

Introduction: Essays in Honour of Rana P. B. Singh



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Abstract Culture is central to human beings to the extent that the history of their evolution is incomplete without the consideration of cultural attainments across time and space. However, in the domain of geography as a discipline, its conceptualisation and place do not appear clear. The sub-discipline of cultural geography having its roots in late nineteenth century both in the German and the French traditions grew and got recognition through the works undertaken by the American geographers, particularly the tradition established by Carl Sauer and his students. No matter whether culture and cultural issues were at margins or centre stage, all through the journey they remained contested. Today, it is a well-recognised discipline and rich through scholarly contributions from different perspectives benefitted by the development taken place in the allied disciplines. Indian geography presents a good example wherein cultural geography could not acquire substantive status despite having tremendous scope given the cultural richness of this land. It remains a marginal sub-discipline in Indian geography even in the twenty-first century; of course, the works of some practising Indian geographers have acclaimed international repute, but their number is miniscule. The present chapter is an attempt in short to trace cultural geography's journey vis-à-vis the Indian scenario and to introduce the contents of the volume.

Keywords Culture · Cultural geography · Cultural turn · New cultural geography · Landscape · Heritage · Religion · Pilgrimage · Tourism

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1 Introduction

Geographers are now more likely to understand culture as a set of symbolic resources that help people make sense of the world around them, as well as a manifestation of the power relations between various groups and the structure through which social change is constrained and enabled (Wylie 2016; Adams et al. 2001). There are many ways to look at what culture means in the light of various geographical insights, but in general, geographers study how cultural processes involve spatial patterns and processes while requiring the existence and maintenance of particular kinds of places and cultural landscapes.

In the 1970s, a revitalised cultural geography manifested itself in the engagement of geographers such as Tuan (1977), Relph (1976) and Buttner with humanism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (cf. Maddrell 2009). This break initiated a strong trend in human geography towards post-positivism that developed under the label ‘new cultural geography’ while deriving methods of systematic social and cultural critique from critical geography. In the twenty-first century, the trends turn towards ‘return to materialist concerns in the work of a new generation of cultural geographers informed by their engagements with science and technology studies and performance studies, on the one hand, and by their worldly involvements in the politically charged climate of relations between science and society on the other’ (Whatmore 2006: 600–601). Obviously, these efforts capture the new ways of approaching the vital axis between the bio (life/*landscapes*) and the geo (earth/*Gaia*), or the ‘livingness’ and ‘liveability’ of the place attachment, where the modality of life is politically and technologically molten (cf. *ibid.*). In India, Rana Singh (2009c) contribution in cultural astronomy is an exception on the above line.

This edited volume has been put together in honour of Professor Rana P. B. Singh, an Indian geographer who has made significant contributions to the discipline of geography. Spanning a period of over 48 years, Rana Singh’s research and publications have covered several themes including landscapes, religion, heritage, pilgrimage and tourism, and human settlements. The remainder of this chapter is divided into three parts. Section 2 includes a brief survey of the trends in cultural geography in the West. As this volume is put together in honour of Prof. Rana P. B. Singh, the authors felt it important to include an overview of the trends in cultural geography in India—this is the focus on Sect. 3. The last section of this chapter provides a brief introduction to the structure of the book and the chapters included in its six parts.

2 Cultural Geography: Reflections from the West

Cultural geography is an evolving domain of study around the world. In modern times, the first due consideration to the study of culture in the domain of geography was led by Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) in Germany and by Paul Vidal de La

Blache (1845–1918) in France. The American geographers later took the lead in the Anglophonic world. The dominant traditions within the American geography had been influenced by the Ratzalian ecological conception and anthropologic interest of Franz Uri Boas (1858–1942) in ethnographic study of (local) communities. The foundation of ‘Berkeley School’ by Carl Sauer (1889–1975) has emphasised its primary concern with ‘human interventions’ and the natural world’s ‘transformations’ (cf. Sauer 1963). In this manner, cultural geography was seen bridging the social and earth sciences; thus, it sought an integrative view of humankind within its physical environment underlining the unavoidable temporal frame in any geographical enterprise. It made clear that how cultural geographic enquiries subsist on collaborations with fellow practitioners in the academic domains like history, archaeology, ethnography, and anthropology (cf. Wagstaff 1987). The changes seen in the domain of cultural geography during the last quarter of twentieth century could be broadly identified as: (i) new cultural geography, (ii) cultural turn, and (iii) New Age science.

