

PRESS RELEASE

SUBJECT: ANNOUNCING THE 6th EDITION OF HIMALAYAN ECHOES – KUMAON FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE & ARTS

ABOUT: Over the 5 five years, the Himalayan Echoes Festival, in the foothills of the Himalaya's (Nainital) has gained traction with like-minded readers, writers and people with a mountain sensibility who celebrate books, music and poetry in the wonderful setting of the lush green mountains dotted with cedar and oak trees. Last year we organized the first digital version of the festival due to covid restrictions. This year will be the 6th edition of Himalayan Echoes closely mentored by [Namita Gokhale](#) and directed by [Janhavi Prasada](#).

THEME: 2021 we will focus on a collaborative theme around the idea of:
C. A. L. M. - Creativity. Art. Literature. Mountains.
We hope to nurture C.A.L.M as an informal collective of mountain festivals.

GOAL: Our goal is to resonate voices from the Himalayan region. The intense two-day festival will forefront the beauty and joys of mountain life as well as the challenges before us and delve deep into the cultural diversity and unity of the Himalayan terrain. The shared outreach of the participating festivals will create a positive energy in such times.

SUPPORT: Himalayan Echoes C.A.L.M. is supported by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

ONLINE LIVE TELECAST: The festival will be held online this year on social media platforms, bringing a unique confluence of themes and ideas into your screens, smartphones, tablets, and laptops. It will be spread across 2 days with 4 sessions each day.

TIMINGS: The 2 days festival will be broadcast online (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) on the weekend of 20th and 21st November 2021 from 10:30 AM – 2:00 PM.

SPEAKERS & TOPICS:

Celebrate the beauty and diversity of the Himalayan ranges through a thoughtfully curated thread of sessions which includes inputs from Nepal Literature Festival, Drukyl's Literature Festival, Bhutan Echoes, Mussourie Mountain Festival, Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival among others.

We have for you the internationally acclaimed musician **Ani Choying Drolma**- a Buddhist nun from Nepal known for her soul stirring Buddhist renditions, a session curated by **Ajit Baral** founder of Nepal Literature Festival, moderated by **Bhushita Vasistha**. **Mamang Dai** an understated repository of knowledge but a transformative Himalayan thinker from Arunachal Pradesh, also the first woman IAS from the region. **Arjun Vajpayee** the mountaineering youth icon, who constantly seeks to be one with the young mountains. **Stephen Alter & Akshaye Shah's** compilation of Uttarakhand voices from writer **Namita Gokhale** works, Historian **Shekar Pathak** on Chipko Movement, Anthropologist **Lokesh Ohri** on the hidden history of Mussoorie, **Dr D R Purohit**, Folklorist from Garhwal on age-old rituals of Mahabharat and **Pushpesh Pant**, Food Critic. **Anjal Prakash**, on the impact of climate change on the Himalayas with **Mandakini Kaul**, South Asia Regional Coordinator at World Bank. Renowned journalist **Kaveree Bamzai** in a revelation by Prof. **Neerja Mattoo** on her work on women poets of Kashmir. **Asiya Zahoor's** powerful readings from her works of poetry. The **Queen Mother of Bhutan Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck** with powerful Bhutanese literary voices of **Lopen Karma Phuntso**, **Kunzang Choden**, **Kezand Dechen Choden's** heart-warming poetry – curated by the Drukyl's Literature Festival: Bhutan Echoes.

Mountain Festival Partners representing Himalayan Echoes: C.A.L.M. from their regions:

SPEAKERS: HIMALAYAN ECHOES : KUMAON FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE & ARTS :

UTTARAKHAND

Arjun Vajpayee, is the youngest Indian (16 years) to summit Mt Everest in 2010 – Uttarakhand. On 20 May 2011, he became the youngest person ever to summit Lhotse, aged 17 years, 11 months and 16 days. Arjun also became the youngest to summit Manaslu on 4 October 2011. After 3 failed attempts on Makalu, he became the youngest Indian to summit it in his 4th attempt on 22 May 2016.

