

Report & Program ICSSR Sponsored National Seminar- Dept of Geography, 3rd March, 2017

State Level Seminar

One Day State Level Seminar Sponsored by ICSSR

- The Department of Geography Organised a State Level Seminar on 3rd March, 2017 in collaboration with ICSSR. The Seminar was entitled “Askot Arakot Abhiyan: A Historical Geography of Himalayan Communities”. The inaugural session was chaired by Dr. Kalpana Bhakuni (Acting Principal), Professor Shekhar Pathak (Guest Speaker), Prof. S.C. Rai (Guest of Honour, Head of Geography Department, DU), Prof. R.B. Singh, (Guest of Honour, Prof. at Department of Geography, DU), Dr. Ranjana A Gera (Convenor) and Dr Renu Malhotra (Co-convenor).
- The seminar focused on the Himalayan ecosystem whose fragility and transformative nature has always attracted scientists and social scientists alike including Geographers and Historians. The main speaker for the first session of the seminar was Prof. Shekhar Pathak, a noted Historian. His research organisation, named People’s Association for Himalayan Area Research (PAHAR) is dedicated to raising awareness of the fragile Himalayan environment and bringing together scientists, social activists and common people to save the Himalayas. PAHAR has been organizing a trek from Askot (Pithoragarh) to Arakot (Uttarkashi) at a select interval of 10 years. Five such research expeditions have been undertaken between 1974 and 2104. Prof. Pathak shared the knowledge gathered during these expeditions about human communities in ecologically and culturally important region of Uttarakhand and the transitional challenges they are facing.

- The second half of the seminar commenced portraying information on the Askot Arakot Abhiyan focusing on the ecological challenges of the Himalayan region along with the challenges faced by the communities dwelling therein. The documentary covered details of region specific problems addressing the issues of burning of grass and trees used as a mechanism to melt the glaciers by some village communities. Other dimensions of local issues such as river bed encroachment were touched upon. The documentary also entailed the need of harnessing community wisdom for building resilience towards forthcoming issues generated by developmental processes. The issue pertaining to natural hazards of Uttarakhand because of its location in the most seismically active zones was also focused in the documentary. The documentary included the elaborations of a Geologist, Dr. Naveen Juyal, on structures which can sustain earthquakes as they are designed to be earthquake resistant.
- The second segment of the seminar included the presentation by Dr. Kalpana Bhakuni. The deliberations were arranged to structure the idea of how natural scenery becomes a visual resource. The landscapes were typified as the Focal, Panoramic, Vivid, Uniform and Feature landscapes, and were discussed along with the scenic variables to identify such landscapes. The 'Panel approach' to seek the consensus in order to evolve an evaluation of scenic potential was also touched upon. As a whole, the presentation upheld the natural scenery of Kumaon Himalayas as a potential natural resource of high order.
- The seminar ended with an interactive session in a trans-disciplinary tone with active participation by the faculty members and students. The questions raised covered issues related to the Himalayan communities. The essential take away of the sessions were the problems of Himalayan communities, the resilient practices and the future perspective in terms of thought, policies, activism and implementation.





