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Editorial

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Before we introduce this issue, we need to take a moment to recognize the current state of things, as our world aches and wrenches from struggles and injustice all around. One might rightly suggest that is always the state of things, yet there is a saliency to this moment in a world quite literally on fire. The current COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a global interconnectedness that we as a global citizenry—and to be sure, our leaders—have yet to fully grasp. On top of this, we are witnessing the continued murder of Black people by police in the United States, the increasing fortification of borders globally, and authoritarian nationalist policies that call into collective question what the future holds—for people of all walks of life, in each part of every country on this spinning rock of ours. It is an unsettling time with profound uncertainties. Still, it is a time to struggle. Now more than ever. As this issue reminds us, the people's voices will be heard.

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When we began our editorship, our primary commitment was to expand the scope of *HIMALAYA* and continue to build on the wonderful work of our predecessors. In addition to maintaining its global reputation and ensuring that the journal remained open access and free of significant article processing charges despite industry-wide shifts in the other direction, an important goal for us was to foreground areas and perspectives that had hitherto

remained peripheral to conversations on the Himalayan region, and yet formed an integral part of the intellectual and physical landscape.

To that end, we are delighted to bring you *HIMALAYA* Volume 40, Number 1, with its emphasis on Kashmir, a Himalayan region that has witnessed decades of wars and military occupation, and remains one of the most densely militarized regions in the world. Yet the dominant scholarship on the region, at least until recently, erased critical histories and counter narratives, and privileged state-based perspectives that had little to no resonance with the everyday complexities of people's lives in this deeply contested area in the Himalaya. Popular framings of Kashmir continue to view it as a bilateral dispute between two warring nation-states, India and Pakistan. Such perspectives ignore Kashmiris' longstanding resistance to despotic regimes, and their aspirations for *azadi* (Urdu. freedom), that predate the formation of India and Pakistan. This special issue of *HIMALAYA* offers a much needed corrective by centering Kashmiri perspectives on politics, wars, militarization, and occupation, while attesting to multifaceted struggles for rights, justice, and accountability.

The political situation in Kashmir has worsened considerably since 05 August 2019, when India's Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) government under the leadership of Narendra Modi abrogated Articles 370 and 35A that secured Kashmir's semi-autonomous

status, and allowed the region to have its own flag and constitution. Such provisions also protected Kashmiri rights to their land and property. In addition, the BJP government split the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories. Thousands of Kashmiris, including mainstream leaders who were part of India's client regimes, were detained and jailed. The BJP, which represents India's Hindu majoritarian politics, has through a string of recent decisions successfully consolidated India's image as a predominantly Hindu territory, with Muslims and other minorities being reduced to the status of second-class citizens, or on the verge of being stripped of their citizenship rights.

The decision to strip Kashmir's autonomy, which experts have termed unilateral and even illegal, is also an attempt to transform the demographics of the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir by settling outsiders from India and dispossessing Kashmiris of their land, resources, and property. What might the future hold for Kashmiris and how might their struggle for justice and freedom, and their resistance to India's settler colonial policies, unfold over time? These are significant questions that the special issue raises while also charting Kashmir's historical struggles for rights, dignity, and identity.

This issue is also our last issue as Co-Editors. We'd like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you, the readers and contributors, for your unwavering support to the

journal, and for writing and reading such amazing work that we have had the privilege of curating over the past three years. Your contributions and commitments to highlighting the voices of diverse communities in the Himalaya through scholarship and advocacy has been engaging and inspiring. We hope you all will continue to support the journal's goals and mission in the future, as well.

We also have many people and institutions to thank. First and foremost, we want to thank Jacki Betsworth and her incredible team of student aides at Macalaster College's Dewitt Wallace Library, who have worked consistently over the past decade to make the journal a stunning success by overseeing essential parts of the design and production processes. The pandemic has unfortunately brought this long and meaningful work collaboration between Macalaster and the journal to an end. We want to express our sincerest appreciation to Macalaster College for providing *HIMALAYA* a wonderful home, and for the continued commitment to host the journal's archival collection of current and previous issues. Thank you for this legacy and stewardship.

For this issue, we are truly appreciative of Deepak Sharma and team at Prepress Plus (www.

prepressplus.in) who stepped in to oversee the manuscript typesetting and collation work, and to Alina Ronghangpi, who served as the visual and graphic designer for 40.1. They both dove right in with little orientation to the work, and were able to seamlessly reproduce another beautiful volume.

Our sincere appreciation to *HIMALAYA*'s Editorial Board, who have served as reviewers, recommenders, contributors, and general ambassadors for the journal. We want to thank our current Reviews and Reports Editor, Mason Brown, and his predecessor Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz, for their incredible work ensuring that *HIMALAYA* featured carefully chosen book and film reviews and conference reports across multiple fields and locations, and include scholars at different stages of their academic careers.

We also want to thank our Pre-Production Editors, Emily Leischner at the University of British Columbia, and Megan Ramaiya, at the University of Washington, who have been absolutely amazing even as the pandemic upended our lives and made focused work extremely difficult. Thanks also to Jessica Bachman and Shubham Sapkota for improving the journal's social media profile and following. And,

finally, our deepest gratitude to Scott Halliday, who joined us on this editorial odyssey as Managing Editor, and who has been invaluable to the journal. He has been extremely gracious with his time and wisdom these past few years, and we are fortunate to have had him on our team to keep us on track.

We are more than thrilled to welcome the incoming Co-Editors, Jeevan Sharma and Michael Heneise, who bring with them decades of experience conducting research in the Himalaya, and intimate knowledge of the region and its diverse histories, languages, and communities. We are excited for the vision that Jeevan and Michael have for the journal, and their rich and far-reaching academic and publishing networks across South Asia and Europe will provide the much needed energy to steer *HIMALAYA* in exciting new directions.

As always, please do reach out to us with any thoughts or feedback on the current issue. Thank you for reading, and for enriching us with your scholarship and academic camaraderie. Take good care, and please take care of one another.

Mona Bhan and David Citrin
Co-Editors, *HIMALAYA*