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PANEL TITLE:

SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF HIMALAYA AND TRANS-HIMALAYA: EXPLORING PEOPLE, CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AND TRADE LINKAGES, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In India, the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions, comprising Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and parts of West Bengal, are distinguished not only as cold/semi-cold/cold and arid entities but also in historical, linguistic, cultural, political, and ecological terms. Why and how do these regions constitute a unique field of study? Under extreme climatic conditions, the human habitations in these regions have continued to thrive with their unique traditional and cultural practices for centuries. In the process, the people living in the mountains have protected the landscape and scarce resources as intrinsic to their natural attitudes. In fact, they have created for themselves an environment that has all the features of an environmentalist's dream. For centuries, they have experienced harmonious co-existence with nature and their close environment. Be that as it may, these regions, almost without exception, are experiencing unprecedented socioeconomic and socio-cultural transformations – both desired and undesired. For example, most of these regions are experiencing a transformation from a pastoral economy to a cultural industry with the onslaught of global tourism, which brings in its wake both desirable and undesirable impacts. Besides, climate change in these regions is fast redefining their characteristics. In some ways, sudden changes in climate patterns are also adversely impacting the livelihood of many people in these regions and their habitations. This panel seeks to account for the driving factors of change and its effects on people, places, cultural landscapes, and environments of the Himalayan and Trans-Himalayan regions.

Keywords: Linkages, Livelihood, socio-cultural transformation

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