A string of colorful prayer flags (blue, white, red, green, yellow) flying against a clear blue sky. In the background, there are snow-capped mountains and a valley. The text 'MOUNTAIN TRAIL' is overlaid in white, serif font.

MOUNTAIN TRAIL

The Annual Publication of
Mountain Spirit: 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Mountain Spirit	3
Message from the President	4
Message from the General Secretary	6
Message from the Editor	7
Executive Members	8
Advisors	9
Articles	12
Issues of Culture, Gender, and Social Exclusion are Issues of Human Rights	12
The Middle Path	15
Village Autonomy and Environmental Governance System in the Changing Context	19
The Melamchi Project and Hyolmo Peoples	21
Customary Governance Systems Among Dolpos in Nepal	25
Woman Along the Nepal Conservation Trail	28
Herder Compensation in Everest	30
High Water	32
Not Every Sherpa Is Meant to Summit	35
Sustainable Development of Nepal Through Eco Tourism	41
Mountain Spirit Activities	43

About Mountain Spirit



Mountain Spirit is a member-based non-governmental organization that advocates for social justice, human rights, and environmental conservation by supporting indigenous mountain communities. It was registered in 1996 under the laws of Nepal by a group of like-minded people from different mountain districts. The organization aims to improve livelihoods, protect the environment, and conserve mountain cultures through capacity building, awareness, empowerment, and sustainable development initiatives with the participation of local communities.

The strength and spirit of this organization lies in its members. Mountain Spirit consists of more than one hundred members that represent 16 different mountain districts of Nepal. Members hold diverse expertise in issues related to health, education, gender sensitization, conservation, eco-tourism, community-based planning, and entrepreneurship. Its pool of experts have proven track records of successfully implementing Appreciative Participatory Planning Action (APPA), designing and conducting quantitative and qualitative research, and monitoring and evaluating projects.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear members, friends, and partners,

Mountain Spirit would like to express its gratitude to each of you: advisors, former chairs, members, support members, volunteers, and friends for their contributions.

Wherever you live, our mountain people are living in isolated places with poor infrastructure services and our indigenous mountain women are facing greater challenges. Thank you for not forgetting that the mountain is our original home.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of Mountain Spirit's partners and supporters: Mountain Spirit Deutschland, American Himalayan Foundation (AHF), Thame Sherpa Heritage Fund (TSHF), Sagarmatha National Park, WWF Nepal, Snow Leopard Conservancy-US, World Education, Namaste Nepal, The Mountain Institute (TMI), all four Snow Leopard Saving and Credit groups of the Everest region, and all government line agencies for their help, partnership, and professional journey together.



Despite the recent challenges, struggles, and tragedies that have struck Nepal, we have stood strong. I offer my deepest condolences to those who have passed due to the recent, tragic landslides and floods. I would like to take the time to especially pass my condolences to friends and families of Mrs. Suzi Dunsmore, Ang Diku Sherpa, and many Nepalese weavers and friends.

I would also like to acknowledge our advisors, members, and volunteers' remarkable work. Thank you, Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, for caring for Mountain Spirit as a watchdog and for continuously supporting our journey voluntarily since 1996. Thank you, Dr. Shailendra Thakali for coming every day and providing your professional input that has been invaluable to Mountain Spirit. Similarly, thank you, Dr. Alton C. Byers, for developing projects for mountain eco-systems and livelihoods together with Mountain Spirit. Thank you, Mr. Lhakpa Tenji Lama, for your involvement in implementing APPA (Appreciative Participatory Planning & Action) with the Snow Leopard Conservancy. Many thanks as well to Dr. Mingma Norbu Sherpa for your involvement in the reporting of the workshop. And thank you, Ngawang Thapke Sherpa, for monitoring and reporting on the Thame construction work.

I would also like to acknowledge Mr. Ang Tenji Sherpa for returning to his home village after his long service in the government as an agriculturist officer. Through his expertise, MS received the opportunity to promote organic land and agricultural activities in Udayapur. I am also thankful for the active support of Lhadorchi Sherpa and Jikme Tshering (Sherpa) for their support and participatory involvement in the MS team and communities. Thank you also to our committed staff, Mr. Phurba Chheten Pradhan and Ngawang Thapke Sherpa for their work and dedication.

I would also like to especially acknowledge our volunteers for their contributions:

- ✚ *Ms. Stephanie Kim, Mountain Spirit Intern from Columbia University, for going beyond her initial responsibilities as negotiated before her arrival in Nepal.*
- ✚ *Dr. Anup Gurung for greatly helping in developing Mountain Spirit's proposal.*
- ✚ *Ms. Sharmila Rai, for documenting Mountain Spirit's work and making it accessible to all.*
- ✚ *Ms. Shanti Thapa Magar and Mr. Nandalal Majhi of world education for supporting MS training voluntarily.*
- ✚ *Mr. Jikme Tshering Sherpa (general member) for his specific volunteer work on the Darwin Initiative and report writing of the Udayapur field visit.*
- ✚ *Ms. Neema Sherpa and others who for expressing their interest and coming to help MS.*

We would also like to thank MS honorary members, advisors, partners, and friends who have contributed to the organization in past and present: Dr. Gabriel Campbell, Mr. Kanal Mani Dixit, Mr. Bob Davis, Yankila Sherpa, Wendy B. Lama, Dr. Rodney Jackson, Rob Fairely, Carl Zichella, Kaji Sherpa, Dr. Ghana Shyam Gurung, Dr. Katie Marwic, Dr. Sara Parker, Darla Hilard, Ms. Helen Sherpa, late Nima Wongchhu Sherpa, Frances Klatzel, Brain Paniston and friends for their inspiration.

At last but not least, I would like to thank the Human Rights Advocate Program (HRAP) of Columbia University, FIMI, National Indigenous Women's Federation, and many other friends who have motivated me to continue working on human rights, indigenous people, and women's issues. I would like to personally thank my professor and great mentor, Prof. Elsa Stamatopoulou, Prof. Raine, and Prof. Kristy Kelly for their academic guideline. I am especially grateful to Stephanie Grepo, the director of HRAP, for helping me find a committed summer intern who strengthened the organization by focusing on human rights and social media.

Finally, I would like to encourage all to focus on sustainable livelihood, conservation of the environment, and preservation of mountain culture. I also encourage all to join human rights based development work in addressing the issues of marginalized people, such as mountain indigenous people and women.

Thank you,

Chhing Lamu Sherpa
President

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Dear members, partners, friends and well-wishers,

Warm greetings from Mountain Spirit!

Mountain Spirit has been in action for more than two decades, serving mountain communities and the environment; we are certain that the best is yet to come. Over the years various executive bodies have paved their ways to the current status. I hope to continue to keep up the excellent work that this historic organization has been doing since the onset.

Mountain Spirit aims to continue its mission of bringing people and resources together for the development of mountain communities and for generations to come. It has implemented various projects in the field of health, education, tourism, and environment in the mountain communities. Through the Appreciative Participatory Planning Action (APPA) approach, Mountain Spirit has especially emphasized the equal participation of the local communities in planning and implementing projects.



Nepal is a resilient country with a sense of pride in being an independent nation. Looking at the positive human energy released in support of the disaster victims and the resiliency of the local community that get on with their lives, there is hope. However, issues of mountain communities are still in the backside. Thus, Mountain Spirit fights for the capacity building of mountain peoples.

Nepal ratified ILO Convention No. 169 and adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in September 2007. Despite this work, there continues to be a gap on implementation of policies on the ground – ultimately refusing to address the needs of mountain peoples. Since mountain communities are positioned at the corner of decision-making positions in the government and in political parties, MS will focus on the advocacy of these issues. Therefore, in this edition, we focused on the issue of human rights in relation to indigeneity, women, and the environment.

Above all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all individuals, institutions, and supporters who are dedicated to mountain communities. I recognize and appreciate that you made the organization a success in these past years. In the coming year, I commit to listening to your inputs. Our future plans and programs will find their base on your invaluable suggestions.

Thank you very much!
Happy Reading!

Tashi Lama Hyolmo
General Secretary

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear members, friends, and partners,

No words can adequately express how much I've loved my time here. I came to Nepal alone without knowing anyone and without knowing what to expect; I left Nepal with a newfound spirit and with people I call family. Thank you to everyone who welcomed me and made me feel at home with your warmth and kindness.

I would like to especially thank the people I lived and worked with on a regular basis. Thank you, Anita aama, Dr. Ghana Shyam Gurung, and Mendhala for welcoming me into your home and for nurturing me every day with your amazing cooking and never-ending generosity. Thank you, Phurba and Jikme, for always looking out for me like older brothers. Thank you, Dr. Shailendra, for being someone I can call baa and for always livening the office with your humor and intellect. And last but definitely not least, thank you, Lamu mama (Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa), for *everything*. My heart swelled with pride whenever people asked if I was your daughter. I hope that someday I can be as strong, caring, and inspirational of a leader as you are.



I wish that I could have met more members, friends, and partners of Mountain Spirit, but I feel incredibly grateful for at least being able to read your work. Thank you so much for submitting articles and making this year's publication possible.

As a human rights major, I wanted the publication to focus on women's rights, indigenous rights, and environmental rights. While I was familiar with the international framework of human rights law, I wanted to learn about its effectiveness on the domestic level. Unfortunately, I learned during my time here that international human rights law is not as powerful as I would hope it to be. Although Nepal is a signatory to several international instruments that protect women's rights, indigenous rights, and environmental rights, there are alarming gaps between policy aspirations and implementation. However, I do not believe that means we should abandon and ignore the international framework.

People continue to commit crimes despite the existence of criminal laws. Does that mean we abandon criminal law?

The international framework may not prevent all human rights violations, but it codifies what human rights are and what violations are. Thus, rather than complain about its ineffectuality, we must educate the public on human rights. Marginalized communities in several countries have been able to use public opinion and international human rights law to hold governments accountable. Nepal can do the same once strong public opinion is formed in favor of these rights. Education is the first step.

Stephanie Kim
MS Intern from Columbia University

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS



Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa, President

Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa was a founding member of Mountain Spirit and now serves as the president. Ms. Sherpa, originally from Finjoling, Tatne of Nametar VDC in Udayapur, has an educational background in Rural Extension and Women from University of Reading in the United Kingdom. Since Mountain Spirit's formation, she has served in various roles and has played an important leadership role in the organization's overall program design and policy development. Ms. Sherpa is also a founder and life member of various organizations committed to women's rights and participatory action, such as TEWA and Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN). She has been dedicated to empowering indigenous mountain people, women, and the most marginalized groups of society in Nepal.



Mr. Ang Phinjo Sherpa, Vice President

Mr. Ang Phinjo Sherpa, a founder member of Mountain Spirit, is originally from Namche Bazar in Solukhumbu and now serves as the vice president of the organization. He received a bachelor's degree at Monterey Peninsula College and a master's degree at Rushmore University. In the past, Mr. Sherpa also served as the general secretary and executive director of Mountain Spirit. He has played a significant role in the implementation of the MS-CESVI project in Sagarmatha National Park. He is also the chairperson and executive board director for various organizations dedicated to supporting mountain communities, such as EcoHimal Nepal, Farming for Health, and Khumbu Agro Tourism.