By the end of the twentieth century, the sub-discipline appeared maturing as revealed by distinct theoretical positions and methodological refinements. A good example in this context is ‘eco-feminism’. Similarly, pilgrimage studies together with religious landscapes too continue to get academic attention in the West. Contemporary practices provide evidence to the fact that cultural geographers are looking at important human issues—like conflicts, global relations, terrorism, and also development through culture as well as materials and waste, and revisiting older issues like migration from the prism of culture (Silvey 2013). The twenty-first century has flagged off interesting directions as Anderson (2019), in his third and last part of report, argues that three versions of the concept of culture coexist in cultural geography in the wake of an interest in life and living: culture as essential effect, culture as mediated experience, and culture as forms of life. All three break with one of the versions of culture in the ‘new’ cultural geography—culture as ‘signifying system’. In this light, the attempt by Rogers (2018) may be viewed as attempting to construct the crossings of aesthetics, mobility, and geopolitics based on performing arts.

New cultural geography, as a genre of thinking influenced by sociological critique of (material) culture and landscapes, which put forth views in favour of a new geographical concept of culture, concerned more with space and spatiality that are explained through social relations of production and reproduction. Thus, it is more aligned with social sciences and humanities rather than biological and earth sciences, as it was the case in the past. Under its influence, problems of culture and communication, symbolism and meaning, identity and territory, and the likes emerged searching for new grounds (cf. Smith and Foote 1994, 27–33). In the passage of time, the range of topics studied and the strength of interpretations have grown unprecedentedly. The vigorous intellectual debates taking place in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities are creating an inescapable influential effect on geographers interested in the study of culture and cultural patterns.

An intellectual shift termed as ‘cultural turn’ that successfully brought cultural issues to the forefront took place in the 1990s. It has been a replacement of the political economic approach. In recent times, attempts are being made to highlight the scientific backgrounds of ancient wisdom, and all such attempts are being put

together under the umbrella of ‘New Age science’. In this process, we are returning to ancient texts to dig out the scientific knowledge which could be gainfully used to respond to the present-day human crises; it is an attempt to understand the underlying messages in the continuing and living cultural practices. Consequently, areas like cultural astronomy and sacred geometry, etc. have come into being (cf. Singh 2009c, also Malville and Singh 1995). Though quite rich and strong in terms of interpretations and the meanings, in terms of number and frequency, such studies are limited. Growing involvement of scientists and cultural geographers in this enterprise can play a considerably larger role in contemporary discourse.

Under the aegis of World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, a global discourse is initiated through organising annual International Conference on Cultural Geography since 2007 and the planned one in process for 2022—International Geographical Union Centennial Congress (see Singh and Singh 2022). These meets provide a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners, and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered, and solutions adopted in the fields of cultural geography, of course predominated by the Euro-American contexts.

3 Cultural Geography: Trends in India

The practice of cultural geography as a sub-discipline has been gradually evolving in India as well, generally as part of historical geography. However, since the 1980s, the substantive coverage of cultural geography in India has moved away from rural settlement studies in the past to a wide array of cultural subjects in the recent decades. In their survey of cultural geography in India during 2000–2008, Singh and Singh (2004, 2008) noted the existence of following topics of concern: cultural ethnology (text, context and narrative), cultural practice (consciousness and performances), cultural manifestations (spatiality and astronomy), and cultural journeys (pilgrimage to sacred places). Further reports confirm the continuing progress in cultural studies, but the geographers’ contributions are feeble except a few, mostly by Rana P. B. Singh (Singh 2012a, 2016c; Singh and Singh 2022). Compared to a few decades ago, today cultural studies courses are offered in many more universities in the country. Though, all of this did not happen in a day.

Cultural geography in India has had its own critiques. Way back in the 1970s, Sopher (1973/2009) lamented the missing ‘dweller’s perception’ in Indian geographic tradition. The resources for cultural geographers available are all around—in the material landscape, mass of visiting devotees at shrines and participants of fairs and festivals, marriages and marriage parties (cf. Sopher 2009: 274). The major factor behind the slow growth and limited thematic coverage of cultural geography studies in India in the twentieth century is that this sub-discipline was taught only in a few universities in the country during that period. As a result, the published works featured recurring themes, such as settlement and house type studies—especially rural settlement ecology, habitat, diffusion, distribution and morphology, caste

and tribe related studies, and literary geography. The fact that India—the home to rich cultures, alive through practices and represented in diverse heritage—that provides vast opportunities for cultural geography studies, had only a limited bearing on the thematic coverage of cultural geography studies in the past century.