Mandakini Kaul, Regional Coordinator for South Asia, World Bank works on issues of regional cooperation, economic connectivity, and engendered approaches in traditionally gender-blind sectors among countries in Asia. She leads high-level policy-influencing dialogue and knowledge platforms with government and non-government, and manages regional relationships with key counterparts in government, civil society, development agencies, private sector institutions and chambers of commerce, and think tanks.

Dr Anjal Prakash, Research Director and Adjunct Associate Professor, Bharti Institute of Public Policy, Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad was the coordinating lead author for the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC). Recently he was nominated as a member of the Gender Task Group of IPCC to develop a framework of goals and actions to improve gender balance and address gender-related issues within the IPCC. Dr Prakash's work focuses on water and climate change, urban resilience, gender and social inclusion issues covering South Asia.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Mamang Dai is a poet and novelist from Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh. A former journalist, Dai also worked with WWF in the Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspots programme. Her first publication Arunachal Pradesh -The Hidden Land received the State Verrier Elwin Prize. In 2011, Dai was awarded the Padma Shri (Literature & Education), and the Sahitya Akademi Award, 2017, for her book The Black Hill, in English. Dai lives in Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

Mukul Pathak, is a journalist with Channel DY365, Itanagar. He began writing for newspapers at an early age and later went on to join the Assamese Daily newspaper as a correspondent in 1997. He has worked for All India Radio in Nagaon, Guwahati and Itanagar and for Itanagar Radio (Casual) as News Editor . He is a literary activist and discharged his duty as AGS of Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society. He dabbles with writing poetry and short stories.

Ziro is held in the Ziro valley in the Northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. It showcases the independent music scene in India. The festival was founded in 2012 by Bobby Hano and Menwhopause guitarist Anup Kutty, and has featured artists like Lee Ranaldo, Steve Shelley, Damo Suzuki, Shye Ben Tzur, MONO, Divine, Louw Majaw, Shaa'ir n Func, Indus Creed, Peter Cat Recording Co, Menwhopause, Guru Rewben Mashangva, and Barmer Boys among others. A four-day affair, it is hosted by members of the Apatani people at Ziro. The festival is noted for its eco-conscious value chain. It employs locally sourced material for the infrastructure, local artisans who create everything out of bamboo inspired by the animist Donyi Polo faith prevalent in the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

KASHMIR

Professor Neerja Mattoo is an eminent writer, teacher, translator who has taught in Kashmir for over three decades, and has published five books, including the critically acclaimed - most recent - *The Mystic & the Lyric: Four Kashmiri Women Poets* (Zubaan, 2019). Her works have been published by Sahitya Akademy, and she has been awarded a Fellowship & Visitorship to Oxford, by the Ministry of Education and the British Council, respectively. She lives in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Kaveree Bamzai is an independent journalist. She was the first, and so far, only woman editor of *India Today*, where she was employed till January 2019. She is the author of *The Three Khans* and the *Emergence of New India*, *No Regrets: The Guilt-Free Woman's Guide to a Good Life*, *Bollywood Today*, and two monographs in the Zubaan series on Women in Indian Film. She is on several committees, among them the Women Exemplar Committee of CII, and is recognised as a changemaker by Save The Children charity.

Asiya Zahoor has written books and articles on the literature of exile, Kashmiri literature, and psycholinguistics. Her film, *The Stitch*, has won the Critics Award for Best Film at the Second South Asian Film Festival. Her latest collection of poems is *Serpents Under My Veil*. She has recently won the Sanford Taylor Fellow at Cornell. She is currently working at a college in Baramulla, Kashmir.

SPEAKERS: THE MUSSOORIE MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL

The Mussoorie Mountain Festival was founded by Stephen Alter in conjunction with Mussoorie Writers. It was initially established with the aim of celebrating Mussoorie's Literary Heritage. It has since redefined itself to become a broader Mountain Festival at the heart of which is a community celebration of Himalayan culture, national history and exploration.

Stephen Alter, Author, has published more than 20 books of fiction and non-fiction. His *Wild Himalaya: A Natural History of the Greatest Mountain Range on Earth* received the 2020 Banff Book Award in the Mountain Environment and Natural History category and the Kekoo Naoroji Prize. He is the founding director of the Mussoorie Mountain Festival.

