

Mountain Literature: Mount Everest in the eyes of the two Nepalese Climbers

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Received: March 5, 2021

Accepted: May 7, 2021

Published: December 24, 2021

Abstract

This article looks at the Mountain Literature of Nepal, based on the writings of two Nepalese mountaineers of Mount Everest, Jamling Tenzing Norgay, and Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa. It presents their feelings, observations, and the challenges they faced while climbing up the peak.

The Humans' appetite for travelling, their spirit of adventure and exploration, and their desire to know and conquer the unknown have inspired many to climb the mountains. Though Mountaineering is a daring adventure, many climbers are attracted to it. The mountaineers try to test their courage and stamina. For that, they risk their lives in snow, bone-chilling avalanche, and sharp windy weather to reach the summit. They know that getting the pinnacle is not always easy, but it is worthwhile.

The magic of Mount Everest attracts the attention of the mountaineers. Its beauty, mystery, and majesty make Nepal, a center of attraction. For all, the mountains are the abode of Gods and Goddesses. They are the sources of peace, happiness, power, faith, and enlightenment.

The Mountaineering narratives have contributed much to the development of Nepalese mountain literature. It is a rich source of information, that is beneficial not only for the Mt. Everest climbers but also for the lover of mountains.

Key Words: Mount Everest, Ascent, Soul, Bliss, Spiritualism.

Introduction

Travel and mobility, the desire to explore new places, and the spirit of adventure are great joy in human life. The history of traveling begins with early Human civilization, but mountain expedition starts only from the 18th century. The main aim of Mountaineering is to ascend the Himalayan

peak. Nepal has numerous mountains of varying heights and dimensions. In Nepal, Mountaineering starts in the middle of the 20th century. Nepal's mountainous landscapes have glaciers, falls, and high passes that make the natural sceneries enchanting. These are the core of attraction for adventure throughout the world.

Mountain literature is about the mountain narratives, with information that includes the strange events that have occurred at the peak. It contains the experiences, feelings, observations, and challenges of the climbers. In other words, it is the literary history of the mighty- mountains and the mountaineers. Mountaineering, climbing mountains, is a risky and challenging game. HMG/MoCTCA (2002) in its publication, *Some Provisions related to Mountain Tourism in Nepal* defines that "Mountaineering is the sport of climbing mountains or the exploration of the high mountain for scientific purpose or simply conquest. The term like the activity, is capable of wide interpretation but basic to it is the acknowledgment of the same degree of difficulty, only overcome by skill on the part of the mountaineer. Mountaineering involves four major activities: walking, rock-climbing, snow or ice climbing, and navigation. To these may be added mountain camping. Ski mountaineering, mountain rescue, high altitude planning... .."(p. 223). So, Mountaineering is an adventurous activity. It needs great strength, devotion, and determination.

Tak Raj Gurung, in his book, *Mountain Tourism in Nepal* (2007) writes, "The Himalayas are a symbol of adventure that is wedded to hard work, patient organization, continued experience and unwavering devotion to a successful end. There is a possibility of everything that one gets lost in the heavenly thinking and spiritual awakening"(p. 91). Without hard Labor and devotion, no one can reach the summit. The mountain has captured the dream, desires, and imaginations of men. It's not only about putting hands and feet on snow but finally reaching the summit. On the way to mountain peaks, the climbers behold the panoramic view of snow-capped mountains, crevasses, fountains, and glaciers. Although being a dangerous adventure, many climbers from home and abroad, visit Nepal to see the world's highest peaks, drink its beauty, and test their endurance. Then, they mention their experience in the form of narration.

Nepalese mountaineers, Jamling Tenzing Norgay and Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa climbed Mount Everest in 1996 and 1995 and made their journey memorable by narrating in different books. Jamling Tenzing Norgay's *Touching My Father's Soul* tells the story of his participation in the successful ascent of Mount Everest. Jamling writes in his cover page of his book, "As climbing leader of the 1996 Everest IMAX expedition led by David Breashears, Jamling Norgay was able to follow the pathway of his legendary mountaineer father, Tenzing Norgay, who with Sir Edmund Hillary was the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest, in 1953". Jamling interlinks his story of ascent with his father. Similarly, Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa in her book, *Forty Years in the Mountains* records her tale of joy and sorrow. The Kathmandu Post (1995) writes on her cover page, "The author's account of Mountaineering and Skiing in several European countries gives readers a comparative picture of Mountaineering in Nepal and abroad, and underlines avenues of immediate intervention and improvement. To those who want to have in-depth knowledge about high Himalayan trekking and climbing, this book will prove handy". So, her book celebrates her odyssey of success.