The cultural geography in India started to take some new directions in the late 1980s. Religion is an important part of culture, especially in the case of India that is home to many world religions and indigenous religious belief systems. The traditional geographical works on religion, which focused on limited themes with often a descriptive approach among which pilgrimage finds an important place, are now replaced by the analytical ones wherein issues like politics and poetics of religious place, identity, and community have found place, but mostly in anthropology. In India, geographers have shown a general interest in this sub-domain of cultural geography in several ways (see Singh, Ravi 2009) including: (i) regional religious geographies, (ii) demographic and distributional aspects, (iii) sacred geography as ecology, (iv) time, ritual, and space organisation, (v) religious ecology and animals, and (vi) pilgrimage.

The significance of literature in cultural studies in geography is well established. India has a vast pool of literature in different regional languages that is a huge resource. New horizons have opened wherein human existence, action, experiences, and expressions—which have direct bearing upon making, unmaking, and remaking of places and cultural landscapes—have been given due consideration (cf. Singh 2003). A classic example is presented with a monograph on the literary images of Banaras (Singh 2004). It appears that literary geography is coming out of the Puranic garb and has begun to address contemporary critical issues?

The present century sufficiently indicates that culture itself is in flux. The growing popularity of cybernetics and hybridity is defining urban cultures across the globe today. However, the studies on urban culture of India from geographical perspectives are missing. The evolution and transformation of tribal cultures and culture areas also need to be studied longitudinally. There is an urgent need to enrich cultural geography studies in India by utilising the accessible geographic content available in the cultural heritage and landscape, texts and traditions. Looking critical, cultural geography in India has ever been a marginal sub-field, but for settlement studies, unable to draw attention of the mainstream Indian geography.

Writing in the last part of the twenty-first century, Singh (2009b: 162–195) identified three approaches to accomplish the future task in Indian cultural geography: (i) empirical–analytical approach; (ii) hermeneutic approach; and, (iii) critical approach. Many potential areas of study remain barely explored, for example, cultural animal geography. The twenty-first century thus is an opportune time to take up research issues like mapping the changes in food behaviour and patterns, and the emerging new economics of food supply–demand and surplus–shortage too. There still exists tremendous scope for exploratory studies in a variety of traditional and emerging areas (see Singh, 2020: 89–140). The form of urbanism and emerging urban spaces, heritage studies—a rich and potential area of applied cultural geography—could be

developed by including both tangible and intangible together with sites using geographers' expertise to make comprehensive (re-) interpretation and heritage planning. It has a direct policy implication too.

Clues from the optimism shown by Joe Schwartzberg need serious consideration, 'There is...much scope from Indian cultural traditions. What is now needed is to enrich geographic research in India through a skilful blending, in appropriate cultural contexts, of the rigour of the western scholarly paradigms and greater application of indigenous culturally relevant concepts' (Schwartzberg 1983: 253). More geographies of people's experiences, memory, and exposition of inherent meaning are required. India has always consisted and possessed of such geographies, where simplicity has invisible complexity, and visuality has deeper messages. Unfortunately, the recent generation of geographers has little sense of feeling this' (Singh 2009a: p. 40).

3.1 Twenty-First-Century Trends

The twenty-first century has unfolded two interesting academic realities—super specialisations in one and collapsing of older disciplinary boundaries making way for convergence of varied disciplinary practices. This has helped in enriching cultural geographies which get contributions from varied perspectives (cf. Singh, 2012a; Singh, 2020a). That is why it is not surprising to find cultural studies using historical, archival, ecological, literary, travelogue, ethnographic, and associated methods to investigate localised patterns of religion, language, diet, arts, customs, folk music, cinema, and any associated attributes are concerned with some of the aspects of cultural geography (cf. Singh and Khan 2002; Singh, 2020b; Singh and Sweta 2019). Some of the notable attributes of cultural geography as captured in Indian contexts are discussed in short.