Mr. Tashi Lama Hyolmo, Executive Director/General Secretary

Mr. Tashi Lama Hyolmo first became affiliated with Mountain Spirit in 2007 and became a general member in 2009. He is an indigenous youth activist, writer, and media mobilizer. He has been exploring the applications of his professional practices on technology, youth, and social activism. He has served as a member, chief, and advisor of several organizations dedicated to youth and indigenous people, such as Nepal Indigenous Nationalities Students Federation, Hyolmo Student Association of Nepal, and Lumbini Help Foundation. He strongly believes in the power of the youth around the world and their impact on the future of all countries. He believes that the youth should be given meaningful opportunities to participate in the decision-making process of their country.

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS



Ms. Ang Diku Sherpa, Treasurer

Ms. Ang Diku Sherpa serves as the treasurer of Mountain Spirit and received a degree in Commerce Business Administration and Public Administration from Minbhawan Campus. She has experience and training in diverse fields, such as new and small enterprise promotion, health management, and HIV/AIDs. Ms. Sherpa has worked as a facilitator between domestic and international enterprises and has given trainings on participatory rural approaches.



Ms. Anita Lama Gurung, Executive Member

Ms. Anita Lama Gurung is a social worker and businesswoman with an educational background in Sociology and an expertise in financial management. She is currently an executive member of Mountain Spirit, the Executive Managing Director of Samarpan Saving and Credit Cop. Ltd, and the co-chair of Prayas Nepal. She was also a former treasurer of Mountain Spirit from 2007-2010. She is experienced in social science research using Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA).



Mr. Janga Lama, Executive Member

Mr. Janga Bahadur Lama is a tourism entrepreneur from Karnali in the Humla district. He has been affiliated with Mountain Spirit since 2014. He has been the owner of Firante Treks and Expedition P.LTD since 2007 and is also affiliated with several NGOs. Mr. Lama is the present chairman of the Karnali Tourism Entrepreneur Society (KTES), core member of Sustainable Tourism Network (STN), executive member of Village Tourism Promotion Forum Nepal, (VITOF Nepal), and present chairman of Bodhi Tree Foundation Humla (BTFH).



Ms. Ram Maya Thakali, Executive Member

Ms. Ram Maya Thakali is from Jomsom in the Mustang district and first joined Mountain Spirit in 1999. Since then, she has been involved in Mountain Spirit through a range of roles and responsibilities including president, treasurer, executive member and coordinator. She received a bachelor's degree in Economics and Nepali and a master's degree in Sociology and Anthropology. She has extensive experience working with communities in the mountain region using participatory and appreciative approaches to planning, socioeconomic surveys, and institutional capacity building.

ADVISORS



Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, Advisor

Dr. Lhakpa Sherpa is a founding member of Mountain Spirit and served as president from 2008-2012. His interests and specializations are in conservation of mountain environments, preservation of mountain cultures, and sustainable livelihood of mountain communities. Dr. Sherpa received his Ph.D. in Forest Resources from the University of Washington in 1999 and became the first person from the Sherpa community to earn a doctorate. Dr. Sherpa was employed by the Nepal Government from 1980 to 1999 and served as warden of a number of national parks. He was actively involved in the planning and creation of Sagarmatha National Park, Makalu-Barun National Park, and Kanchanjunga Conservation Area. He is a senior fellow with The Mountain Institute and also serves as the president of the Khumjung School Alumni Association. In 2009, Dr. Sherpa received a Fulbright Doctoral Fellowship to Yale University where he was appointed as a research scientist. He is currently involved in conducting a research project on sustainable tourism in the Khumbu Region.



Dr. Shailendra Thakali, Advisor

Dr. Shailendra Thakali has over two-decades of professional career experience in protected area management, particularly in integrated conservation and development programs. He holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Management from Lincoln University, New Zealand and a master's degree in Sociology and Anthropology of Travel and Tourism from University of Surrey, UK. Dr. Thakali has served as the Livelihood Advisor of DFID UKAid for three years and the Programme Manager of The Mountain Institute for six years. He also took the position of Director of Education and Information for the National Trust for Nature Conservation for two years, Senior Program Manager for three years, and Regional Conservation Officer for the Annapurna Conservation Area Project for three years. He has been working as an independent consultant since 2006.

ADVISORS

Yankila Sherpa, Advisor



Yankila Sherpa is from Olangchung gola – one of the most remote villages of Eastern Nepal. She is among the first women to get a university level education from her community and region. She feels privileged to have received a university education and has dedicated her life to giving back to the mountain communities. She sees tourism as a means to uplifting the economic standard of mountain communities and to empower its people, especially the women. Yankila has spent over twenty-five years advocating for sustainable and responsible tourism and for the cause of women empowerment. She is the managing director of the Snow Leopard Trek, vice president of the Trans Himalayan Environment and Livelihood Program, chief advisor of the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA), vice chairperson of the Kathmandu Valley Public Library, and past president of both the Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal (FWEAN) and the Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN).

Lhakpa Tenji Lama (Sherpa), Advisor



Mr. Lhakpa Tenji Lama (Sherpa) is originally from Beni-3, Tumbuk village of the Solukhumbu district. He is one of Mountain Spirit's founding members and previous served the organization in various roles including executive member, general secretary, and president. Mr. Lama has an academic background in community development and planning in tourism management. He has worked with various national and international organizations on community development using appreciative and participatory approaches.

Nima Lama Hyolmo, Advisor



Mr. Nima Lama Hyolmo is originally from Shermathang village of Kiul VDC, Sindhupalchowk. He joined MS in 1999 and became an executive member in 2008. Since then, he has served as general secretary and president of the organization.. He also served as secretary of Foreign Affairs for the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN). Professionally, he is a tourism entrepreneur and is actively involved in various community and social organizations, such as Trekking Agencies' Association Nepal (TAAN) and Yangrima Trust.

Issues of Culture, Gender, and Social Exclusion are Issues of Human Rights and Human Rights Development



Development must be linked to human rights. Human rights are enumerated in international law and represent truth, justice, equity, and equal treatment for all human beings. Similarly, human rights based development takes the approach of seeking the voices of the people and their active participation. Even though human rights activists may face indifference, skepticism, criticism, and persecution, voices must be raised for justice, truth, and an end to the violation of the rights of all individuals. While all kinds of human rights violations can be found across the country, this article focuses mainly on culture, gender, and social exclusion.

How does one come to recognize human rights? In Nepal, people start having human rights driven thoughts when they think about how women and girls, poor men, and rural societies are discriminated against. People think that human rights violations must consist of heinous crimes, but they can be as basic and simple as the difference in how family members treat their boys and girls. In most cases, girls or women in our society are expected to work in the kitchen and on the farm, to handle manual household work, and to organize social functions and gatherings. Thus, there is a big gender gap in education. Moreover, this inequality in education does nothing but exacerbate the inequality in career opportunities and economic stability. Women hold 16% of government jobs whereas men hold 84% (GSEA study; 2010).

After visiting Shree JanaJyoti Secondary School of Chudade, Udayapur, a Mountain Spirit member noticed and asked why more girls than boys were present in the school. The principle, Mr. Punya Karki, responded, “Boys are usually sent to English boarding schools in the cities.”

Even in the 21st century, our parents still do not treat boy and girls equally. Because girls are the main supporters of manual household and farm work, the higher education and professional careers of girls and women are hampered.

The state has been neglecting the voices of women as a whole, isolated mountain people, and indigenous women. Society has confined them to a culture of silence that hinders their rights and development support. Many have not realized that they all are equal human beings.

While progress has been made on gender over the past two decades, Nepal still needs to go a long way. Nepal may need to promote feminist theories that respect division of labor, equal opportunities, independent budgets, individual identities, and affirmative actions. Prof. Kristy Kelly of Columbia said that there is a great need to reframe and revalue the reproductive labor at the household level that will then reflect at societal and organizational levels.

In addition to gender inequalities, people in Nepal can start having human rights driven thoughts by thinking about the discrimination indigenous people face. Prof. Elsa Stamatopoulou of Columbia University in 2016 highlighted that academicians and international law have recognized indigenous peoples' cultures. She said that cultural rights are human rights of sustainable development. Culture constitutes the pride and dignity of each citizen and should be cared for by the government. In 1966, UNESCO defined culture as a way of life and highlighted that cultural diversity must be considered as a "common heritage of humanity." However, the Human Rights Advocate Program (HRAP) at Columbia University revealed that 90% of indigenous languages in the world are in danger. Furthermore, in Nepal, only 2.3% of valley indigenous people work in civil services (NIWF; 2013).



Out of 198 countries in the world, only 22 countries have signed the Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO 169). On 19th September 2007, Nepal ratified the convention, becoming the second country in Asia to do so. However, the government has still not recognized our indigenous rights.

As Nepal becomes more developed, indigenous rights are even more indispensable. The Vena Declaration in 1994 declared rights to development after realizing that development had become business and reached without the rights holder. After the declaration, many global agencies, such as UNICEF, have proceeded to human rights based development. As mountain people are excluded from education, health, and infrastructure systems, Nepal must also proceed to human rights based development.

Some suggestions are:

- Budget for the mountain should not be based on the number of people; it should be based on physical difficulties.
- A separate monitoring council with representation should exist to measure the right use of resources and to ensure the rights of mountain people, women as a whole, and indigenous women.

- Leadership and building capacity of marginalized mountain communities, mountain women, and Dalit people should be promoted.
- Historical and cultural places of the mountain people must be mapped and documented for protection and conservation.
- Law enforcement on gender gap mitigation and social and economic opportunities should be provided to indigenous women who are left behind in many cases.
- Special programs should focus on the elderly in the mountain communities.

Finally, I hope that the new local re-structuring of the government office will reach mountain villages and address the needs of mountain and indigenous women who are behind. Inclusion is one aspect of equality, freedom and dignity. The dignity of indigenous people and women should not be humiliated by the government's policies and practices. The African proverb, "if you go alone, you reach fast, but if you go together, you reach far," should be applied in Nepal. We must move together to fulfill the need of marginalized indigenous people and women.

Chhing Lamu Sherpa, *President*, Mountain Spirit



The Middle Path

The prosperity and fame the Sagarmatha National Park brings has come at a price for local residents

On 19 July 2017, the Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park marked its 41st anniversary in Namche with the standard songs, dances, and speeches. As part of the event, the Park honored the newly elected representatives of the Khumbu Rural Municipality, and many of these representatives spoke appreciatively about the Park's role in shaping the local environment, economy, and development activities. The atmosphere was positive and celebratory, a promising start to the beginning of a long process: in an area where the boundaries of the freshly formed Municipality now overlap with those of the Park and its Buffer Zone, a myriad of shared powers and responsibilities must be determined.



However, the tone had been more somber a day earlier when an urgent meeting was held between herders, local representatives, and Park officials to discuss a string of grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) attacks on local livestock. The herders maintained that nearly one hundred livestock had been killed over the last eight months, inflicting a devastating blow to their livelihoods. The dire situation continued to hang like a dark cloud over the festivities on the following day that celebrated the Park's achievements.

The issue exemplifies the constant and central challenge of the Sagarmatha National Park in balancing the mandate of protecting a unique ecosystem while also ensuring the needs, aspirations, and rights of the people that live within it.

The establishment of parks in Nepal began after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. In 1972, nations from around the world pledged to the common principle that “natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate.” Ironically, activities designed to achieve these noble goals end up violating the rights of the people who live close to the park.