Jamling Tenzing Norgay's and Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa's primary intension of mountaineering is to put their feet at the summit and show love and respect to Mt. Everest. They see and worship Mt. Everest as Goddess. Nepalese worship high Himalayan peaks as a holy place, the abode of Lord Shiva and Parvati. In *Himalayas, An Aesthetic Adventure* (2003), Pratapaditya Pal writes, "Mount Kailash in West Tibet is the abode of Shiva, whose impish followers roam the mountains. And lifting still higher, you should be welcomed by Kailasa the mirror for goddesses...[where] Gauri, her hand held by Dhiva who has tossed aside His armlet of snakes, . . on that pleasure mount..." (p. 15). According to Hindu mythology, Lord Shiva and Parvathi are like the father and the mother for whole Humans and creatures on earth. Jamling Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, also in his book, reveals that Mount Everest is the symbol of Goddess and to respect, for blessings and approval, he is taking a risk. He gives credit to his father and says that he is climbing Mount Everest to touch his father's soul that is in his mind and dreams. Jamling describes his passion for climbing because of his father. He writes, "There is something about my father, and I feel a family connection to the mountain. I think it was written on my forehead at birth" (p. 21). He regards mountain climbing as his heredity work.

Like his father, Tenzing Norgay thinks mountain journey as the journey for spiritual enlightenment because it brings an exquisite sense of peace to his heart. Maxine Meilleur, in his book, *What is Spiritualism?* (2018), writes, "Spiritualism is NOT a phenomenon of the New Age movement, it's not an 'a cafeteria-style' belief system in which practitioners take a little of this religion and a little of that one. Spiritualism is NOT for those who are "spiritual but not religious". Spiritualism is not about talking to the dead; it is a philosophy for the living" (p. 57). So, spiritualism teaches about life. It says that there is more to life than material life. It soothes people and gives utmost mental satisfaction. Jamling gets peace and complete satisfaction at the top. He knows that people have different motives for mountaineering. Among many he writes, "One reason why people go into the mountain is to experience the purity of these elements- these goddesses- in their unobstructed form. In the mountains, worldly attachments are left behind, and in the absence of material distractions, we are opened up to spiritual thought"(P. 218). So mountains are the symbol of spiritualism which guides us to the right path for living. He asserts, "The image of Miyolangsangma, the protector goddess who resides on Everest, leaped to mind. My father believed that Miyolangsangma was the deity who had guided him and granted him safe passage up the mountain"(P. 61). In climbing, every action becomes significant because each effort is a matter of life and death.

On the other hand, Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa is a government job-holder, worked with eight ministers and seven secretaries in Nepal. She is known as a jewel of Solukhumbu, according to [www. soluonline. com](http://www.soluonline.com), written on her cover page. Her autobiography, *Forty Years in the Mountains* (2016) is a tale of her success flecked by untellable struggle. In the author's note, she writes, "I am progeny to a Himalayan hamlet. My ancestors and my birthplace have an integral connection with the Himalayas. I have set my foot on all terrains, from the lowest bases on land to the highest altitudes of the world". Born in Mushey, half an hour from Lukla, she was a daughter of a mountain climber, and has taken courageous tours of many high peaks like Mount Everest, Dhaulagiri, Makalu, Lhotse, etc. Lhakpa's father used to tell stories about his mountaineering and all other members would listen curiously. When she was young, she insisted on her father to go with him to Thyangboche, a seven days' tour with a group of tourists. She had joined the group of porters, helped in the kitchen, getting the vegetables ready, and making beds for the tourists. She had neither climbing shoes

nor clothes, even though she was was excited in climbing. From her early life, she cherished travelling, so she has climbed different mountains and even Mount Everest with her friends. Although the uphill and downhill journey was troublesome, she was thrilled and excited that made her path easier. She still remembers and writes, "We often bumped our toes against stones and stumps. This too was because we did not have proper shoes and stockings" (p. 69). These hardships made her further bold and assertive.

For Nepalese, Mt. Everest is the symbol of the Goddess. It is Sagarmatha to us (Nepalese), Chomolungma to Sherpas, and Jomolungma to Tibetans, and the translation of the name is Mother Goddess of the world. Mount Everest today, is not only the highest peak in the world, it is a yearning, the soul of people, and a sort of dream for the adventure lovers. The climbers want to climb the highest mountain to experience the purity and gain merit in mind and body. They achieve solace by putting their feet at the top of the highest peaks. Both, Jamling and Laphka perceive Mt. Everest as a mother who understands, guides, and protects us regardless of where in the universe we find ourselves. She frequently write in their books that they reached the summit only to respect Miyolangsangma (p. 305). Sherpa, including other climbers, has great respect and care for Miyolangsangma. They believe anger, jealousy, lust, pride should be avoided on the mountain because that offends and defiles Miyolangsangma. This positivity brings harmony between the people and the mountain. Thus, we assert that many climbers scramble Nepal's snow-capped Himalayas to experience the goddess's purity and bring peace and solace to their minds and heart.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research is to find out how the Nepalese mountaineers perceive Mount Everest and why? It takes the narrations of the two mountaineers, JamlingTenzingNorgay and Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa.