3.1.1 Cultural Landscapes

Landscape is a complex concept including spatiality and temporality and their interconnectedness. The Indian cultural landscape (ICL) becomes a complex cultural mosaic due to the addition of sacrality of nature and overall the encompassing manifestation of transcendence of man who since time immemorial is trying to make a connect between conscious mind and superconscious divine (cf. Singh 2013). The ICL thus becomes a repository of mental constructs, visual expositions, collective memories, monuments, cultural traditions, including rituals, happenings, and many other associated elements shaped by active engagement of different communities with respective ecology over generations (cf. Thakur 2012: 154–155). The Hindu literature personifies the land as divine Mother (*Bhudevi*) and is full of reverence for *Bharat Mata* ('Mother India') and 'Mother Earth'. And naturally the land becomes

part of the sacred geography of India (Eck, 2012; Singh 2013e). Sacrality and imageability of holy-heritage sites are other issues of concern, as exemplified in case of Varanasi and Ayodhya (Singh 2020; Singh and Kumar 2018).

Sacred landscape is represented through codified sacred art, signs, and symbols which contain inherent meanings (Singh 2015d; Singh 2016a; Singh, Rana and Olsen 2022). The riverfront of Varanasi presents an example sacredscape which has undergone creation and recreation (Singh 2015c), and this process still continues (Singh 2020). Similar landscapes are characterised in Ayodhya, and the nature and characteristics of ritualsapes, sacrosanct environment, intangible heritage, SDGs and heritage development, and imageability of cultural landscapes are described while comparing with Varanasi (Kumar and Singh 2013, 2015a, b, 2016a, b, 2017a, c, 2019; Singh and Kumar 2018; Singh and Kumar 2020a; Singh, Kumar, and Rana, 2020b; Singh, Rana, and Kumar, 2020c; Singh, Kumar, and Rana, 2020d).

The nexus of Nature-divine-Man interaction, manifested through sacrality and symbolism in the process of landscape formation in ancient cultures like India, now considered as emerging philosophy of nature conservation (Singh and Rana 2020), and expressed deep sense of ecospirituality and cosmology (Singh 2016b, 2014b) which may help in building harmonious global order (Singh 2012c).

Chatterji's (2014) two-volume work has looked at Indian urban development from colonial and postcolonial perspectives taking issues like history of urbanisation, concepts of urban space, socioeconomic and sociocultural dimensions of postmodernism, globalisation, urban expansion, planning, conservation, heritage, race, class, ethnicity, poverty, gender, public health, natural and built environments, etc. and also the evolution of the natural and rural landscape in India.

3.1.2 Heritage

The deep sense of ecospirituality and cosmology has been the hallmarks of ancient geographical thoughts in India (Singh 2009a, 2009b) whose similarities and archetypal relationship with the works of Leonardo da Vinci has recently been examined (see, Singh 2014b). Geographical imprints on the sacred landscapes of India from historical perspective have caught attention of scholars in recent interdisciplinary debates (cf. Singh 2015k; Singh 2016a), especially in the context of cosmic integrity (Singh 2012d), and analysing holy-heritage city of Banaras/Varanasi as cultural complex and cosmic whole (Singh 2002, 2004, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a, b, c, d, 2016b, c, 2018; Singh and Rana 2016b, c). The Hindu family system has central and unique place in the formation of Indian society in spatio-temporal context and illustrates the example of geographical vision (Singh 2013c, 2013d). Based on an assessment of the cultural heritage of the sacred Braj region in phenomenological approach, Sinha (2014) sought to promote environmental values through restoration of water bodies, groves on the Yamuna Riverfront, and Govardhan Hill. Rivers have been conceived as goddesses in the Hindu religious tradition which have purificatory power and bless the humanity well narrated in case of the river Ganga—one of the bases of integrating India culturally. Singh (2013b) in his study of the Muslims

shrines in Varanasi has identified the existence of their 1388 shrines and sacred sites, among which 14 are so popular that they also attract even the Hindus. Some other notable studies dealt with Muslim culture, pilgrimage and water symbols (Singh and Ahmad 2021a, b). Besides the issues of sacrality, tribal culture and heritage and changes taking place therein as found in the work of Hilaly (2018) on Apatanis, a tribal community of Arunachal Pradesh (India); cultural continuity and changes taking place in other part of the world by Indian scholars (Singh, Ravi 2019b) have also been addressed. It would be appropriate to note that heritage continues to attract scholars from multiple disciplines (Sharma 2018; Singh and Niglio 2022).