Four decades ago, the government of Nepal decided to declare the Khumbu region as a national park and take control of protecting its natural resources. Up until this point, the indigenous Sherpa communities had used a sophisticated set of customary practices to manage natural resources to ensure equitable sharing and sustainability. As Buddhists, Sherpas almost never hunted wildlife for food. Furthermore, Sherpas enforced strict rules that were communally agreed upon to prevent overuse and degradation of the fragile high altitude forest and grasslands.

After declaring Khumbu a national park, Park rules superseded the age-old customary practices of the local people, thereby creating a dual but unequal resource control model between the state and the local community. This is interpreted by many as a violation of indigenous rights, particularly in conflict with the ILO Convention 169 to which Nepal is a signatory.

Park regulations defined the people who live in Khumbu as “local residents” and allowed them to continue to reside in their villages own land. This avoided the controversial step of relocating them outside of the Park, an option that had been used at the time in forming other parks in Nepal.



The village enclaves are technically excluded from the Park; in practice, however, it is impossible to separate the villages and the Park lands. Villagers depend on the forests and rangelands for survival, and activities within the villages directly influence the surrounding environment. Therefore, the boundary between village and Park land has not been effectively delineated to date.

Although local residents are allowed to travel, graze, and gather resources within the Park, the Warden has the power to limit or even ban any of these activities if deemed necessary. The Park has introduced a stringent system of permits, fees, and limits for collecting firewood, timber, rock, sand, and soil. Moreover, it does not allow residents to take retaliatory action in defending livestock and crops against wildlife depredation – leaving herders helpless when wild predators attack their animals.

Despite these seemingly restrictive controls and the infringement of their traditional resource rights, most local residents appreciate that the Sagarmatha National Park generates several key tangible and intangible benefits for them.

First and foremost, the Park has managed and minimized the potentially detrimental impacts of the exponential growth in tourists and mountaineers drawn by Mount Everest, the area’s star attraction. Initially, visitor numbers were small: less than 5,000 people visited in 1976, the year the Park was declared. However, even with the small numbers of tourists in these early days, their per capita impact was colossal. They used large quantities of firewood and left trails and campgrounds littered with pollution. Furthermore, travelling guides and porters who accompanied tourists often engaged in wildlife poaching.

Thus, the Park was created mainly to contain the environmental and cultural impacts of tourism, with an understanding that sustainable tourism is possible only if the environment is protected. Since the Park’s formation,

forest and vegetation cover has increased; wildlife hunting and poaching activities have been drastically reduced; and local communities have been engaged in effectively containing the pollution that tourism brings. The Park also plays an important role in sequestering carbons, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and facilitating scientific research. These achievements and benefits are largely results of having the Park's status and its empowered management and regulatory authority for the area. The customary rules of the Sherpa communities alone could not have withstood the economic pressure and demand for forest and land to build lodges and teashops; without rigid Park regulations, it is almost certain that most forests, open public space along trekking routes, and key viewpoints would have been occupied. Even with vigilant protection, there have been instances of tourism developers illegally capturing prime park lands by taking advantage of weak governance. The Park has prevented this from happening on a massive scale.

Tourism provided a strong economic justification for the Park. Last year over 45,000 tourists visited the national park – giving many people substantial opportunities to benefit from the sale of food, lodging, and employment. However, these benefits are not equitably shared; the gap between those who work in tourism and those who do not, such as the traditional agro-pastoralists, are disconcertingly widening.



The area generates millions of dollars in mountaineering and visitors' fees for the government, and local communities are officially entitled to 30-50% of this revenue through the Buffer Zone program. In recent years, annual revenue from visitors' fees alone acceded million dollars per annum. Portions of this income are channeled each year through community user groups to support local-level health, education, cultural and environmental programming, and infrastructure development in villages. The park revenue sharing has greatly increased local interest and support for the Park.

At the international level, Parks such as Sagarmatha helps fulfill Nepal's national obligations to international conventions, such as conventions on biological diversity, world heritage, wetland preservation, and endangered species protection. Nepalese of every ethnic and geographical origin have a responsibility to contribute to these national level obligations.

However, despite these direct and indirect benefits, living within the Park can come at a heavy cost for local communities. Majority of Nepal's parks including Sagarmatha were established during the Panchayat era (1972-1990). The regulation governing the protected areas therefore concentrates the authority with the central government, making them highly vulnerable to top-down decision making. Consequently, the local communities are excluded and marginalized, and the participation and commitment on the local level remains unjustly inadequate. Therefore, the economic and other benefits received hardly compensate for the loss of people's fundamental rights.

Exclusion and marginalization can best be addressed through involvement, consultation and empowerment of affected communities in decision-making processes. One benefit that could be delivered is the training and employment opportunities in the park service. At the early planning of the Park, decision makers in Katmandu realized that local participation would be essential in establishing a Park in Khumbu, and several local people were trained to serve as park managers. However, once the Park was firmly established, the policy of involving locals was abandoned. The current Park staff does not include a single person from the local Sherpa community.

This exclusion persists despite the federal constitution's emphasis on inclusiveness in public service. The inclusion and representation of Dalits, Janajati, and women in protected area services are still unforgivably low. Even if the constitution ostensibly guarantees it through words, without concrete action, the issues of inclusion, equality, and local benefits will continue to exist in centrally managed Parks. Determining how to decentralize the rights to power and the resources to local levels under the federal structure will be one of the most urgent and immediate challenges Nepal will face in the foreseeable future. This will be especially complicated in areas such as Khumbu, where the resource management authority and responsibility are assumed by a centrally managed national park.

The propensities for conflict as well as opportunities for co-existence are both high. The Park and the local government must work closely together to steer the conservation and development in Khumbu on a middle path of Buddha by avoiding the extremes of over-exploitation and over-protection. This can set the Khumbu region on a path of sustainable, green growth with a human face.

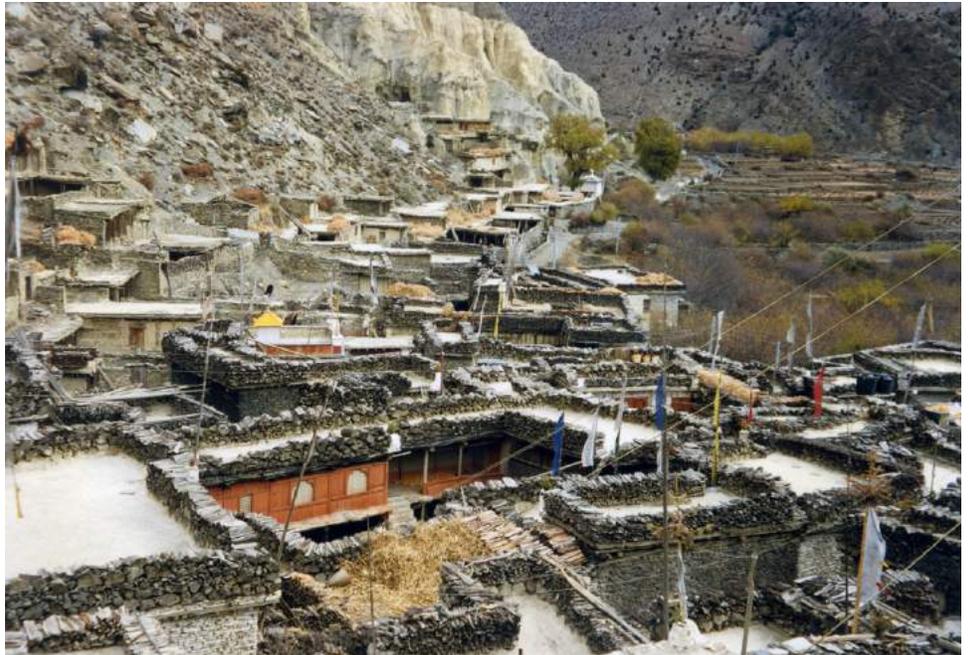
Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, *Advisor*, Mountain Spirit



Village Autonomy and Environmental Governance System in the Changing Context

This short article is based on the doctoral research I conducted in the Mustang district of Nepal in 2009. My research aimed at critically examining the evolution of institutional arrangements and environmental governance systems in high mountain regions. It focuses particularly on the successful survival of endogenous village governance institutions from a long-term, socio-political, and historical stance.

Historically, strong village-based institutions that had evolved over centuries governed every village in Mustang. This system of self-rule oversaw village welfare and the management of natural resources, such as forests, pasture areas, water sources, and lands. These natural resources, collectively referred to as environmental resources, were and still are the local life-line; they are integral to the wellbeing of village inhabitants. Thus, village-based governance institutions under the leadership of *Ghempa* – Village Head or *Mukhiya* in Nepali – developed strong rules and regulations to govern environmental resources.



Local communities did not treat forests and other natural resources as an open access resource. Cases of massive deforestation were not reported until the arrival of the Khamba, Tibetan rebels, who occupied the district in thousands and destroyed forests. The long history of association and conflicts, particularly with neighbouring villages, molded the local regulatory structure that defined and demarcated village territories; established ownership and authority over environmental resources; and shaped socio-political relations within a village, between villages, and among different regions in Mustang.

Environmental resources especially served as defining characteristics of the village identity and were integral to village welfare. The village identity held the village together and gave social meaning to the local people, thus promoting strong social cohesion and bonding. This village-based identity played a crucial role in building cooperation among villagers, inspiring them to take collective actions to protect themselves from non-villagers throughout history.

The government only started to establish offices in Mustang since the mid 1970s. Prior to this, Mustang was considered a far flung region from the national power centre. It was isolated and remote. The central government's only interest was to collect custom and land taxes. After the 1970s, endogenous governance systems and institutions in Mustang had to adapt to changing exogenous forces, primarily to protect village authority and to access rights over environmental resources.

Thus, the endogenous environmental governance prevalent across Mustang today is a historically rooted phenomenon. Its origin even predates the emergence of Nepal as a modern state in the 17th century. It emerged as a response to political and economic marginalisation and isolation by the central government.

Interestingly, the majority of villages adopted concurrent village governance practices that allowed them to continue managing their internal affairs in their endogenous institutions while simultaneously participating in new political structures. Villagers found ways to adapt to the local political structures, such as the Village Panchayat during the Panchayat regime and the Village Development Committee after the restoration of the multi-party democratic system. They also adapted to new conservation institutions, such as the Conservation Area Management Committees and the Forest Management sub-Committee at the village level.

Mustang's case study highlights the adaptive capacity of endogenous environmental governance institutions to respond to different political and policy regimes of the central government. It does not indicate that decentralised policies result in a dramatic transformation in the local environmental beliefs and actions, as many academics have argued. Furthermore, it does not demonstrate that there are dramatic impacts of including Mustang under the ambit of the participatory conservation programme.

This is not to undermine the dramatic socio-economic transformations that Mustang has experienced in the past five decades, fuelled largely by the neo-liberal development and modernisation agendas of the central government and its increased investments in development infrastructure. The country is now going through another round of dramatic socio-political and economical changes to establish a federated governance structure with much more empowered rural and urban municipalities.

How these changes will shape the fate of the endogenous village governance systems and institutions of Mustang or other mountain districts with similar institutional landscapes will be an interesting subject to explore further in the future. It is indispensable that we understand the relevance and resilience of endogenous governance systems as well as their implications for political autonomy and devolution – issues that dominate today's political rhetoric.

