



# punjab geographer



A DOUBLE BLIND PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL OF APG AND KSS-ISPER INDIA

VOLUME 22

ISSN: 0973-3485

OCTOBER 2026



## BOOK REVIEW

### **Himalaya: Mountains of Destiny**

**By Suresh Chand Rai (Editor)**

(Published by Springer Nature Switzerland AG, Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland (2025), Pages 1-435, Price € 159.99)

The Indian Himalayan region and its communities are facing several emerging challenges, including climate change, globalization, migration, conflicts, and environmental degradation. Although the Himalayas have great ecological, economic, and social importance, yet the knowledge about their ecosystems, natural resources, and communities remains relatively limited, particularly in the context with rapid changes taking place across the region.

The book entitled “Himalayas: Mountains of Destiny” edited by Suresh Chand Rai is a comprehensive academic work that examines the complex socio-ecological conditions prevailing in the Indian Himalayan region. It makes an important contribution to Himalayan studies and environmental science by bringing together perspectives from both the natural sciences and human geography. Rather than examining the Indian Himalayas only in terms of their physical and geological characteristics, the book presents the region as a “mountain of destiny,” emphasizing that its future depends on both environmental protection and appropriate policies and governance.

The book is systematically organized into four parts comprising 22 chapters and an introduction. The chapters cover a wide range

of environmental, ecological, socio-economic, and governance-related issues. The content is presented in a clear and informative manner. The inclusion of well-selected figures, maps, and diagrams further improves the presentation and helps readers to understand complex concepts more easily.

The introduction, written by the editor, provides the conceptual foundation for the book. It discusses the mountains of the world, the Indian Himalayan Region, major threats and challenges, future directions, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in relation to Indian Himalayan conservation. The introduction also emphasizes the need to protect the region's natural resources and promote sustainable development.

The first part of this book focuses mainly on the geo-physical environment of the Indian Himalayan Region. It consists of four chapters dealing with important aspects of the region's physical environment. These include its geological characteristics, the effects of changing land use patterns and precipitation on hydrology, the development and dynamics of glacial lakes, and the availability and importance of water resources. Together, these chapters provide a useful understanding about the physical processes and resources that shape the Indian Himalayan environment.

The second part of the book examines ecosystems, natural resources, and development in the Indian Himalayan region. The eight chapters included in this part, explain the close relationship between the natural environment, ecological processes, and human well-being. The section also explores river channel morphology and ecosystem development, as well as nature-based livelihood strategies that support mountain communities.

This section also examines the distribution and future development of healthcare facilities, by highlighting the importance of access to basic services in remote mountain areas. The chapters included in this section also focus on the effects of climate change on forest resources and medicinal plants, particularly the vulnerability of communities that depend on these resources. The section further examines how environmental and climatic changes are affecting the traditional lifestyles and practices of the Indian Himalayan communities. The final chapter of this section focuses on springshed management and emphasizes the restoration and sustainable use of springs, which are important sources of water for both communities and mountain ecosystems.

The third part of this book deals with geo-environmental hazards and contains eight chapters. It provides a detailed assessment of the region's vulnerability to natural hazards and the risks associated with them. The chapters focus on landslide susceptibility, slope instability, and the identification of hazard-prone areas.

This section also examines disaster risk reduction and resilience, emphasizing preparedness, adaptive capacity, and community participation. Considerable focus has also been given to floods and glacial lake outburst floods

(GLOFs), which are becoming increasingly important risk factors in fragile Indian Himalayan environments. River-channel dynamics and slope failures, showing how fluvial and geomorphic processes interact to create hazards are explained in other chapters.

This section also considers examining risks in rapidly developing mountain towns and examines the relationship between multiple hazards. The final discussions focus on the data and methods used to map, monitor, manage, and reduce GLOF risks. These chapters explain the importance of scientific research, geospatial technologies, and reliable data in improving disaster preparedness and resilience in the Indian Himalayas.

The fourth part of the book, containing two chapters, focuses on the governance. These chapters highlight the importance of effective governance in addressing environmental problems and strengthening resilience in the Indian Himalayan region. The first chapter discusses disaster-risk financing within the federal system and emphasizes institutional coordination, fair allocation of resources, and adequate financial support for disaster preparedness and response. The second chapter examines sustainable governance strategies and emphasizes integrated, participatory, and long-term approaches to environmental conservation, resource management, and the development needs of the mountain communities. Together, these chapters demonstrate that effective governance is essential for achieving environmental sustainability and building resilience for Indian Himalayan communities.

Overall, this book is a timely and valuable contribution to the growing body of research on the Indian Himalayas. Its multidisciplinary approach brings together

environmental, ecological, hydrological, socio-economic, and governance perspectives and provides a broad understanding of the interconnected challenges being faced by the Indian Himalayan region.

The book effectively highlights the relationship between environmental change, human activities, development, and natural-resource management in one of the world's most ecologically sensitive regions. It also emphasizes the importance of balancing human development with environmental conservation. In this respect, the book provides a useful framework for understanding the complex relationship between human aspirations and the protection of Indian Himalayan ecosystems.

The book will be particularly useful for researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate

students, and scholars working in environmental science, geography, ecology, disaster management, development studies, and Himalayan studies. It can also serve as a valuable reference for policymakers, planners, administrators, and other stakeholders involved in Himalayan development and environmental management. Given the increasing environmental and socio-economic pressures on the region, the book can be regarded as an important reference for developing sustainable policies and practices for the Indian Himalayan region in the twenty-first century.

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