3.1.3 Pilgrimage and Tourism

The personification of land (the earth) as mother goddess automatically gives form to the sacred geography of ancient cultures like India (Eck 2012; Singh 2012f) and in due course of time the pilgrimage places emerge to which people seeking salvation. Today, a huge corpus of pilgrimage studies are known including one of the classics by Bhardwaj (1973), including those which provide scientific as well as interdisciplinary perspectives, especially on Hindu sacred centres and spaces (Singh 2009c; Singh and Haigh 2015; Singh and Rana 2016b; Singh, 2020a: 89–140). Sacredscapes and ritualsapes are strongly interconnected, and therefore, it is difficult to imagine one in the absence of other.

The study made by Aukland (2016) has attempted to conceptualise pilgrimage and tourism as two separate domains and argued that tourist guides and their guided tours have become an integral part of Hindu pilgrimage and its operation in contemporary India. Adler et al. (2013) made an interdisciplinary study in the Kailash Sacred Landscape region (Nepal) to explore opportunities and challenges for sustainable tourism as a strategy to community resilience in the wake of climate change and poverty-alleviation measure, incorporating local traditional knowledge and legitimising it.

Geography, like other social sciences, is in a state of flux (Singh 2016c). The process of cultural studies becoming more and more interdisciplinary has broadened the horizons of cultural geography and its scope which also stands true for India at present, and Hinduism especially (cf. Singh 2015e, 2016a; Singh and Aktor 2015). The study of cultural ecology with its basic attributes and their interrelationships embedded in the values and ethics of Indian society need consideration for future research. Singh (2016c) makes an optimistic remark in a report on the progress in cultural geography in India, ‘The studies in cultural geography of India will take these issues in the coming future. We should realise and reveal ways to change the mind-set, and mass awakening in making our culture harmonious, peaceful and happy; remember the core concern of geographical practice is to make happy places and spiritual landscapes’ (p. 132). Beside the works of Rana P. B. Singh (selected ones reviewed), works like Singh and Sugandh (2017), Ghosh and Ghosal (2019), Kapur (2019) and Singh and Ghosh (2019), Singh and Singh (2019), Singh, Rana, Kumar (2020), and Kumar and Singh (2013, a, b, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2019) are

few examples of some recent directions in cultural geography practices in India (see Singh, 2020: 89–140; Singh and Singh 2022).

4 Essays in Honour of Rana P. B. Singh

This felicitation volume is organised into six parts. Part I is the introduction to the present volume in which the present chapter is followed by an introduction to Prof. Rana P. B. Singh in a semi-biographical mode, and an interview-based essay on his academic journey. Part II on ‘Landscapes’ consists of three chapters dealing with landscape perception in the context of tourism; *Char* landscape of Brahmaputra river; and the landscape dynamism of Hanoi city. Part III on ‘Religion’ has three chapters which discuss priesthood in Pandharpur (Maharashtra); spread of Hindu religion; and indigenous religious belief system. In Part IV on ‘Heritage’, five chapters explore different aspects from ancient intellectual heritage to tribal heritage, viz. Kautilya’s political geography; facets of Bodhgaya; vernacular landscape; cultural approaches to animal geography; and the Misings—a tribal community of Assam, India. Part V is titled ‘Pilgrimage and Tourism’ that includes chapters on Buddhist pilgrimage; Panchakroshi Yatra of Varanasi; cultural tourism; and the Baul-Sufi interface. In Part VI on ‘Human Settlements’, there are four chapters addressing different aspects of cities like cultural images; urban sanitation; agricultural land use trajectory; and urban renewal and redevelopment of public space.

Part I: Introduction

Beside the present chapter introducing the theme and content of the book, Part I of the book contains two more chapters. The chapter by Singh and Dahiya presents an appraisal of Rana Singh’s professional career, academic contributions, and recognition, covering most of the aspects he dealt with, that is how he is widely known as a leading figure of Indian geography which he has enriched through immense contributions especially cultural geography from dweller Indian perspective in the purview of multidisciplinary frame.

In the essay by Adityam, the author has talked to Rana-Ji to know about his journey and experiential feelings to the academic pedestal on which he stands today as an internationally known academic and scholar of repute, and finally the future he foresees of his adopted home city and the tradition of Varanasi Studies that he has developed through dedicated work and untiring zeal to serve its cause. He has spent almost half a century understanding unfolding meanings of different layers of the city as it is said metaphorically that this city is older than history and maintained the path of ‘succession-sustenance-and-sustainability’—as to how Rana has narrated in his writings.

Part II: Landscapes

Chhetri and Chhetri’s essay describes the evolution of the concept of landscape in geography and establishes it as a geographical paradigm, and further examines the constituents of landscape and identifies the components of experiential aspects.