Dr. Shailendra Thakali, *Advisor*, Mountain Spirit



The Melamchi Project and Hyolmo Peoples

The Melamchi Water Supply Project (Project) is considered to be the most viable long-term alternative to ease the chronic water shortage situation within the Kathmandu Valley. Although the Project is almost in its final stage of execution, none of the stakeholders have seriously considered its possible adverse impacts on the Hyolmo indigenous people and its actual and potential violations of their human rights. The people in the Helambu region are just as concerned as Kathmanduites about supplying the much needed and long-awaited drinking water project. However, these people are also worried about what it means for them in the future. The main objectives of the Project are to alleviate the chronic water shortage in Kathmandu Valley on a sustainable, long-term basis; to improve the health and well being of its inhabitants; and to develop a comprehensive, institutional framework for water resource management within the Valley. There is an urgent need of action to mitigate the adverse impacts and to ensure adequate protection for the human rights of indigenous peoples of the area. Though the government of Nepal made a nine point official agreement on 2nd August 2009 to ratify ILO 169, they fail to implement and execute it as per agreement.

The Project is located in Helambu, Sindhupalchok district – the traditional homeland of the Hyolmo, Tamang, Majhi, Danuwar, Gurung, and others. These people are legally recognized as indigenous people under Section 2 and schedule No.1 of the NFDIN Act, 2000. According to the 2001 census, indigenous people comprise 56.2% of the total population in the Project area. Linguistic data indicate that 89.55% of Hyolmo, 59.62% of Tamang, and 6.97 % of Gurung speak their mother tongues in the Project area. Customs



and customary laws govern Hyolmo people; despite the State's refusal to recognize such laws and institutions, they have been retained and administered by traditional institutions.

This might apparently portray us as anti-development or against providing the clean water that people in Kathmandu depend on for most of their livelihood. However, that is never our intention and will not be. But we need assurance that our valid demands are not being overlooked and that our relationship with our traditionally, culturally and historically significant places and monuments in the region are not understated.

Fifty-one hundred million liters of water will be diverted per day from the Melamchi,

Yangri, and Larke rivers to supply water to the Kathmandu valley. The aforementioned rivers and surrounding lands are sacred and otherwise important to the Hyolmos and other indigenous people for their identity, culture, livelihood, survival, environment, and very existence. The Project will significantly impact the Hyolmos by displacing them from 17 villages (Tarkeghang, Milimchhim, Ghangul, Nakote, Bolgang, Serkathili, Dhupkhang, Dana, Bwatsosa, Pusha, Guangang, Doring, Paragan, Phungbochhe, Gocheling, Ichok, Yalmunehsa) located in the vicinity of three tunnels that will be constructed and the intake site.

There are a number of sacred sites with cultural, spiritual, and identity values for the Hyolmo people and its members, namely Aama Yangri, Dhupkhang (Milarepa Cave), Chiri Monastery (the oldest monastery of Hyolmo), Ghocheling Monastery, Ne-Ding (Tantrik Cave), Lhakhang Monastery, Dhuptsu, etc. The agricultural lands and spring water sources relied on by the people may become dry, and the environment and sacred sites will be polluted. Majhis, whose subsistence livelihood is fishing, will be completely displaced from the Project area. However, the people have not been informed or consulted about the mitigation measures in relation to these adverse impacts.

Importantly, the Hyolmo indigenous people are not necessarily against the development of the Project. They are, however, adamant that the Project be assessed, implemented, and monitored in a way that fully respects and complies with applicable national and international laws that guarantee and safeguard their rights as indigenous people.

The Constitution of Nepal recognizes indigenous people and guarantees their fundamental right to preserve and promote culture; their right to live in a clean environment; their right to participate in the state structures on the basis of proportional representation; their right to information; and the right to a constitutional remedy.

Similarly, Nepal is a party to binding international human rights instruments including the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination – all of which recognize and require respect for and protection of indigenous peoples' rights. Nepal is also a party to the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 169 and endorsed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, both of which recognize and guarantee indigenous peoples' human rights (e.g. rights over lands, territories and natural resources; right to give their free, prior and informed consent; right to participation; right to benefit sharing from the development and projects undertaken in or affecting their territories). These provisions of international law are incorporated into national law; in the case of any conflict, international law will prevail over national law (Sec. 9 of Treaty Act, 1991). However, it is our view that none of the aforementioned national and international laws, nor the ADB safeguard policy on indigenous peoples, have been adequately taken into account in the Project to date.

Local communities have never been consulted or informed about the Project or to what extent the Hyolmos will be affected or benefitted from the project. In relation to this, the official webpage of the Project indicates that fourteen consultations were carried out in the fourteen affected VDCs. But none of these consultations were done with Hyolmos; nor were their interests taken into account.

Since 2004, we have been consistently and repeatedly raising concerns and demanding recognition of the Hyolmos' inalienable and collective rights over traditionally owned lands, territories, and waters; rights to enjoy culture; to be secure in our means of subsistence; to access information; to participate in decision making; to give our free, prior, and informed consent; to just and equitable compensation and benefit sharing; and to the conduct of an independent and



transparent impact assessment, including our right to participate therein. These concerns and demands were formally presented to the Project, government agencies, and other relevant stakeholders on three separate occasions (20 Sept. 2004, 23 Jul. 2006 and 31 Aug. 2008) through the submission of detailed memoranda. Yet the submissions have been completely ignored to date.

We have requested several times to have meaningful and mutually respectful dialogue, but these requests have been completely denied. Despite our objection, the Nepal government signed an agreement with a



Chinese company to construct a tunnel as part of the Project. Consequently, we were compelled to take the position of not allowing any further activities until we were adequately consulted and gave our consent. We had given an ultimatum to have a dialogue before May 4, 2009, but we did not receive any response.

According to informal information, the first survey identified a Project water intake site at Chokpu Ghoo in Melimchim village, but it was later changed to Rebarma, located almost 7 kilometers away from the original site. The shifting of the intake site will massively affect the aforementioned villages with

approximately seven thousand Hyolmo residents. There were no consultations or agreements with the affected indigenous people in this regard. Hyolmos have the right to be informed of and to participate in any Project decisions and activities, including the changing of intake sites.

Asia Development Bank, as a funder and benefactor of the Project, needs to communicate with and urge the Nepal government to comply with its national and international obligations. Furthermore, ADB must ensure that its operational policies that safeguard the rights of indigenous people are fully adhered to in the Project. Suspending and postponing any further support to the Project is crucial in encouraging the government to carry out meaningful dialogues with indigenous people. These dialogues are the only way to solve the problems amicably and in a way that will create broader support, ensure peace and sustainable development, and ultimately secure indigenous peoples' consent. They need to fully disclose all relevant documents pertaining to the Project, particularly feasibility studies that include whether there were any assessments of alternative sites, the EIA/SIA, agreements with third parties, and other relevant documents. More importantly, they must ensure the right to information in the language that the Hyolmos understand. It is critical to carry out inspection visits to the Project affected area with the involvement of indigenous experts as well as the representatives of the communities who are experts on their own situation. Furthermore, they must request and ensure that the Office of the Special Project Facilitator should be involved in facilitating future dialogue and positional negotiating.

The Nepal Government and the Project need to review the findings of the SIA/EIA in collaboration with indigenous peoples' freely chosen representatives and, among other things, correct the false findings that no indigenous people are in the Project area. They should recognize the right of Hyolmo people over its traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territory, and resources and ensure their

meaningful participation and free prior informed consent before any Project activities are further undertaken. It is critically important to provide just, fair, equitable compensation, and benefit sharing through agreements with the Hyolmo communities as part of securing their consent.

The community demands recognition of its historical identity and demands changing the name of the Project to the Hyolmo Water Supply Drinking Development Committee in order to acknowledge and ensure the identity of Hylomos and their homeland. Hyolmo is a region from where the water will be sourced. Therefore, rightly and righteously, it ought to be titled the “Hyolmo Drinking Water Project.” For years, the people in the origin of the water source have been kept in the dark regarding the project details despite the free information and open media in today’s world. The government should also establish a grievance mechanism in the Project that ensures the participation of indigenous peoples’ freely chosen representatives and experts. Furthermore, an independent, comprehensive, and reviewed study on the extent to which indigenous peoples’ rights are or will be affected by the Project must be carried out. The participation of indigenous experts and the communities’ representatives must be ensured in this study as well.

The government and anyone involved at an influential level of this project must take appropriate procedures and respect the cry of the people there if they are truly concerned with getting water down to Kathmandu. On the part of the local indigenous people out there, the way the work is planned to start is unacceptable. We cannot allow any inch of work to begin, let alone quench the thirst of some vested powers and politics. In the modern age of equality, there should be high recognition of indigenous culture, tradition, and civilization. As a sustainable solution, FPIC with and participation of indigenous people at all levels must be ensured. Compensation must be reviewed and acted upon accordingly. The people of Helambu are looking forward to having positive consequences for a Peaceful and Prosperous environment.

Tashi Lama Hyolmo, *General Secretary*, Mountain Spirit

Customary Governance Systems Among Dolpos in Nepal

Introduction

Nepal is home to many indigenous nationalities known as *Aadibasi Janajati*. The indigenous people have been living in different geographical regions of Nepal with a distinct culture, identity, and way-of-life. In 2002, the Nepal Government legally recognized 59 indigenous groups in the country (NFDIN, 2002). In 2009, a high level taskforce formed by the government of Nepal recommended that the number of indigenous nationalities be rescheduled to include 81 indigenous groups (TFRIN1, 2009). However, they are still not officially recognized. According to the 2011 National Census, the population of indigenous people comprises 35.6 percent of the national population: 9,267,870 indigenous people out of 26,494,504 people nationwide. However, out of the 59 groups, the census has not reported or listed 11 indigenous groups (Dahal, 2014).²

The subsistent nature of the indigenous people of Nepal renders them dependent on land, forest, and other natural resources. This dependent relationship with the environment is also symbiotic: sustainable



management of forests and biodiversity are pertinent to securing their distinct identities, customary practices, and their ability to pass these on to future generations.

Conversely, the preservation of these traditions, customary laws, and governing systems has promoted conservation and sustainable management of natural resources.

The customary laws, practices, and institutions have existed and developed among their community beliefs, values, and norms. The customary institutions formulate rules and regulations in order to effectively implement customary laws and practices. Such rules and regulations, implemented by the customary institutions, are instrumental in controlling and guiding the daily activities of community people.

The long history of traditional governing systems, customary practices, and institutions in conservation and sustainable management include the *Nawa* system of Sherpa, *Kipat* system of Limbu, *Badghar* system of Tharu, *Riti-thiti* system of Magar, *Mirchang* system of Thakali, and *Mithewa* system of Ngisyanba (Sherpa et al, 2013).

Ghapu and *Dhebu* Systems Among the Dolpos

The *Ghapu* and *Dhebu* systems among the Dolpo community are especially remarkable instances of customary governing systems in Nepal, as they have their own language, culture, tradition, and way of life. Because they directly depend on the environment, the Dolpos have also maintained a close relationship with their territories and natural resources.