Namita Gokhale, a writer, publisher, and festival director. She is a literary genius from Kumaon and has authored over 20 books. Her acclaimed debut novel, *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, was published in 1984. The latest book, *The Blind Matriarch*, has been described as her most ambitious novel till date. Gokhale is a founder and co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival.

Shekhar Pathak, Padma Shri awardee, is an academic, historian and co-author of *Asia ki Peeth Par*. A Himalayan traveler who has worked on several aspects of Himalayan history such as local movements, the freedom struggle and the culture of Uttarakhand, he is the founder of the People's Association for Himalaya Area Research (PAHAR). His latest book *Hari Bhari Umeed* now translated in English dives deep into the Chipko Movement.

Lokesh Ohri is an anthropologist, author and activist, who lives and works in the Himalayas. He is wanderer-in-chief at the Dehra Dun based group, 'Been There Doon That' or BTDT, that advocates slow travel and responsible tourism. His latest book, *Till Kingdom Come*, is based on the rituals of divine kingship in Jaunsar-Bawar and parts of Himachal Pradesh. Recently, he has also authored monographs on the Cosmology and Iconography around the Ganga. He has a doctorate from the University of Heidelberg.

D.R. Purohit is a senior theatre activist, scholar, mentor, writer, actor, director and exponent of the Central Himalayan folk theatre tradition. He has written 36 plays in Garhwali, Hindi and English. He is a former professor of English and Theatre and founding director of the Centre for Folk Performing Arts and Culture at H.N.B. Garhwal University, Srinagar. He has been a visiting professor at Heidelberg Univ. Germany and a Baden Wurtemberg Fellow at the South Asia Institute, Germany. He has lectured on Uttarakhand's culture and performing arts in German, American, Swedish and Norwegian universities, as well as at many Indian universities. At present he is a National Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

Pushpesh Pant is a noted Indian academic, food critic and historian from Uttarakhand. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 2016. He retired as a Professor of International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. He is deeply involved in bringing back regional cuisines to mainstream tables.

SPEAKERS: NEPAL LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Nepal Literature Festival is a playground for authors, thinkers, and literature connoisseurs. Founded by Ajit Baral, NLF was conceived as a forum for fostering pluralities of thoughts and ideas, advancing ideals of tolerance and inclusiveness. From its humble beginnings in 2011, the festival has grown in stature and has brought together hundreds of national and international authors, activists, artists, intellectuals, economists and leaders to on issues both literary and non-literary.

Ani Choying Drolma, Musician, founder of the Nuns Welfare Foundation of Nepal, the author of 'My Voice for Freedom' and has been recently appointed as the UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador to Nepal. She founded the Arya Tara School in the year 2000 for nuns which runs with the help of proceeds from her concerts, tours, CD sales and donation.

Bhushita Vasistha is the Publishing Editor at Nepalaya Publications, one of the leading publication houses in Nepal. She spent ten years in a meditation centre as an initiate while continuing her professional career as a journalist and creative writer.

SPEAKERS: DRUKYAL'S LITERATURE FESTIVAL, BHUTAN ECHOES

Drukyal's Literature Festival, Bhutan Echoes is an annual celebration of literature and arts in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. DLG is a life changing experience in the world's only carbon-negative country is blessed with the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck. The festival aims to create an enlightened society through books, storytelling and ideas in pursuit of collective progress and happiness. The festival is supported by the India Bhutan Foundation and the Tourism Council of Bhutan.

The Queen Mother, Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck

The Queen Mother is the patron of Bhutan Echoes, and an accomplished author. Her Majesty, in order to broaden the horizon of Bhutanese writers and literature lovers, co-founded the Mountain Echoes Literature Festival, now Bhutan Echoes: Drukyl's Literature Festival, a yearlong celebration of literature and the arts in the kingdom of Bhutan. Her Majesty is the author of "Of Rainbow and Clouds", "Treasures of the Thunder Dragon" A Portrait of Bhutan" and "Dochula: A Spiritual Abode in Bhutan."

Dolma Roder, Bhutan Echoes Director

She is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the Royal Thimphu College where she teaches undergraduate students. She earned her PhD in socio-cultural anthropology from Arizona State University. She is also involved in Riyang Books, a family run publishing house based in Thimphu. In this role she has edited a collection of Bhutanese poetry and a book documenting her ancestral home in Ogyen Choling, Bumthang.