Research methodology

This study takes two books written by two Nepalese mountaineers, JamlingTenzing Norgay and Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa, on Mount Everest. First of all, it examines their books to understand their stories. Secondly, it observes and analyzes how they delineate Mt. Everest in their texts. For that, I have to go through their stories of joy, hardships, and challenges. In this sense, this research is both descriptive and analytical. To make

the research effective and productive, it will also take the help of related websites on mountain climbing in Nepal.

Result and Findings

Jamling Tenzing Norgay and Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa regard the Himalayan Region as a heavenly place, and the dwelling place of Gods and Goddess. The glory of the Himalayas is in many holy books like Bedas, Puranas, Mahabharata, etc. They claim that it is the place for penance, meditation, and self-realization. The highest Himalayan peak, Mt. Everest is the symbol of the Goddess. She is Gauri or Parvati for Hindu and Miyolangsangma for Sherpa, who describes her as an inexhaustible giver. Jamling had a dream of climbing Mount Everest because of the "activity" of Miyolangsangma whom he writes, "She continually increases the longevity, wealth, and power of those who worship her" (p. 220). Besides that, he is eager to climb by his father, Tenzing Norgay Sherpa. He writes, "There is something about my father, and I feel a family connection to the mountain. I think it was written on my forehead at birth" (p. 21). He has a passion for reaching the top. He wants to touch his father's soul. Likewise, Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa's climbing is not only related to her interest. It's the demand of the country, community, and family, she declares. In this sense, she writes in, *Forty Years in the Mountain*, "I had first come here, carrying others' loads. This time, all I had with me was my bag, a light one though. I had no physical burden on my head, yet I was even more pressed by responsibility, sense of duty, challenges ahead and my obligations, the entire nation was looking at me. Every single Nepali was looking at me with high hopes. My community, my family, and my society had sent me with utter confidence to step on the top of Mount Everest and return with the glory of success" (p. 235). Moreover, the intriguing monasteries that adorn the slopes, the wonderful terraced hillsides, and picturesque scenes of the Himalayan Region attract her. We salute her high-spirited power and bravery.

Both climbers' descriptions of hardships and thrills are factual and vivid. Besides physical challenges, there expedition teaches an the enduring lesson of faith and humility. While climbing, the climbers have to face many problems, so they sit for a moment, breathe deeply and pray to Miyolangsangma for extra strength. This is Nepalese tradition and culture to worship and pray nature as Gods and Goddesses. Jamling, frequently prays Mt. Everest as the Goddess and hopeful to her so he writes, "Indeed,

Miyolangsangma's 'activity' is described as inexhaustible giving. She continually increases the longevity, wealth, and power of those who worship her. It is the power of Miyolangsangma that has delivered us all the Foreign tourists and their wealth. Faith is what she asks for in return" (p. 220). Jamling shows great faith and respect for Goddess, and silently appeals to Miyolangsangma to forgive all for their attack and thank her for allowing many to live.

Mt. Everest's magic grasps the Human soul; it casts an intoxicating spell over the people. It brings a magnificent sense of peace and happiness to the human heart. The climbers climb Everest to get merit in life because they know that it is the source of knowledge, power, purity, and faith. The adventurous souls achieve a sense of fulfillment only after ascending the highest peak in the world. For them, the high mountains are a different world in themselves because from them, the mountain lovers can learn, take and absorb many things.