The Dolpo community, a marginalized indigenous group residing in the Dolpa district of Nepal, has an age-long traditional governance system to manage forests, pasturelands, and other natural resources. Previously, the *Chikyap* and *Gowa*, ancient social institutions, played a profound role in managing almost every aspects of society including the environment. Soon after the introduction of the one-party Panchayat System in 1960 by

¹ Task Force to Re-schedule the Indigenous Nationalities (TFRIN) was formed by Nepal government under the MoLD in 2009.

² Chhaintan, Tingaule Thakali, Thudam, Free, Bankariya, Bahragaule, Tangbe, Marphali Thakali, Larke, Siyuar, Surel.

then King Mahendra, the *Chikyap* and *Gowa* traditions went out of practice. However, the *Ghapu* and *Dhebu* systems are still in practice in Dolpo communities. In Dolpo language, both the *Ghapu* and *Dhebu* mean ‘the key or senior person of the village’; some Dolpo villages practice the *Ghapu* while others exercise the *Dhebu* system.

These customary laws and governing systems have managed their ecosystem and maintained its integrity and complexity in a sustainable and culturally appropriate way for centuries. Based on the endemic traditional knowledge and skills of the Dolpos, the customary resource management systems have proven to be ecologically sustainable and efficient. In addition to the conservation and management of natural resources, the customary practices have also maintained peace, prosperity, and unity within society. The communities depend on their ecosystem, not only for their livelihoods but also for their cultural and spiritual existence.

Under the *Ghapu* and *Dhebu* system, a five-member *Hyulpon Chhokpa* – ‘a committee’ – led by the *Ghapu* is formed. The members of the committee are called *Rolbu* ‘supporters.’ *Ghapu* and *Dhebu* are selected in rotation among the households each year while the *Rolbu* are selected through the village assembly. Generally, the committee is formed in April-May just before the villagers begin their annual farming. The committee is responsible for the management and protection of land, forests, and pasturelands in the village.

There are five types of customary laws among the Dolpo communities: *Rilungchasid* works to manage the forest and land, *Rigya lugya* protects wild animals from hunting and poaching, *Cha-thim* looks after the management of pastureland, *Ngo-thim* works for the management of crops, and *Dhikkim* works to implement fines and penalties to law-breakers.

Dolpo indigenous people make the laws through a village assembly in the presence of their senior citizens and monks. The members of *Hyulpon Chhokpa* bring the laws into practice. *Hyulpon Chhokpa* also secretly appoints two secret agents called *Sowa* who are responsible for reporting the names of people who violate the law.

In order to utilize the resources in a sustainable way, the Dolpo indigenous people manage their land and pastureland based on seasons. On a seasonal basis, *Yarsa* – ‘monsoon pasturing’ – exists for two months Asar and Shrawan; *Ghunsa* – ‘winter pasturing’ – lasts for three months starting from Poush till Phalgun; *Soisa* – ‘spring pasturing’ – exists for the months of Chaitra, Baisakh and Jestha; and *Toen* or *Sarad* – ‘autumn pasturing’ – runs for the months of Asoj, Kartik, and Mangsir.



The households who break the pasturing rules are brought to justice and charged *Nepri*.³ For instance, if cattle damage the crops of any family, the owner of the cattle are fined based on the quantity of the damage. If a bigger animal, such as a yak, merely steps on farmland without damaging the crops, the owner is obliged to pay one-kilogram of wheat or barley to the sufferer. If the animal is a sheep or ram, the owner has to pay one-fourth of the grains paid for the bigger animals. The penalty made for damaging the near-to-harvesting plant is called *Thokkyon* and is charged by the members of *Hyulpon Chhokpa*.

³ *Nepri* refers to the fine charged to the offender in the community; normally such fine is levied in the form of locally produced crops, such as wheat or barley.

Additionally, the Dolpo people have customary laws of penalizing people who kill wild animals, cut trees and plants, or set fires in the forest. The amount collected from the law-breakers and offenders is amassed in the community fund. The fund is then spent on religious and social projects in the community, such as constructing *Stupa*, *Chaitya*, irrigation canals, and roads.

Thus, the Dolpo people's interaction with the ecosystem reflects the value of respecting the environment – not only for their livelihoods but also for their cultural and spiritual existence. Their religious beliefs, social, and cultural values have shaped the *Ghapu* and *Dhebu* systems. These systems have been crucial for the proper utilization, equitable benefit sharing, and sustainable management of agricultural and pasture lands. At the same time, they have conserved biodiversity and maintained ecological balance in their territories.

Conclusion

The indigenous people of Nepal have been practicing customary governing systems that are deeply rooted in their culture and inalienable from their nature. For centuries, their distinct traditions, customary laws, and practices have made substantial contributions to conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. However, many of these traditional practices and customary governing systems have become extinct or defunct due to state intervention and subsequent implementation of various acts and policies on lands and forests. These acts, regulations, and policies of the government have not officially recognized the customary governance system of indigenous people.

ILO Convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) have ensured the indigenous peoples' rights to forest, land, and waters. They have also guaranteed rights to exercise their customary laws and traditional practices. These international legal instruments have drawn the attention of national governments and their need to recognize the customary laws and practices of indigenous peoples while implementing national laws. Therefore, the indigenous peoples' rights over water, land, forest and other natural resources should be guaranteed legally as ensured by the different international legal instruments.

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Dr. Pasang Sherpa, *General Member*, Mountain Spirit



Woman Along the Nepal Conservation Trail

Ang Maya Sherpa from Thamo, one of the several settlements in Everest, has never seen a snow leopard, but many times she has chased away Himalayan tahr, local prey of snow leopard, from her vegetable garden. “If the prey is here, the predator must be somewhere nearby,” she reckons.



That snow leopards are shy is not news to Ang Maya. She is also aware of this endangered cat being listed as one of the species at the brink of disappearance. “Snow leopards sometimes kill our cattle in the high alpine pastures,” she says. “I lost a few calves a couple of years ago.” The inhabitants of Thamo previously had an average of 20 to 25 livestock per household. Their primary occupation was herding but many of them have now turned to alternative professions. “I owned 50 yak, naks (female yak), and cattle. But slowly, it became difficult to find herders. Atop the mountain, snow leopards would snatch away our animals. People turned away from rearing livestock.” Maya is now a hotelier. Some of the villagers are also in the same business. Others are involved in vegetable farming, while still others run teashops. Almost 50 percent of

community members have made trekking and tourism a source of their livelihoods. “Tourism is good for us,” Maya says. “I also realize that when I tell tourists that we have the snow leopards around, they are so interested to know more about this cat.”

Villagers in Thamo today have understood the advantage of having snow leopards in their area. That is why she, along with 20 other enthusiastic locals from Thamo, have directed their energy towards conserving snow leopards for the past three years by establishing a Snow Leopard Savings and Credit group. “To save snow leopards we must conserve their prey and habitat,” asserts Ang Maya, the president of the group in Thamo.

In Ang Maya’s experience, after the establishment of the Savings and Credit Group, small monetary problems have been easily overcome. All of the members have used credit, which has earned an income for the group. According to the group’s secretary, Karma Gyaljen, this year alone there has been a net transaction of RS 350,000 (c. \$3500).

Ang Maya has used the loan she obtained from the group twice to buy the essentials for her hotel. “I saved RS 11,500. Being a member of the Savings and Credit Group has been beneficial.”

Since the establishment of the Savings and Credit Group, Ang Maya explains that snow leopards – and not just the members – have benefitted. Snow Leopard Conservancy in partnership with Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park Buffer Zone Management Committee has established four saving and credit groups in the region, including the one in Maya’s village of Thamo. Each of these groups contributes 15% of the annual profit to local snow leopard conservation fund. If any member’s livestock is lost to snow leopards, the conservation fund is used to provide partial compensation. “The group has decided to allocate RS 500 for calves and RS 1000 for adults,” says secretary Karma Gyaljen Sherpa. “This past year we received applications for two calves that were believed to have been killed and eaten by snow leopards.”

“As the income increases, the Trust grows bigger, and so does the amount given out as compensation,” Ang Maya points out. The group donates 10% of the net profit to local schools for conducting nature education and awareness programs as well as teaching children about the importance of snow leopards and biodiversity. The local schools have been spending this money by conducting environmental debates, essay competitions, and playing snow leopard street dramas. “The conservation message is reaching doorsteps through these young students,” Ang Maya reminds us.

Anil Adhikari, *Conservation Officer*, SLC Nepal Team

Article From the Snow Leopard Conservancy



Herder Compensation in Everest

Lakhpa Chamsi knows snow leopards are not easy to see, yet she hopes that she will someday see one near her village of Thameteng, a settlement of Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park Buffer Zone. Since becoming involved in snow leopard conservation, she has become much more curious about the elusive cat. The chairperson of the Thameteng Saving and Credit Management Group, Lakhpa says if she sees one she will be able to share with others what the snow leopard looks like. While collecting the grass in the jungle she has seen other wild animals such as Himalayan tahr, musk deer and Himalayan Munal, but at this point the snow leopard is like an animal of the imagination.

“My sons are part of the Eco Club, so they know a lot about snow leopards. They also learn about snow leopards in school. My eldest knows how tall a snow leopard is, how much they weigh, and has even written a report that won first place in an essay contest with an award of 3000 rupees,” says Lakhpa proudly.

There have been problems of predator and livestock conflict in Thameteng and nearby villages of Thame, Thamo and Phortse in Sagarmatha National Park Buffer Zone. The members of the Thameteng Saving and Credit Management Group claim the predators are surely snow leopards. Ang Sarki Sherpa, a member of the group says, “The predators that come here are snow leopards.”

Only a few months ago a snow leopard killed a baby yak near the Thameteg Army Barrack. “People rushed to see it, but were too late.” says Lakpa, “I have still never seen one.” However Lakhpa’s husband Karsang has seen a snow leopard twice. He was first frightened by a cub in the Tabang jungle while he was picking mushrooms. Then, last year in September he saw a snow leopard sitting under a bush near the road and almost stepped on it.

In 2012, Snow Leopard Conservancy, in coordination with Sagarmatha National Park Buffer Zone Management Committee (SNP BZMC), formed Thameteng Saving & Credit Management Group which teaches savings and credit practice to its members and allows for compensation to herders when livestock has been killed by a wild predator, such as the snow leopard.

“The saving group members contribute to conservation,” says group secretary Kami Doma. According to Lakpa, the group has been able to collect 23,000 rupees for the snow leopard conservation fund.

Kami explains how the group works, “SLC has given us 200,000 rupees as a seed fund to start income generation activities. From the group’s annual profit, 25% goes to the snow leopard conservation and 10% is given to local schools for conservation based extra-curricular activities.” She also says, “Savings are collected at least once a month and the group concentrates on financial growth for each member and for the group as a whole.” The group is involved in various income generating activities, including having a cafe at a recent Golden Jubilee ceremony. There were able to earn 80,000 rupees net profit.



Lakhpa and her husband Karsang run a hotel in their home. Tourists, guides and porters stay at the hotel. “Twelve people used to sleep in six rooms, but that was not enough,” says Lakhpa. She decided to take out a loan of 40,000 rupees and added five more rooms to her hotel. Every season the hotel has earned 500,000 rupees, but now with more rooms, they are able to earn more. Income from the hotel is used to repay the loan. They have been able to start saving money on a regular basis as well.