They argue for a unified construct integrating the process of sensing, perceiving and cognising the total of biophysical characteristics of geographic space. Later, it also discusses a model to analyse perception and experience of landscape using tourists' perception as a surrogate to represent and reflect the process of constructing landscape.

Sarvesh Kumar has recorded and described the multicultural sacredscapes in Ayodhya, a holy-heritage city of India. These sacredscapes are studied in their ethnological context while taking various niches and frames developed and attested by Professor Rana P. B. Singh in his studies of holy-heritage cities of north India. To begin with, the chapter describes the geographical personality of Ayodhya. This is followed by six sections that discuss the Hindu sacredscapes, including Hanuman-garhi, Ramajnamabhumi, Nageshvarnatha Temple, Kanak Bhawan, Badi Chhavani and Chhoti Chhavani, Chandrahari Temple, Sapta Hari Temple, the Shakti sacredscapes, and the caste temples. This is followed by five sections on provide details of Muslim, Jain, and Sikh sacredscapes, Christian churches, and the memorable landscape of Korean Queen Heo (Korean Park).

Bhagabati and Deka have analysed the evolution of 'Char Landscape of the Brahmaputra Riverine Tract' in Assam and describe the characteristic cultural ecology there. The chapter begins with an exhaustive introduction to the evolution of *char-chaporis* and the formation of a typical cultural ecology characterised by not only ethnic diversity due to inhabitation by immigrants, but also of livelihoods, occupations, and economic opportunities. The authors put forth clearly that both natural and cultural factors are responsible for the constant modification of the *char* ecology which indicates their dynamism. Peopling of char lands have been discussed with reference to the immigrant Muslims, Bengalis, and Nepalis in the political economic approach. The next section provides a reasoned account of human habitation's patterns. The issues concerning evolution of cultural landscape, agriculture, and movement in and out of the *chars* which are typical of the Brahmaputra River from cultural ecological perspectives are also discussed contextually.

Praharaj has attempted to analyse the culture of public spaces in Varanasi, their use and present state of decay through an in-depth case study investigation of *kunds*—the sacred water bodies. The whole discussion is organised into five major sections, covering the introduction of the research design, Varanasi's brief city profile, the city's culture and heritage and public spaces, and the case study of Pushkar *Kund*—its heritage value and present condition. Finally, the author has tried to develop an 'integrated vision' for the renewal of this *kund* which can contribute to its conservation and development as a space for public gathering through a variety of interventions in the form of design, policy regulation, and management frameworks.

Part III: Religion

The focus of chapter by Erik Sand is on Pandharpur—a regional town in Maharashtra, the Viṭhobā temple for which it is known and the priesthood there. It is noted that after independence and the introduction of the modern state, the position of the local priesthood has been increasingly undermined by modern legislation which has led

to the priesthood losing their traditionally inherited rights and privileges including the management of the temple.

In the next chapter, Martin Haigh presents an exploration of the spread of Hinduism into the United Kingdom (UK) using Nattier's Import–Export-Baggage model. Its introductory section begins with a small quote from Rana Singh's work (2011) which calls for 'thinking *universally*, seeing *globally*, behaving *regionally* and acting *locally* but *insightfully*' (cf. Singh 2009a: 147). Treating this idea as beacon light, it draws an extended conceptual framework using comparative assessment of two geographical models for the spread of religions proposed by Nattier (1997) and Park (2004) respectively; and long quotes from Rana-ji's works and various other published literatures by the academicians. Following a descriptive yet critical account of the various Hindu traditions in the UK, he has referred to the pros and cons of each movement leading to the concluding section in the context of the emergence of a new '*Ekatvam*' Hinduism, which ends with Singh's (2012b) welcoming observation on the progressive development of an *Ekatvam* ethic of 'coexistence and equity rooted' in the concept of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakan*' in Global Hinduism (compare Singh and Aktor 2015).

Ravi Singh has presented a descriptive analysis of indigenous belief systems in India's north-eastern region taking up the case study of Arunachal Pradesh, in the background of a critique of colonial approach to cultural studies which does not give importance and recognition to the 'others'. This chapter explains the external influences on indigenous faiths wherever applicable. Christianity and conversion (into it) are sensitive and controversial issues with respect to IRBS in tribal regions including the North-East India as a whole and Arunachal Pradesh particularly.

