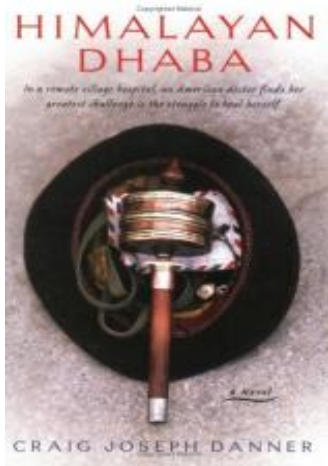


Himalayan Dhaba: A Novel

by Craig Danner



About the Book

Mary, a newly widowed American doctor, travels to a remote hospital high in the Indian Himalayas to work with a colleague of her late husband. She arrives to find this other doctor missing, the hospital abandoned, and herself the only medical provider within a hundred miles.

Caught between shattering loneliness and harrowing self-doubt, she struggles to overcome daunting medical and cultural obstacles in a yearlong odyssey of healing and redemption that connects her with a cast of unexpected characters.

There is Amod, the waiter in the local *dhaba*, who secretly adores and watches out for the doctor. Phillip is a young and lonely British traveler who lands in the doctor's care before he is kidnapped deep into the snowbound Himalayan interior. Antone is the aging kidnapper whose every plan goes sour. And finally there is Meena?abandoned by her family to serve the abusive men of an isolated road crew?who finds the courage to guide herself and young Phillip to their salvation. As the lives of these characters intersect with her own, Mary learns not only to heal others, but also to heal herself.

Himalayan Dhaba leads the reader through the mountains of India and across the rugged terrain of the human heart on a journey that will long be remembered.

Discussion Guide

1. Some would suggest it is difficult for male authors to give an authentic voice to female characters. Are the characters of Mary and Meena successfully drawn?

3. Does gender play an important role in Mary's journey in this novel? How would the story have been different if Mary had been a man? If Phillip had been a woman?
4. Descent and redemption are major themes of **Himalayan Dhaba**. How do the main characters' paths differ? What does redemption look like to Mary, Amod, Meena, and Phillip?
4. At the end of the novel, Phillip stands with his hand out to Mary, announcing his recovery. How do you imagine his long winter with the holy *baba* has changed Phillip?
5. Ravens appear throughout the novel. What, if anything, do they symbolize?
6. What was your impression of the physical setting of **Himalayan Dhaba**? Do you imagine this is a beautiful or an ugly place? Would you like to visit this area?
7. Communication and miscommunication is another major theme of this novel. How is it that these characters could so dramatically affect each others' lives, even when they could barely communicate with each other verbally?
8. The author leaves the reader to imagine his or her ending to Antone's story. What do you think happens to him next?
9. Violence shapes the lives of both Meena and Manu, yet both of them respond to it with more violence. Are their responses justifiable? Did you see alternative solutions for either of them?
10. Physical hunger is a recurrent theme in this novel. What does food mean to Amod? To Mary? To Meena? What is food to people of the West that it is not to the indigenous people of this novel and vice versa?
11. Discuss the ways in which religion and faith are addressed in **Himalayan Dhaba**. Some characters are motivated by Christianity, others by Hinduism. Are there characters in the novel to whom spirituality seems absent?
12. Much is devoted in **Himalayan Dhaba** to birth, but beyond that, little is seen of parents and children interacting with each other. What do we know of Mary's parents from the novel? Do you think their influence, or lack thereof, in the novel played any part in the decision she has made at the novel's end?

Author Bio

In the early 1990s, Craig Danner and his wife found themselves the primary medical practitioners in a remote and rudimentary hospital high in the Indian Himalayas. Working without modern medicines and equipment, they struggled with language and cultural barriers, forged deep friendships with the hospital staff, and did their best to treat thousands of local villagers and wayward travelers. During that long winter in the Himalayas, when the snows closed the passes and the hospital became quiet for several weeks, Craig Danner began writing a novel that has already won both critical acclaim and a Book of the Year Award from the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association.

Craig Danner is a native Oregonian and fourth-generation bootmaker, who holds a license to practice medicine as a physician assistant. He studied creative writing at Macalester and The Evergreen State colleges, and has lived and worked in Indonesia, the South Pacific, India, Nepal, Mexico, and Ecuador. "I started writing **Himalayan Dhaba** during

the winter of 1991, while my wife and I were working in a hospital in the mountains of Northern India. The story began as a screenplay. The world we were immersed in was so visually stunning, it seemed the perfect setting for a movie. But as the characters evolved and their stories took hold of the writing, they demanded the time and development that can only be accomplished in a novel. I still think it would make a great movie, but it's an even better book."

The author lives with his wife on a small farm in rural Oregon. He is at work on his next novel.

Critical Praise

"Don't miss it. Mr. Danner is a born storyteller."

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