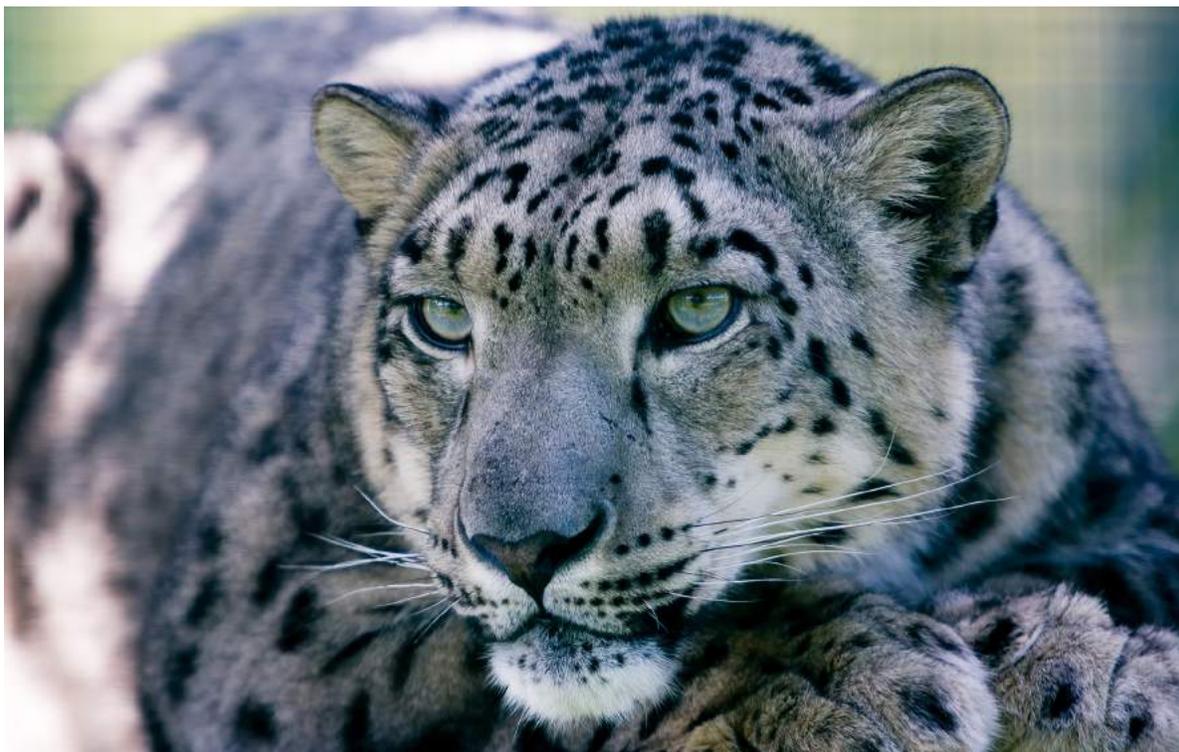
Most of the group members do not own livestock, but some do. If a snow leopard kills a baby yak the owner receives 700 rupees as compensation. 1,500 rupees are given for the loss of an adult. The group also gives financial support to the local school for executing conservation work.

In 2014, the Thame Lower Secondary School was given 15,000 rupees by the three Saving & Credit Management Groups in Thameteng, Thame & Thamo. The school headmaster, Mr. Lakhman Tamang, said the money was used for conservation activities that have helped students develop a better awareness and understanding of snow leopards and other endangered species. “Students can easily recognize snow leopard in pictures and have started talking about its significance,” says Tamang.

Anil Adhikari, *Conservation Officer*, SLC Nepal Team

Article From the Snow Leopard Conservancy

Anil Adhikari serves as local conservation officer, coordinates Snow Leopard Conservancy projects in the Everest & Annapurna region of Nepal. He has a talent in documenting conservation initiative stories from the remote villages that give us a glimpse of life at the foot of Earth’s highest mountains.



High Water

Scientists trace the origin of the damming of the Arun River in April to a bursting glacial lake near Mt Makalu

At 4:00 p.m. on 20 April a flood came down the Barun River that was blocked by debris at the Arun River, forming a lake up to 3 km long and 500 m wide above the village of Barun Bazar.

The rising lake displaced 10 families and threatened 80 more households as well as downstream riverside communities in Bhojpur and Dhankuta districts. The government swiftly deployed the Nepal Army and Nepal Police to help, and unblock the river. Fortunately, the lake drained spontaneously the next day.

Attempts to identify the source of the flood by the Nepal Army were thwarted when bad weather prevented helicopter reconnaissance of the upper Barun region.

Speculation ranged from heavy rains, flooded tributaries of the Barun, to a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) from the Lower Barun glacial lake, one of Nepal's most potentially dangerous lakes.



On 2 May Dhananjay Regmi, Daene McKinney, and I flew from Dingboche over the AmphuLapta and West Col passes into the Barun Valley. We discovered that at least part of the flood's source was the rather small Langmale glacial lake that had obviously undergone a rapid and recent drainage. The flood was most likely triggered by some event that created a surge wave, breaking through the lake's terminal moraine and causing a GLOF downstream.

As a result, the beautiful Barun Valley was transformed from a lush, green Shangri La into a barren wasteland of treeless flood plains, debris, mud, and boulders. No one was killed, but three buildings in Yangle Kharka were lost as was valuable grazing land. The flood was dramatically captured in a video filmed by a visiting German climbing team. Six local bridges were washed away, and villagers were concerned about the flood's impact on the tourist, pilgrimage, and yarsubumba seasons.

Three weeks later, I returned to the Barun Valley and spent the next three weeks studying the cause and impact of the Langmale outburst flood. Tashi Sherpa of the Makalu Basecamp Yak Hotel and Lodge in Langmale pointed to what was most likely the primary trigger: a massive rock wall that broke off from the southwest face of Saldim Peak (6,388 m) on the day of the outburst flood. This slope failure was possibly linked to the destabilising effects of the April 2015 earthquake, which had caused at least one other GLOF in the Everest region. The rock mass plummeted into the Langmale glacier below, in turn triggering an avalanche of ice, boulders, and debris that fell further into the Langmale lake.

Dendi Sherpa, a climbing guide, was camped 200m above Langmale lake with a client and says there were two rockfall events, the first at 3 pm and the second at 4:45 pm. Fog prevented him from seeing the avalanche and flood as they occurred, but Sherpa could hear it and surveyed the damage the next morning. We were thus able to reconstruct what was most likely the series of events that led to the Langmale GLOF in April.

The first slope failure was small and only caused a minor rise in the Barun's water level, largely ignored by villagers living downstream in YangleKharka. The second slope failure, however, consisted of over 1 million m³ of solid rock that plunged 300m down to the Langmale glacier, creating a massive blast upon impact that hurled house size boulders and icebergs up to 1 km in all directions.



A huge cloud of whitish dust settled over everything—shrubs, boulders, lodges, mani walls—over a 12 sq km area. A debris flow of mud, sand, and rocks washed up and over the right and left lateral moraines and into adjacent basins to the east and west. Because the total estimated flood volume was far larger than that contained in the pre-flood Langmale lake, the flood was most likely composed of lake water, water created by friction during the rockfall, and/or water released from caves and conduits within the Langmale glacier. The debris-filled floodwater cascaded over a 200 m rock wall and into the Barun river below, creating a huge torrent that picked up more material and debris as it barrelled down the Barun River. Massive new, canyon-like river channels and flood plains were created that destroyed hundreds of hectares of grazing and forest land, killed at least 24 yaks and dzo. The flood attenuated at the wide and flat valley of Yangle Kharka, but nevertheless continued its destructive journey downstream to dam at the Arun river confluence with the debris-choked floodwater.

When I left the valley to begin the 8-day trek back to Tumlingtar on 3 June, villagers were desperately seeking funds to rebuild the bridges in the Barun valley.

We estimated the total flood volume was 7.6 million m³ of water + 3 million m³. This is nearly twice the estimated flood volume of the famous Langmoche (Dig Tsho) GLOF of 1985 in the Khumbu, which destroyed a nearly completed hydropower station, all bridges for 80km downstream, and killed at least five people. According to Dorje Sherpa, a lodgeowner and eyewitness of the flood at YangleKharka, the Langmale GLOF was short lived (owing to its finite supply of water), with the second major flood surge reaching Yangle Kharka around 5:30 p.m. and lowering back to its normal water level within the hour.



Although Nepal has most likely entered an era of increased GLOF and glacier flood risk, these are natural events and a normal part of Himalayan geomorphology. The Langmale GLOF was largely unexpected, but also represents an excellent example of how GLOFs are not only the result of climate change processes but also that of the dramatic geologic setting of the Himalaya.

Every glacial lake and glacial lake outburst flood in Nepal is different, complex, and defies oversimplification. As earthquakes continue and more glacial lakes form with each passing year, scientists need to continue their work to better understand these hazards, their formative processes, and mitigation techniques.

Downstream infrastructure, such as hydropower projects, need to recognise and plan for these events. Risk awareness and disaster management training will also be of critical importance to people living in villages, and even cities like Pokhara, located downstream of high mountain glaciated landscapes.

Dr. Alton C. Byers

Article from Nepali Times

<https://nepalitimes.atavist.com/high-water>

Not Every Sherpa is Meant to Summit

People often doubt me when I tell them that I have climbed and cleaned the Mountain. My colleagues used to comment, “Poor Pasang! He thought that dealing with Mt. Everest would be as easy as the one he painted on his canvas, but look! He had to turn back!”



My greatest experience on Mt. Everest was in 2011. Little did I know that my work on Mt. Everest that year would someday inspire me to put together a book of biographies honoring Sherpa climbers.

At that point in time, I had worked for two months as an artist completing special paintings for the new gompa in the village of Phorche. I was asked by my villager, Pemba Tshering Sherpa, if I would work for the Everest cleaning campaign. Pemba works with the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee.

At first I laughed at his proposal, but as someone who has always been passionate about working for the betterment of my homeland, I soon asked him for more information. How far up Everest would the expedition go? What would I need to do? How could I prepare for the cleaning campaign?

I began to ponder the opportunity as well as the cause and came to the conclusion that it would be a privilege to help clean up the Castle of Jomo Miyolangsangma (The Goddess of Everest). I accepted Pemba Tshering's invitation.

Once I agreed to be part of the group, the matter of my survival during this endeavor fully struck me. My uncle raised my spirits by reminding me that a man should never be afraid, and that even if I were to die on Everest, I had many brothers to look after my family. His words rang with truth and actually filled me with confidence.

After listening to my uncle's tales of past climbing adventures, I asked him to help me pack my bags with all the essentials. Along with the help of my climber friend, *Makpa* (sister's Husband), Late Namge Sherpa, my uncle loaded my two bags with many supplies. With my bags packed, I headed for my family home in Khumjung.

When it was time to leave and join the other expedition members, my parents' words were those of encouragement for my upcoming mission. Though their words were cheerful, I could see in their eyes a strong force resisting my departure. My sister smiled, but there was no peace in her smile. It was only by recalling the words of my uncle that I was able to turn and embark on my journey.

Although climbing Mt. Everest is a familiar event to many within the Sherpa community, no one but a fool would ever be so bold as to believe it is an easy or uncomplicated task. Everyone knows that even the most skilled and careful of mountaineers is powerless against the forces of The Mountain.

My 20 Kg. bags were full of tools and clothes for the upcoming adventure. At least I had all the necessary supplies!