Tshering Tashi , Bhutan Echoes Director

He is a writer based in Thimphu and Paro.

Sonam Wangmo Dukpa, Bhutan Echoes Director,

She is a development worker and a writer. She currently is on the Strategy Committee, and is the co-founder of Greener Pastures, an initiative that raises awareness on environmental issues, at The British School in New Delhi. She is also a Director for Drukyl's Literature Festival: Bhutan Echoes, and an advisor to GOKAB, a community centre for learning in Bhutan. She has worked on development projects based in Zimbabwe, Afghanistan and Myanmar. She has a MA in economic development, and a MFA in Creative Writing and Literature. She is the recipient of the Leslie Epstein Global Fellowship award at Boston University. Her non-fiction articles have appeared in Kuensel, Yeewong magazine and The Raven. She has taught fiction writing workshops at Boston University, The British School, Royal Thimphu College and at Mountain Echoes. She is presently working on finishing a book of fictional stories set in South Asia.

Lopen (Dr) Karma Phuntso, Scholar

He is a Bhutanese scholar who specializes in Buddhism, Tibetan, and Himalayan Studies. His book, The History of Bhutan, has been called "the first book to offer a comprehensive history of Bhutan in English." He is also the President and founder of Loden Foundation, a leading educational, entrepreneurial, and cultural initiative in Bhutan.

Kunzang Choden, Writer

She is the first Bhutanese woman to write a novel in English. "The Circle of Karma," published in 2005 is her first novel. Kunzang has been writing on Bhutanese oral traditions, folklore, and women. Her latest books are "Monk Chasing Monkey" and "Ashi Tshomen: The Mermaid Princess."

Kezang Dechen Choden, Poet

She first published her collection of poetry when she was only 16. The is titled "Impressions," it is a collection of 25 poems with 25 different paintings that Kezang grew to love during her stay at VAST Bhutan.

This festival is an annual feature, mentored by an eminent panel of literature loving personalities. Festival Director, Janhavi Prasada, is also the founder of the Nainital Book Club. Himalayan Echoes is an initiative that is supported by the Nainital Book Club members in a big way and you will hear some of them speak at the festival. Says Janhavi, **"This year's festival is dedicated to the Himalayas and its importance in our ecosystem – our lives, livelihood, environment, our survival. The coming together of mountain festivals of Nepal, Bhutan and India is of utmost significance for the future of the terrain. Through our literary platforms we can reach out to like-minded individual to create a common goal of**

spreading the importance of the mountains in our lives, and how best we can conserve not only the physical presence but how best we can learn live in harmony with the mountains.

A powerful line up of women voices will take centerstage at the festival. The sessions supported by IICR are curated by the Nepal Literature Festival, the Drukyl's Literature Festival, Bhutan Echoes, Hanifl Center's Mussoorie Mountain Festival and of course Himalayan Echoes Kumaon Festival of Literature & Arts in Nainital. I wish we could have this conjoining of Himalayan Festivals in its physical avatar right here at Abbotsford Nainital, but we must wait it out till the next year. And hopefully we can have all our speakers, festival directors, musicians, poets, authors, our audience, aspiring writers, and mountain lovers here in person in 2022. "

Namita Gokhale, an acclaimed author of over 20 books mostly set in the Himalayas and also the founder and co-director of Jaipur Literature Festival and a mentor to Himalayan Echoes C.A.L.M says " "

The festival aims to:

- Bring together a consortium of mountain festivals under HIMALAYAN ECHOES : C.A.L.M
- Create a space for meaningful, effective mountain dialogue
- Involve all age groups of readers, experts and writers
- Promote regional writers and mountain related books, poems and research works
- Bring together the inter-connected cultures of the region.
- Encourage regional art, craft, farming produce inspired by fair sustainable work
- ethics
- Promote local talent in music and art

Online design for the festival has been done by Kapil Dhawan of Tree Design and his team. On ground Festival Co-ordinator Ankita Jain, Media and Outreach by Kiwa Singh of Mountain Village Foundation, Sukhmoy Mazumdar and Areeb Khan.

Asiya zahoor