



IISER Bhopal

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Imperial Science, the Organic Movement and the Path to Shangri-La, 1905-1969



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VENUE: L2

Abstract: *This talk will examine the role that British agricultural and nutritional science in India played in the development of the 20th century transnational organic movement. It will demonstrate how science, which was shaped by imperial ideology and institutional priorities, was “translated” by U.S. and British-based soil protection advocates to promote organic farming and reject industrialized food production. It discusses how these figures also used the Hunzas, a community in British India (later Pakistan), as an example of a “tribe” whose supposed health and vigour could be ascribed to their holistic farming techniques and diets. The talk investigates how U.S. authors and film directors later represented Hunza as a “Shangri La” where the inhabitants lived blissfully long and contented lives. Finally it demonstrates how North American lifestyle gurus later claimed to consumers that if they followed the habits and diets of the Hunzas they could experience prolonged youth, health and happiness.*



Dr Ashok Malhotra

Ashok Malhotra is Senior Lecturer in British Imperial History within the School of History, Anthropology, Politics and Philosophy at Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK. He is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Dept. of HSS, IISER Bhopal (July-August 2024). He is the author of *Making British Indian Fictions, 1772-1823* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and has published articles in various peer-reviewed academic journals. Malhotra is currently completing a book for UCL Press entitled *Imperial Science, the Organic Movement and the Path to Shangri-La, 1905-1969* which examines the role that British imperial science in India played in shaping the 20th Century organic movement.