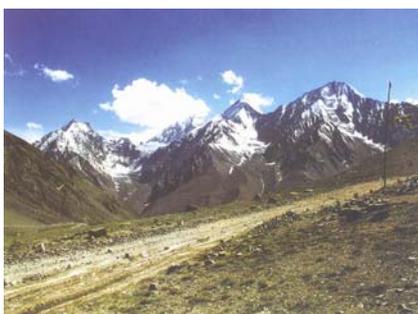


**Geomorphology and Landforms – Illustrations from the Himachal Himalaya.** O. N. Bhargava, Sanjay Kumbkarni and A. D. Ahluwalia. Technological Publications, 15/19, Kalidas Road, Dehradun 248 001, Uttarakhand. 2010. vii + 212 pp. Price not mentioned.

The preface of the book has the following disclaimer ‘this book is by no means a textbook on geomorphology but a sort of geomorphology made easy’. The authors have expressed the hope that the book shall be a resource for illustrations for future textbooks on geomorphology and also be a Coffee Table book, besides serving as an essential companion book for geotourists. The main purpose of this book, it appears to me, was to publish a collection of photographs that were taken by the three authors during their many years of field work in several parts of the Himalaya. Of the 212 pages, there are 30 pages of photoplates on glaciers, 29 on rivers, 10 on lacustrine landforms, 12 on meteoric agencies controlled landforms, and 41 on other aspects, adding up to 122 pages of photoplates.

To this collection of photoplates, a geological background has been provided in part 1 of the book. However, the treatment of the geological background has little to do with the present day geomorphology and or geomorphic evolution of the Himalaya. Instead, it essentially represents a stratigraphic account of the



Glaciated terrain in the Chandra Valley.

Himachal Himalaya giving brief descriptions of the Palaeoproterozoic, Mesoproterozoic, Neoproterozoic, Palaeozoic of the lesser Himalaya and Neoproterozoic to Mesozoic of the Tethyan Himalaya. The Late Cretaceous to Pleistocene has been described together for the lesser and the Tethyan Himalaya. In this part, statements such as ‘during the vast gap in sedimentation spanning Late–Early Cambrian to Palaeocene, the area of the lesser Himalaya up to the Tethyan sea ought to have acquired a mature topography with its own river systems’ are difficult to follow. This statement implies the presence of pre-Palaeocene valley fill deposits in the lesser Himalaya of which there is no evidence. Also, it is of no relevance to the geomorphology and landforms of the Himalaya.

Professionals and amateurs would have been interested to learn about the stages through which the present elevation of the Himalaya has been attained. Instead, one finds an insipid sentence stating that the present height of the Himalaya was acquired mainly during the Pleistocene. The authors recognize, as has been done extensively, that the rise of the Himalaya was episodic but have missed the opportunity to present the various fascinating aspects of Himalayan morphogenesis.

The second and main part of the book begins with a rather cryptic page and a half introduction. Both the initiated and the uninitiated reader would have benefited from a geomorphological map of this region, besides a few detailed geomorphological maps of selected key areas illustrating various geomorphic domains. Also, geomorphology in the Himalaya is essentially a coupled response to tectonics and climate in the Neogene, and more specifically in the Pleistocene. No attempt has been made to provide a synopsis of the tectonics and climate of the region – the drivers of geomorphic development.

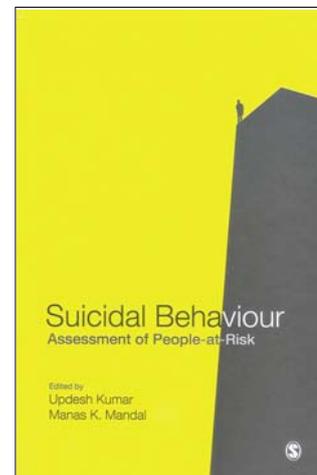
The other chapters in this section include a description of glaciers, rivers, lakes, meteoric agencies (wind, rain, frost, diurnal), besides two other chapters on the lithological and structural controlled landforms and the geoenvironment. The final chapter deals with a one-page summary of the geomorphic evolution. In this summary, the authors have made reference to a relict topography in the lesser Himalayan part between the late Cambrian and the Cretaceous, and then

mention rivers as the first agency to have modelled the geomorphology at the beginning of the uplift of the Himalaya, and then in the next sentence deal with Pleistocene glaciations. One is left wondering whether this is a summary or an exercise in mental gymnastics.

I am not sure whether I would want to recommend this book to any specific readership except those who are perhaps searching for a random collection of geological photographs from the Himalaya.

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**Suicidal Behaviour: Assessment of People-at-Risk.** Updesh Kumar and Manas K. Mandal (eds). SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044. 2010. xxv + 378 pp. Price: Rs 795.