Part IV: Heritage

Adhikari's essay presents a detailed analytical account of the comparative politico-geographical concepts and ideas developed by Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* (c. 321–296 BCE), one of the great ancient Indian scholars who was also an accomplished administrator, diplomat and statesman. The issues captured include concept and structure and spatial structure of kingdom, concept of boundaries and associated physical factors. Focus is also laid on the issue of population and power of the state followed by resources and state power, role of communication, and geographic features and interstate relations before drawing conclusions.

Singh and Sugandh highlight how centuries' old regional genealogical record keeping techniques can be a source of information to explore the patterns of migration and marriage decisions in the Mithila Region, Bihar. It is noted that the annual matrimonial gathering in Mithila called Saurath *sabha* explains the role of the *panji* system in the matrimonial decision-making process. This chapter offers a theoretical view on genealogy to provide an insight into how genealogical record keeping, marriage, and space are interrelated and an inseparable cultural phenomenon in the Mithila region.

Joshi's chapter is a critical enterprise to 're-illustrate' the city of Bodhgaya (India) which has been important to Buddhists and Hindus, hence contested and consequently poeticised. He has argued that sacredness goes beyond scriptural texts and

archaeological remains per se, and its significance chiefly lies in the active interaction between humans and religious architecture within the dynamic ritual settings. This mutual relationship is crucial for understanding the sacredness, generally for the 'living' sacred architecture in India and especially in the case of Bodhgaya to best sustain the values of the place in its context while also managing changes taking place in the surrounding landscape. It is argued that rituals, which are continuously reinvented and altered and thus ever evolving, are central to the sacredscape. In the last main section, at the end, the journey of the Mahabodhi as a World Heritage Site has been analysed in detail considering differential densities of human involvement, attachment, and experience.

Dai et al. discusses how the new cultural geography is concerned with the meaning contained in cultural landscapes, as illustrated in a case of Dongshan Town, Suzhou, China, while using meanings inherent in transmission of vernacular landscape and the context of constructivism theory. It is argued that people of different regions have their own unique understandings of landscape, which advances formation of vernacular landscape concept and the regional cultural sustainability manifests in several ways, like people's identity and heritage. In this process, argue the authors, youth and teenagers assume important roles.

The essay by Doley and Kar is a descriptive analytical study of the Misings tribe of Assam (India) who belong to Tibeto-Burman ethnic group, who primarily inhabit riverine rural areas and have insignificant presence in urban settlements and thus largely concentrated in the upper Brahmaputra valley particularly in Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts. The present study provides an insight into the changes taking place in a very small section of the Misings through the process of modernisation and acculturation in recent times including urbanisation, religious transformation, education and intermixing, and the impacts of these factors on traditional life and cultural practices.

Part IV: Pilgrimage and Tourism

In the chapter on Lumbini (Nepal), Poudel has provided a detailed geographical analysis in a regional context, which is one among the most important places of Buddhist pilgrimage, where Lord Buddha was born. Thus, it is recognised as the place of 'grand pilgrimage' in the Buddhist world. The chapter presents an analysis of social and demographic characteristics of places surrounding Lumbini followed by a theoretical discussion on the concept of pilgrimage, and Buddhist places of pilgrimage with special reference to Lumbini, and the spatial characteristics of pilgrims.

Vandana Sehgal takes us to a different place of pilgrimage, i.e. Varanasi or Kashi which is sacred to many Indic religions, and presents an explanation and exploration of sacred environments of Kashi *kshetra* delineated as one of the pilgrimages called Panchakroshi Yatra, undertaken by the devotees in the intercalary (*malamasa*), circumambulatory in nature forming a *mandala*, in phenomenological approach based on the author's experiences from the architectural perspective through devout pilgrims' belief and experiences. The author has analysed the basic activity pattern to understand the whole cycle of the yatra and how the cycle of spatial environment transforms it into a spiritual realm symbolically. This paper is an extension and

restudy of a classic book on this pilgrimage by Singh (2002/2013) and substantially revalidate his expositions.

Singh and Kumar have made an appraisal of culture-based tourism in development taking the case of Rajasthan and approved the fact that tourism is the largest and fastest growing industry increasingly acquiring organised form and seen as multidimensional, hence viewed as possessing huge potential in terms of future development taking in view the current status and potential of cultural tourism.