Today, the beauty, the unspoiled, and unpolluted state of the mountain is assaulted from every side. Mt Everest is facing innumerable problems because of the excessive mass of the climbers. The mountaineers ignore the Himalayas's environment, that is very fragile. Even the hills and mountains are disrupted and polluted by rubbish materials. The rubbish mostly consists of oxygen cylinders, food cans, torn tents and ropes, human waste, and even dead bodies. Every base camp looks like a tent city. Though Mountaineering has brought both positive, and negative changes in the mountain region, the positive impacts outweigh the negative ones. Hence, the mountaineers' ascent on Mt. Everest expedition is for experience, recognition, and to touch and respect goddess and then ultimately achieving solace in their mind and heart.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Mt. Everest is a sacred place. In the Himalayas, *An Aesthetic Adventure*, Pratapaditya Pal writes (2003), "All over the earth, mountains are held sacred, but none with more passionate favour than the Himalayas. Kalidasa (c. 400 C. E), the greatest of India's poets, even characterized them as "stairway to Heaven" (p. 15). So, the Himalayas are spiritually enlightened places. They are divine and untainted. Lhakpa Sherpa realizes and reflects the same ideas in her book. She writes, "The Himalayan Mountains are holy

spots; we the Sherpa worship them. Before climbing any mountain, we worship it begging apologizes on having to step on it on the top, and asking it to absolve the sin we were going to incur from this particular violence (p. 254)". The climbers climb to the summit to see, respect and liberate them from their sins.

Triumphing over a peak is a matter of challenge because the route is deteriorating and the weather is not cooperating. As a female climber, Lhakpa Phuti has many personal problems that she has to tackle on her way. In *Forty Years in the Mountain*, she mentions her memorable problem when she reaches Camp II. She writes, "I menstruated. Acute headache rendered me extremely weak. The pain soon spread to the entire body, and I felt like sleeping all through the day. I was alone in the tent. Several thoughts popped in and out of my mind. The Himalayan Mountains are the holy spots" (p. 254). She is in a dilemma where to throw those sinful pieces of the pad. Against she writes, "How could I leave there a thing that could thwart the piousness of the Himalayas? She feels a deep sense of regret. Anyway, she buried under a stone and prayed, "God absolved me of my sin (p. 255). " It shows the deep-rooted notion on religion, Gods, and Goddesses. So, Mount Everest is the place of Gods and Goddess, pure and holy so impure persons should not touch it.

Both mountaineers regard their attempt on Mt. Everest as a pilgrimage. The spiritual force in them springs from their belief in Buddhism. The Buddha and the dharma teachings are the core of Buddhism, which takes them to a spiritual path that they believe. Jamling mentions in his book, "Buddhist teachings and beliefs were all I could find to guide me through the tragedy, and I could feel my faith in the growing"(p. 196). To avoid obstacles, he visits his Buddhist saints for their advice. He becomes busy in offerings, rituals, and praying to different deities. He believes in Buddhist teachings that evoke misfortune happens less often to those whose motives are pure.

Being a Sherpa, Jamling, unlike other climbers, deals with the Sherpa's world and shows great respect to them. In Nepal, the mountain is the land of Sherpa. Jamling writes in *Touching My Father's Soul*, "I am a son of the mountains, but I know many of you regard them as your spiritual home" (p. 310). He has great love and respect for the Himalaya. Sian Pritchard-Jones and Bob Gibbons write on the cover page of *Trekking around Everest*

(2019),” The Sherpa people, who live in the shadow of Everest, have an amazing wealth of cultural attractions and centuries-old traditions”. The Sherpa pass their long life playing with snow, climbing high hills, and nurturing the hilly mountains. They are experts in Mountaineering and trekking at high altitude. M. S. Kohli, in *Sherpas The Himalayan Legends* (2003) writes, “If God had not made the Sherpas, Everest might yet be unclimbed. The Sherpas belong to the Himalayas.... ”(p. 3). They play a significant role in mountain climbing, which is always challenging and problematic, and that needs many people of different qualities, and skills to supply equipment, food, staff, along with other necessary things. The Sherpa are always ready to carry the loads, fix ropes and do the hard Labor of fixing camp. Jamling Tenzing Norgay (2001) writes in his book, “ Sherpa do virtually all of the load-carrying through the Icefall, the most hazardous stretch of the mountain. In 1953 seventeen Sherpa delivered 750 pounds of food and equipment to the south Col, at 26, 000 feet, a feat that made my father proud, as I am” (p. 91-92). The Sherpa are hard Worker and for them climbing the mountain is the way a child climbs into the lap of its mother. They love mountains and take pride in their work, but their primary motivation is financially assisting. Overall, Jamling Norgay follows the path of his renowned mountaineer father, Tenzing Norgay, and weaves his beautiful story with him.