Memories flood back in my head of the events that began to unfold when I reached Tengboche. They are still such vivid recollections that I feel my eyes moisten with tears and I am filled with emotions as I prepare to share things from that time. I believe I could write an entire movie script from all the memories I have of that 2011 adventure!

The first act of my journey involved many prayers by the gompa of Tengboche. Once I set out on the trail, it wasn't long before I encountered a friend who was headed in the same direction. During the first part of the trek we barely talked because he was speaking to his wife on his cell phone.

As I listened to him, I sensed increasing guilt in myself. *What kind of person was I?* I hadn't even left a message for my girlfriend (who is now my beloved wife) about the unusual journey I had decided to take! She was abroad at the time, and with all of the preparation and the vast time difference, I somehow had left without contacting her to tell her I was leaving for Mt. Everest. I prayed that I would have good news to share with her at the end of the journey. It was all I could do at that point.

My heart ached when I heard my friend sending kisses over the phone to his son. I commented that his son must have grown big, but my friend said, "Nom he is just two years old." I realized that one doesn't need to be 'big' to understand love.

As we continued on our journey, my friend shared his thoughts with me about the hardships of mountaineering. He expressed his loyalty and his attachment to his employer by continuing to work for that company, although other expedition and trekking companies would have compensated him better for his work. He smiled as he told me that foreign climbers sometimes give generous tips to their Sherpa climbing guides, while other visiting climbers are mean and look down on the Sherpas.

I remember one time when my friend pulled a container of food from his pack and invited me to have some. "Have this to eat," he said. "My wife prepared it two months ago by mixing *champa* (barley flour) and *cchyang* (barley beer). It tastes good and will also serve as medicine above Camp 2." I graciously (and hurriedly) gulped down two of the not-so-tasty flour balls.

We next stayed at Pheriche, where I was lucky to find some potato bread to add to my pack. Once I had added some food that was more to my liking, I went to visit a friend who lives in that village. We enjoyed a good visit and he urged me to be cautious on my first attempt to climb Mt. Everest.

When the time came to leave the village, my friend wished me a safe journey and bade me farewell. I think he was trying to offer encouragement when he added that the weather conditions were good for climbing at that time, but the doubt I could see on his face betrayed him. Still, he invited me to stop and visit on my return and I readily agreed, hoping that this would not be our final encounter.

I reached Base Camp that evening and began to settle in with the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC) group. All of the confidence I had mustered suddenly left when I found myself at the camp and I quickly lost my appetite. The fear of the journey ahead and the hardships to be faced became much more real at that point. My mind raced with questions: *what would the journey be like? What type of tasks would I need to do? Who would accompany me? Would anyone be there to help me if I needed assistance?*



A calm old man had been sitting near me. Tshering from the SPCC introduced me to the gentleman who was Mr. Ang Nima Sherpa, an ice doctor. Ice doctors are Sherpas who set and maintain the trails through the treacherous Khumbu Icefall. They fix the ropes and also lay down the ladders over the many crevasses. Being in the company of this experienced and knowledgeable man allowed me to find the peace and assurance that I had been lacking. Mr. Nima quietly chanted prayers like the Vajra Guru Mantra, “Om Ah Hum Vaja Guru Padme Siddhi Hum,” which asks for Peace, Healing, Transformation and Protection.

Nima Sherpa became my first true mentor in mountaineering. In the short time we spent together at Base Camp, he imparted a huge amount of knowledge and in doing so, rebuilt my confidence and my commitment to the task I had volunteered to do. Since my job was to collect waste, the late Ice Doctor (Nima passed away in 2013) told me where to find the areas with the most waste deposits. He also told me how to safely remove the items from the mountain.

As I listened to him and analyzed all of the information he shared, I gained a true appreciation for the role of the Ice Doctors. Though few in numbers, they truly know the mountains. Their contributions are essential

for the successful experience of all climbers. Their expertise earns them special and well-deserved respect. I could not believe the good fortune I had in sitting near this great man when I reached Base Camp!

Our SPCC team leader directed everyone in our group to prepare our own tents. The job was difficult because it required digging down about 2 feet into the ice before setting up the tent. Trying to drive the pegs securely into the hard ice was a challenge I had not anticipated. It took me almost four hours to erect my tent!

Once my tent was set up, I went to the dining spot where everyone was introducing himself and getting to know the others. At the age of 25, I was the youngest – and most talkative - of the 24 people in the group.

After the introduction of all the representatives of organizations participating in the Everest Conservation Campaign, it was my turn to speak. I stood to address the group and said, “My mind allows me to go out there and work to clean Mt. Everest. Forgive me if my body does not!”

The next announcement soon came from our leader. “This is your luggage for tomorrow. If you can carry over 15 Kg (just over 33 pounds), you will receive 200 Nepali rupees (less than 2 USD or 2 EUR) for every excess kilogram (2.21 pounds).”

As I looked around Base Camp, I was thinking that we could achieve most of our goal by simply cleaning up that area without climbing the mountain! I was surprised and saddened to see so many things that had been left behind by previous expedition groups.

Our task, however, was to climb to Camp 2 and bring back waste material from that site. At an elevation of roughly 6,553m (21,500ft), reaching Camp 2 involves climbing through the treacherous Khumbu Icefall and also the Western Cwm. We knew that in addition to human waste, we would also find waste from cooking, discarded fuel and oxygen containers, batteries, plastic material of all kinds, cans, and bottles.

As I was thinking about things, I found a couple of plastic bags and emptied my flour into one and juices into the other. The cook asked me what I was doing and I said I had realized I didn't need to carry the heavier cans up the mountain. We were to bring trash down, not take it up with us!

After enjoying a good meal and the evening's events, we were ready to go sleep in our newly erected tents. Unfortunately, we were told that we would need to depart Base Camp at 2AM. I was surprised to find out that breakfast would be champa (barley flour porridge) and that we would not have our lunch until our return to Base Camp. Even then, we were told we would just get a hot soup to eat.

The cook was singing to himself as he returned to his tent and I headed for my tent to get five hours of sleep before I needed to wake up and set out on my first journey to Camp 2. With thoughts and curiosities about what might happen the next day, I fell asleep.

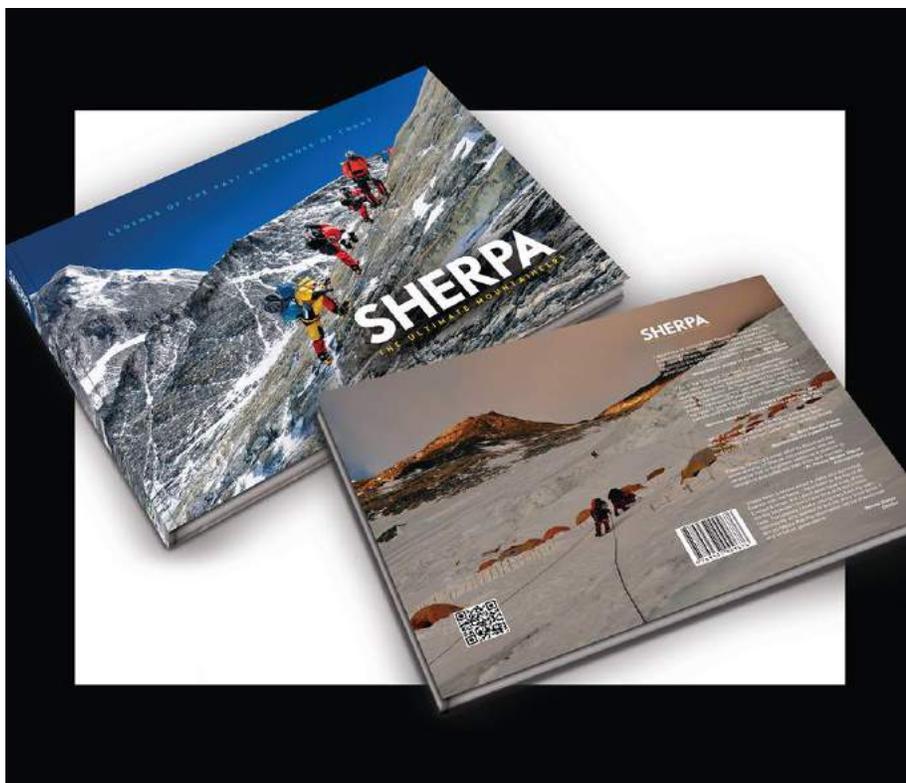
I woke up much too early for my liking but discovered that many climbers had already left on their ascent. I needed to hurry because I knew the trail was degrading with the passage of each climber. I put warm clothes on and laced up the climbing boots on my feet. They alone weighed 4Kg (just under 9 pounds). Around my waist, I wore a harness.

When I got outside I was able to see people upwards on the trail ascending single file. From somewhere in the distance, I heard the sound of ice breaking loose and was thankful that the falling snow was not near our climbers. I filled my water bag with black tea, ate some champa, and after taking a deep breath of determination, followed my elders - chanting every prayer that I knew.

The long line of people ascending the southeast face of Mt. Everest seemed like a black thread stretched over the snow-white trail. The 15Kg bag I carried began to feel more like 50Kg as I climbed upwards following the preceding fellow's footprints.

Thendi Sherpa was behind me and from time to time would call out, "Hurry up, or the snow will soon break away and bury us all!" He seemed to do so with a sense of humor for encouragement, but I knew there was truth in his words.

It wasn't long before I was thirsty and asked Thendi if I could rest for a few minutes to sip some black tea from my water bag. I quickly realized I had been foolish to put the tea in the bag because it was frozen solid! Thendi was there to point out the importance of carrying drinking liquid in a Thermos, not in a water bag. He generously gave me a cup of his hot water and I swear that I haven't tasted water sweeter than that in my life! I was hoping for more than just one cup, but Thendi quickly secured the lid of his Thermos and continued on his way. Everyone needs to carry his own drinking water on the journey. Thendi had given me a small drink, but he taught me a big lesson.



That day, I made four trips up and down from Camp 2 carrying heavy loads of waste down each time. When the day's work was finally over, I developed a severe headache. The altitude and hard work had taken a toll on me.

Our group worked diligently for 25 days and at the end of that time, we were proud to learn that we had brought down about 10 tons of trash. At one point I climbed to Camp 3 and kept some of the items from that level. After I returned to my home, I decorated them with artwork.

An 84-year-old man had been a member of the cleaning team and I had the opportunity to speak with him on a couple of occasions.

During one of my descents, I

noticed his lifeless body tied with ropes onto the side of the trail. Later on, his remains were taken off the mountain by helicopter.

At one point, I was finding it very difficult to work at the higher altitudes and asked for permission to work at a lower level. I was not granted permission to do so and had to push myself to continue with my assignment. The work was very hard and the conditions were challenging. I had to keep focusing on the good work we were accomplishing in order to get through each day.

One day, I found a buffalo leg that had been carried up and abandoned in the snow. At Base Camp, I had noticed a Rai man (another ethnic group that lives in the lower valleys) selling buffalo legs to climbers as additional food. As a Sherpa and Buddhist, I consider that meat to be very unhealthy. Also, it was wrong to have such meat at a holy place like Mt. Everest.

Even at the high altitude, the discarded buffalo leg was covered with flies. When I consulted one of the ice doctors, he explained that the meat was rotten and the waste needed to be collected and taken down the mountain for proper disposal.