The chapter titled 'Baul-Sufi Interface and Cultural Tourism: A Study in Northern Rarh of West Bengal, India' authored by Chakrabarty and Mandal describes cultural tourism in the Rarh Region of West Bengal, perceived as the land of Sahajiyā syncretistic tradition, characterised with its sacredscapes. Bauls and Sufis associated traditions and sacred places particularly in the Northern part of Rarh are identified as valuable tourism resources by the authors. The Baul-Sufi interface thus becomes a subject matter in the tourism geography of Rarh Bengal. And, at the end, an appraisal of the scope of promotion of Baul-Sufi tourism in the region is made.

Part VI: Human Settlements

An essay by Satpati attempts to bring out as to how cultural imprints provide spatial identification to places in cities, taking the example of Kolkata, based on perception of prominent personalities, the images of cultural heritage and perception of identities of locations at micro level, pseudo-locations as well as shift of the imageries. The paper also discusses the issues pertaining to locating the images of urban transport in Kolkata, pseudo-locations and shifts of the imageries, miscellaneous images and identities, and finally cultural legacy under threat.

Basu has conducted a case study of India's capital city Delhi to develop an understanding of how the ongoing process of urbanisation in India unfolds as intensified class inequalities reveal 'new and renewed urban landscapes' emerging on the basis of elite and middle-class ideals of forms of urban spaces and their occupants. Her argument, that the cities increasingly reflect contemporary economic imperatives through adopting the aesthetics of a 'global city' that can accommodate capital investment, is further extended by focusing on how animals are accommodated into or displaced from cities seeking to become properly global. The central argument of this chapter is that the stray cattle removal program has led to confinement of animals being the only acceptable mode which has pushed the dairy farmers along with the cattle to the margins of the city.

Arun Singh's paper discusses the state of urban sanitation at macro level and highlights existing grass root realities taking Varanasi as a case study, based on primary data collected from twelve sample municipal wards through a set of questionnaires and supported by other techniques like informal discussion focus group discussion, participatory appraisal, and observation technique. Finally, aspects of sanitation related ground realities have been addressed which are generally not revealed by the government statistics.

Banu and Fazal have attempted to analyse the perspectives of agricultural land use trajectories for three decades (1980–2010) due to the development and expansions of Aligarh city of Uttar Pradesh (India) on its peri-urban interface zone and

portrayed how the distance from the urban centre plays a role in the transformation of agricultural land use to urban usage. Finally, the discussion is made with respect to the status of land resource in Aligarh peri-urban interface zone, drivers of peri-urbanisation and land use, human activities and alteration in peri-urban land use and land cover in the peri-urban interface zone of Aligarh, determinants for disposal of agricultural land, pattern of peri-urban land conversion and transformation, and the cost of peri-urbanisation.

5 Perspective: From Emergence to Envisioning

Let us stop at the destination of awakening, what Schwartzberg (1998: 252) has rightly and rationally suggested in his own vision taking into account the ‘long, rich, and distinctive culturally-rooted history of geography in India that with the coming of western colonialism was not only denigrated but also, in time, rendered virtually invisible’. His concluding appraisal is alarming and could be taken as a path to be followed: ‘There is, ..., much scope from Indian cultural traditions. What is now needed is to enrich geographic research in India through a skilful blending, in appropriate cultural contexts, of the rigour of the western scholarly paradigms and greater application of indigenous culturally relevant concepts’ (Schwartzberg 1998: 253). Notwithstanding ‘the lines of thoughts, approaches, methods, population groups, religions, politics, economy, and so forth, must not be forgotten that geography like science has no boundaries, that on daily basis, knowledge is revitalised, as long as it is used to construct a better society’, where civic sense, care for the nature, conservation for the heritage, and concerns for sustainable and harmonious world be part of the lifeworld (Singh 2009a: 40–41). It is further provoked that ‘it would a great task before us, dweller geographers, to explain and share with others by joining hands in narrating everyday experiences, feelings, revelations and realisations in all their geographical complexities in order to research and remaking path towards peace, passion, love, mutual cohesiveness and harmonious life’ (Singh 2009b:182). “Let variety of flowers bloom in different gardens, but there should also be a soothing fragrance to be shared by all. Let [cultural] geography flourish where the roots are to be searched through the present, but envisioned it into the better future” (Singh and Singh 2022: 156).

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For his professional contributions to sustainable urban development in Mongolia, the Government of Mongolia awarded Prof. Dahiya with a *Certificate of Honour*, and the Municipal Government of Ulaanbaatar decorated him with a *Medal of Honour*. In December 2021, the Global Council for the Promotion of International Trade conferred a *Global Sustainability Award 2021* on Prof. Dahiya.



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