Both books illuminate the mountaineers’ personal opinions on Mount Everest and their adventurous achievement. Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa enlightens us with her sorrows and challenges. She frequently remembers the nights which were quite painful. The legs had turns stiff with cold, and even unable to manage a short nap. They have to drink water frequently to save from altitude sickness, but as a result of it, they have to urinate quite often. For Women, urinating everywhere is not easy. So, she writes, “We were supposed to wear thick clothes of four to five types. Taking off the dresses and pulling them back was a painful task every time. Some clothes had fasteners, while Others had buttons or strings” (p. 239). The difficulty with clothes becomes even more acute as they reach higher and higher. Despite the hardships, she admits that she touches the destinations earlier than others. She writes, “I admit that I had a different style of walking. I walked straight, and when felt like sitting, I sat down abruptly. I never lazed around, nor ever vacillated. Therefore, I often walked ahead of my

friends" (p. 234). Her strong determination and dedication make her think that she is heading towards the pinnacle to be the first Nepali woman to climb the highest peak in the world.

Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa also shows her love and sympathy to the Sherpa for their contribution - as cooks, guides, and high altitude Workers. She shows special gratitude towards them and writes, "The Sherpa have a lot of responsibilities in their hands. Every second, they become mindful of the safety of the tourists in their group. Yet, many of them reach home bare-hand" (p. 244). She explains the miserable life and the situation of the Sherpa. Although their life is full of trouble, they are very warm-hearted and hospitable to the climbers. Their smiling faces appeal to national and international visitors to visit Nepal and climb the highest Himalayas. In addition to this, her book shows her attachment to national luminary Pasang Lhamu Sherpa and their joint expedition. In "Alone towards the Summit" she mentions Pasang's death. She asserts, "Pasang Lhamu had left me behind. I looked in the direction of Camp 1V, where she had gone, never to come back to us again" (p. 264). She further says, "Pasang conquered the summit and this was their common dream. All came down one after another but Pasang Lhamu did not. The writer looked at the peak that was in front of her. It was still there but those who had gone there did not return" (p. 262). Indeed, the writer's experience is dreadful which is remarkable and unforgettable. Anyway, Mountaineering account would be vibrant and exciting to mountain lovers.

The pleasure of Mt. Everest climbing lies not only in the conquest of a peak but also in the physical and spiritual satisfaction. The high mountains are always dreadful, but they teach human beings about patience, preparation, determination, dedication, courage, etc. This positivity brings harmony between the people and the mountain. Mountaineering is not only ascending and descending, but it is also about the environment, culture, lifestyle, and economy of different people.

In conclusion, we understand that mountain literature is the narration of the mountain climbers, their adventurous lives, journeys, triumphs, and tragedies. The mountaineer's memorable moments, and happenings have contributed a lot to mountain literature. In Mountaineering, ascending

and descending is quite tough, which is as challenging as managing our life. On that account, the mountain is not just a mountain, it stands for the wheel of life, the cycle of birth and death. Anyway, Jamling's *Touching My Father's Soul* and Lhakpa Phuti's *Forty Years in the Mountains* are the sources of information and inspiration to those who love Mountain Literature and Mountaineering on Mt. Everest in near future.

Required Sample Size†								
Population Size	Confidence = 95%				Confidence = 99%			
	Margin of Error				Margin of Error			
	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	19	20	20	20	19	20	20	20
30	28	29	29	30	29	29	30	30
50	44	47	48	50	47	48	49	50
75	63	69	72	74	67	71	73	75
100	80	89	94	99	87	93	96	99
150	108	126	137	148	122	135	142	149
200	132	160	177	196	154	174	186	198
250	152	190	215	244	182	211	229	246
300	169	217	251	291	207	246	270	295
400	196	265	318	384	250	309	348	391
500	217	306	377	475	285	365	421	485
600	234	340	432	565	315	416	490	579
700	248	370	481	653	341	462	554	672
800	260	396	526	739	363	503	615	763
1,000	278	440	606	906	399	575	727	943
1,200	291	474	674	1067	427	636	827	1119
1,500	306	515	759	1297	460	712	959	1376
2,000	322	563	869	1655	498	808	1141	1785
2,500	333	597	952	1984	524	879	1288	2173
3,500	346	641	1068	2565	558	977	1510	2890
5,000	357	678	1176	3288	586	1066	1734	3842
7,500	365	710	1275	4211	610	1147	1960	5165
10,000	370	727	1332	4899	622	1193	2098	6239
25,000	378	760	1448	6939	646	1285	2399	9972
50,000	381	772	1491	8056	655	1318	2520	12455
75,000	382	776	1506	8514	658	1330	2563	13583
100,000	383	778	1513	8762	659	1336	2585	14227
250,000	384	782	1527	9248	662	1347	2626	15555
500,000	384	783	1532	9423	663	1350	2640	16055
1,000,000	384	783	1534	9512	663	1352	2647	16317
2,500,000	384	784	1536	9567	663	1353	2651	16478
10,000,000	384	784	1536	9594	663	1354	2653	16560
100,000,000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16584
300,000,000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16586

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