I reported the matter to a Rai climber but it angered the man when I suggested he take the rotten meat down the mountain. Because of my religious beliefs, I could not bear the task. Luckily, other volunteers with the SPCC came to my aid and carried down the waste.

When I returned from my adventure, slightly injured and weak, I received a sum of 135,000 NPR's for my work. [As of January 3, 2016, that amount is roughly 1,270 USD and 1,188 EUR]. With my earnings, I purchased a laptop computer and put all of the remaining money toward my rent.

I have often recalled the hardships I experienced and witnessed during that 2011 project on Mt. Everest. Since that time, there have been several incidents of profound tragedy within the climbing sector. All of those things have motivated me to find a way to contribute to the legacy of Climbing Sherpas.

Mountaineering is of great importance within the Sherpa community and I wonder if our descendants will continue to work within this time-honored profession or if they will seek their life's work in other areas. Nowadays, youth in our community have educational opportunities that did not exist before. Only time will tell how many young people choose to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors who have climbed the beautiful and dangerous mountains.

I have wanted to ask all climbers their opinions about things, such as establishing a Climber's Wives' Association, which could benefit the families of those who are seriously injured or killed in the process of climbing. Government compensation alone is clearly not enough to sustain families who suffer such loss. The scope of mountaineering is changing and environmental factors are creating situations that we have never before needed to consider.

I have been excited to ask climbers to share their experiences. I have traveled great distances to meet many of the current Sherpa climbers and hope to meet even more individuals before this project concludes and the biographies are published.

Putting together this book has involved a small team of people. Although we cannot do huge tasks, we can record and publish the information and experiences that are shared by present-day Sherpa climbers. We can do our best to help people all over the world understand more about the process of climbing – even if they are not mountaineers. We can share information about the majestic yet dangerous Himalaya Region that I am so very proud to call my homeland.

From my inspiration after working with the cleaning campaign in 2011, and from my interest in and love for my fellow Sherpa who work very hard in the noble profession of mountaineering, it has been my joy and my honor to lead this project group in making sure that the Sherpa Climbers do not end up like a diamond without its shine.



Pasang Tshering Sherpa, *General Member*, Mountain Spirit

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF NEPAL THROUGH ECO TOURISM

Since the 1980s, environmentalists considered ecotourism a critical endeavor towards allowing future generations to experience destinations relatively untouched by human intervention. Thus, ecotourism has been a topic of promotion and discussion.

Developed as well as developing countries, such as Nepal, are promoting ecotourism for the sustainable development of their nation. Different researchers apply different methods throughout the world to assess ecotourism. Because of the high rate of beneficial impacts, it helps the overall development of the community and the country. Ecotourism is a kind of tourism dedicated to improving livelihoods of local



people along with conservation of the environment, preservation of local culture, and promotion of local food and resources. In other words, ecotourism is the practice of traveling to beautiful, natural places for pleasure in a way that does not damage the environment.

Ecotourism helps in environmental protection, wildlife conservation, poverty alleviation, and socio-economic development. It affects environmental, social, and economic components of the community and the whole country. Ecotourism is perfectly suitable in Nepal as there are many possible villages and

communities that want to promote ecotourism in their village. Even in Udayapur, nine households have prepared homestay facilities and have shared proudly that they like to welcome responsible visitors to their villages.

An ecotourist is different from a regular tourist in the sense that he or she is mindful of the environment – in most cases, contributing to the sustainability of their surrounding environment and local culture.

Importance of Eco-tourism:

- Ecotourism focuses on socially responsible activities, such as protecting the local environment.
- Ecotourism typically involves traveling to destinations where flora, fauna, and cultural heritage are the primary attractions.
- Ecotourism helps to preserve the culture and way of life of the locals for generations to come.
- Ecotourism advocates for environmental responsibility in preserving ecosystems for future generations.
- Ecotourism focuses in income generation for the locals using the local food and local production available at that particular destination.

Main Attractions in Nepal for Ecotourists:

- Nepal's natural attraction
- Physical, historical and cultural monuments and temples
- Art treasure and festivals
- Wildlife and endangered species, such as snow leopards
- Endangered species of flora and fauna
- Land of Buddha
- Scenic beauties of the Himalayas
- Peaked mountain rivers and lakes with majestic charm

There is a need for cooperation among different stakeholders, ecotourism training for tourism entrepreneurs, and appropriate management policies for sustainable implementation of ecotourism in the villages of Nepal.

Due to its unique geographical position and altitude variation, Nepal is one of the smallest but richest countries in the world in terms of bio-diversity. It is one of the world's best places to explore for religion, culture, and natural resources. Because of the fine blend of art, culture, tradition, and natural beauty, Nepal has a great potential to attract all types of tourists from all over the world.

Jikme Sherpa, *General Member*, Mountain Spirit



Mountain Spirit Activities

August 2016 to August 2017



Community Resilience Project at Thame Valley in the Everest Region of the Solukhumbu District

With the support of the Thame Sherpa Heritage Fund (TSHF) and the American Himalayan Foundation (AHF), Mountain Spirit has been implementing the Community Resilience Project in the Thame Valley since April 2017. The rebuilding of a hostel for monks is progressing well. Mountain Spirit is also exploring possible collaborations with stakeholders for rebuilding school hostels in the area.

Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action (APPA) Workshop for Four Women Saving and Credit Groups in partnership with the Snow Leopard Conservancy

From 21st November to 7th December 2016, Mountain Spirit implemented APPA workshops for four Snow Leopard saving and credit groups of Phortse, Thame, Thamo, and Thameteng in partnership with the Snow Leopard Conservancy (SLC), a USA-based organization. These workshops focused on preparing detailed community planning with a commitment to snow leopard conservation. The APPA workshop has not only prepared their group planning but has also documented baseline information regarding group status and their involvement in the conservation of snow leopards. The workshop followed the Appreciative and Participatory approach to empower groups through their own actions and initiatives. The workshop was conducted with a team of four people: Dr. Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, Dr. Mingma Norbu Sherpa, Mr. Lhakpa Tenji Lama and Mr. Ngawang Thapke Sherpa. Continuous input was provided by MS Chair, Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa, during the program design and report.





Scholarship Distribution On the Basis of the MOU of 2014 Under the Health, Education, Eco Tourism & Environment Project in Udayapur

In 2016, on the basis of the MOU of 2014 with Mountain Spirit Deutschland (MSD) Chair Wolf Gang and MS Chair of that time, Mr. Lhakpa Tenji, Mountain Spirit provided scholarships to 40 poor and intelligent students of 8 primary schools to motivate further education. MS Member, Mr. Lhadorchi Sherpa, facilitated the activities.

Ghatlang Health Post Medical Support Program

Mountain Spirit supported medical supply kits to the Ghatlang Health Post in four different installments after the earthquake. MS Associate Member, Mr. Durga Bahadur Thamang, facilitated the implementation of medical kits to the Ghatlang Health Post, supported by MSD.



Capacity Building on Book Keeping, Auditing, and Finance Management for Local Resource Persons

Mountain Spirit, in partnership with the Snow Leopard Conservancy successfully organized a five-day training to participants representing four Saving and Credit groups. The training was provided by Mr. Narayan Prasad Regmi (former auditor of the groups), followed by Ms. Shanti Thapa Magar and Mr. Nandalal Majhi from World Education on 5th to 9th February.

Orientation Program to New Members

An orientation program for the new MS members was held on 19 March 2017 in Mountain Spirit's office in Kathmandu. The first session began with a brief historical background, goals, and objectives of Mountain Spirit by Finance and Admin Assistant, Mr. Phurba Chheten Pradhan. In the second session, Mountain Spirit Program Officer, Mr. Ngawang Thapke Sherpa, highlighted the ongoing programs and projects of the institution. MS Chair, Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa and MS Executive Board Member, Ms. Ram Maya Thakali, also shared their experiences. In the end, an interaction session was carried out where everyone shared their motive for joining the organization along with suggestions for the betterment of the organization in the future.





WWF Guarding God's Pets in the Himalayas (GGPH) Evaluation Project

Mountain Spirit applied for an evaluation project for WWF with the leadership of Dr. Shailendra Thakali (main evaluator), Dr. Anup Gurung (support evaluator) and Ms. Tshiring Lhamu Lama (support evaluator). The evaluation period lasted for four months and consisted of field visits to the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) and the Shey-Phoksundo National Park (SPNP) along with the report production on the basis of field visits. The field visits have been completed and the reports have been submitted.

Conservation and Restoration of Alpine Eco-systems in the Himalayas and the Andes Talk Program

On 14th June 2017, Mountain Spirit organized a talk program on "Conservation and Restoration of Alpine Eco-systems in the Himalayas and the Andes: New Challenges for the 21st Century." The guest speaker for the talk program was Dr. Alton C. Byers, senior environmental advisor for Mountain Spirit.



Human Rights and Social Media Talk Program With National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF)

On 2nd July 2017, Mountain Spirit intern Stephanie Kim from Columbia University gave a presentation at the National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF) office on mobilizing social media for human rights. Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa accompanied Ms. Kim. An active discussion on social media's powers and dangers followed. Mountain Spirit would like to thank NIWF and participants for their active contribution and arrangement even under the pressure of closing the year's program.

Human Rights and Social Media Talk Program with Mountain Spirit Members and Stakeholders

Mountain Spirit organized a talk program on "Human Rights and Social Media" at Hotel Seto Gurans. The guest speaker for the talk program was Ms. Stephanie Kim, a student from Columbia University doing her internship at MS. The program focused on how to raise human rights issues through social media and emphasized the benefits and risks of social media.





Darwin Initiative Joint Planning Workshop

From 26th to 28th July 2017, a joint program was held at The Mountain Institute (TMI) office. Snow Leopard Conservancy, in partnership with The Mountain Institute and Mountain Spirit, organized the Darwin Initiative Planning Workshop in Kathmandu. Dr. Shailendra Thakali, Lhakpa Tenji Lama, and Chhing Lamu Sherpa participated on behalf of Mountain Spirit. The initial documentation of the workshop was initiated by MS Member, Jikme Tshering Sherpa, with the support of MS advisor, Lhakpa Tenji Lama.



Participation in Issue Based Rally

Mountain Spirit members and advisors participated in an issue based rally for social justice, good governance, and social inclusion.



Documentation on Mountain Spirit Program Time Line

Ms. Rarmila Rai from Khotang with a master's degree in geography has been writing Mountain Spirit's program timeline.

Environment, Health, Eco-tourism, Human Rights & Social Media Promotion Field Training in Udayapur

Mountain Spirit organized a field visit program in Udayapur 2nd August to 7th August 2017. Ms. Chhing Lamu Sherpa, Jikme Tshering Sherpa, and Stephanie Kim from Columbia University along with MS members, Ang Tenji Lama and Lhadorchi Sherpa, involved in the program (*see report of Udayapur field visit 16th Aug 2017 for more detail*). Regardless of the heavy monsoon season, MS team managed to get a tractor to reach the venue and conduct workshops in Majhkharka School and Finjoling Tatne School with community members. The participants from both places were pleased with the work of Mountain Spirit who raised hope through eco-tourism, organic vegetables, tea and cardamom farming, and talk programs on sustainable livelihood. Participants highly appreciated the human rights, social media, and health training facilitated by Stephanie Kim.





हिमाली जोश
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