to be ethnically distinct' (pp. 774, 775).

13. Ibid.: 777. Berreman noticed that the layering of multiple castes was not to be found in the hills and there was simpler two-fold division between the untouchables on the one hand and the Brahmins and Rajputs on the other. All castes consumed meat and liquor. Unlike in the lowlands, practices such as bride-price, polyandry, divorce by mutual consent, and widow remarriage were widely acceptable in mountain societies. Women in the hills were actively engaged in different aspects of village life.

14. Ibid.: 783.

15. Fisher, James F. (1985), 'The Historical Development of Himalayan Anthropology', *Mountain Research and Development*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 99–111, argues that the centre versus periphery question runs through all other issues, and has been used by 'Himalayanists' to challenge the 'assumed centrality of lowland India or China to the north' (p. 108).

16. Ibid.: 105–6.

17. Berreman, Gerald D. (1963), 'Peoples and Cultures of the Himalayas', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 6, pp. 289–304. This paper gains importance because it was prepared as part of the 'Himalayan Border Countries Research Project' of the Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, subsequent to Indo-Chinese border conflict. Here, Berreman demarcated four distinct traditions in the Himalaya: (1) South Asian and (2) South West Asian, both termed Indo-Iranian; (3) Tibetan and (4) South East Asian, both termed Tibeto-Burman. The aforementioned description of Paharis would apply primarily to the South Asian tradition. For an argument pertaining to the different cultural areas in the region, see also Karan, Pradyumna P. and Cotton Mather (1976), 'Art and Geography: Patterns in the Himalaya', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 66, No. 4, pp. 487–515.

18. Pelto, Pertti J. and Greta H. Pelto (1975), 'Intra-Cultural Diversity: Some Theoretical Issues', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 2, No. 1: 'Intra-Cultural Variation', pp. 1–18.

19. Berreman, 'Cultural Variability and Drift in the Himalayan Hills', pp. 774, 778, 782. He recognized that the vast expanse of the lower Himalaya was made up of smaller areas of 'localized cultural variability'. Within these smaller areas there was to be found 'comparative cultural homogeneity across caste lines'.

20. Ibid.: 788, 791. See also Berreman, 'Peoples and Cultures of the Himalayas', pp. 290, 292. He went on to suggest that 'except for a very small educated elite, they think of themselves as citizens of nation states only in a very vague sort of way. Their identification tends to be with the people of their own immediate area, who speak their own dialect and with whom they interact frequently'(1963: 292).

21. Fisher, 'The Historical Development of Himalayan Anthropology', p. 101.