Increasing rates of suicide around the world, have made it today, a major public health problem. In India, recent figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) indicate that every four minutes one person takes his life and one in three is likely to be below 30 years of age. Assessment of risk for suicide, in particular, is complex and challenging and any attempt to throw some light on this issue is to be commended. The book under review is divided into two sections: the first focuses on theoretical issues related to

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risk assessment and the second deals with the subject closer to the title of the book; assessment of people at risk.

Although a few chapters, especially the introductory ones, deal with topics that one would find elsewhere, there are several that stand out because they are unique to this compilation. Cultural issues in suicide risk assessment (Colucci, Chapter 6) and Suicidal ideation and behaviour among Asian adolescents (Leung *et al.*, Chapter 15) are two such chapters. The first includes recent cross cultural data, including a sample from India, and the second cites studies done in India, although its focus is on research from the South East Asian region. Both, however, provide the reader with a good socio-cultural orientation for working in the area of suicide, especially with adolescents. A useful chapter for new researchers in the field and for academicians is the one on Suicide: Its assessment and prediction (Mukhopadhyay, Chapter 10), which exhaustively lists the scales for the assessment of suicidal risk along with their psychometric properties. However, it does not provide any information on how these tools, developed in the West, fare in Indian or Asian populations.

An extremely relevant topic of how suicides are reported by the media, their role in mitigating or escalating the problem and how the media can be used to play a more proactive and responsible role is dealt with in the chapter on Reporting suicide: impact on suicidal behaviour (Kidwai, Chapter 9). The suicidal soldier (Mehlum and Nrugham, Chapter 14) is another interesting chapter dealing with suicide in the defence forces. There has been increasing concern in India with regard to the escalation in suicide rates among security personnel and this chapter throws light on the subject.

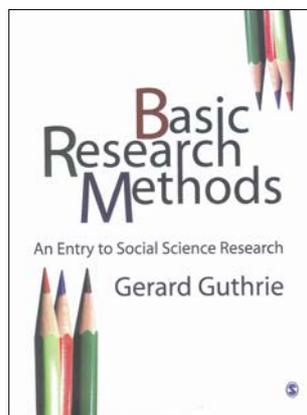
The fact that the contributing authors in the book are from the West and from India is both the strength and weakness of the book. While, on the one hand, it gives a strong cross-cultural perspective, at the same time it makes for rather uneven reading in terms of writing style and quality. One would have hoped that a book edited from India would have had a greater focus on the issues regarding suicide risk in India. In fact, one of the authors in the book (Colucci, Chapter 6, p. 123) states that many countries, including India, have developed their own suicide risk assessment scales. However,

the book does not throw any light on this subject.

After the compilation of articles on *Suicide Prevention* edited by Vijayakumar, Orient Longman Limited, Chennai, 2003, this is to my knowledge the first to appear with a strong Asian focus. It is in this context, that the efforts made by the editors Updesh Kumar and Manas Mandal are to be appreciated. The book will be of interest to a broad readership, including students of behavioural and social sciences, medical and mental health professionals and researchers in the area of suicide. It is, therefore, a welcome addition for any library.

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**Basic Research Methods: An Entry to Social Science Research.** Gerard Guthrie. SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044. 2010. xix + 221 pp. Price: Rs 395.

It is easy to agree with the author, as described in the preface, that this book is intended for novice researchers. It focuses on the fundamental practices to be followed when doing research in Social Sciences. The author uses language that is clear and lucid in describing research methodologies and how to go about being a researcher who is ethical and having a clear proposal. The

author provides knowledge on how to go about executing a research project, distilled from 40 years of experience in various research projects (academic, government and industrial consultancy), he has associated with.

It is a handy book for young researchers. Apart from the standard topics of Social Science research methods, within its 221 pages it briefly introduces the student reader to complex themes like philosophical approaches such as positivism and ethical deviations such as plagiarism. It also describes terms like commonsense, triangulation, social science English, researcher persistence and researcher power, and influence when it comes to dissemination and sharing of results, although very briefly. Additionally, this book provides step by step pointers to avoid the pitfalls that cost the time and energy of any research student. The book has a glossary and provides information like names of journals that focus on Asia-Pacific, South and Southeast Asia regions. Other appreciative features of this book include the list of topics to be covered given at the beginning of the chapter, examples provided in boxes throughout the chapters, summary and annotated references at the end of each chapter, making it learner friendly.

Looking at this book from the research methods knowledge it imparts, it is true that most books on research methods are either generic or discipline/subject-specific. The book under review belongs to the first category. It adopts an 'inductive' and 'how to' approach. It brings together knowledge of currently prevalent research methods commonly used in Social Sciences. Although its title indicates it as a book on research methods additionally, it has adopted a holistic and unified approach, and at times a project management approach.

The book has four sections that deal with the four major tasks in the research process. The first section entitled 'the problem' includes four chapters that explain succinctly, points to be cognizant of while selecting a research problem. The first chapter describes briefly the approaches to research. It includes the pure applied policy and action model (PAPA) of research, the stages of research and some actual research projects the author was involved with as examples. School and education systems and crime rate analytics examples from Papua New Guinea run through the book.