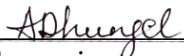


Mountaineering Literature: Journey from Self-Discovery to Transformation

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Introduction

This research introduces mountaineering literature within the broader framework of travel literature. Mountaineering literature chronicles the adventurous stories of climbers, emphasizing both incredible achievements and the sublime moments of awe and terror they encounter. The thrill of exploration, and adventure in mountaineering offers climbers profound joy and transcendence, often leading to self-discovery. Through the recognition of their insignificance in the vast universe, mountaineers experience a transformation, becoming humbler, more compassionate and enlightened beings. To comprehend the purpose behind, ‘the why, the how, and the what’ provokes mountaineers to conquer peaks like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna, this research examines the narratives of renowned mountaineers. These include Sir Edmund Hillary's *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest* (1955), Jamling Tenzing Norgay and Broughton Coburn's *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest* (2001). Similarly, it also looks into Edmund Viesturs and David Roberts's *The Mountain: My Time on Everest* (2013), Maurice Herzog's *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak* (1997), Reinhold Messner's *Annapurna: 50 Years Expeditions in the Death Zone* (2000), Rebecca Stephens's *On Top of the world* (1994), Lene Gammelgaard's *Climbing High: A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy* (1999), Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa's *Forty Years in the Mountains* (2016), and Arlene Blum's *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* (2015).

The selected primary texts, spanning from 1955 to 2016, include six Mount Everest and three Annapurna narratives, authored by both male and female climbers. The works are chosen for their representation of diverse cultural and geographical perspectives as well as their contributions to promoting gender inclusivity within mountaineering literature. They are crucial for understanding the multifaceted physical and emotional experiences of climbers. The key variables include trepidation, terror, physiological and psychological challenges, exhilaration, and most importantly, the profound transformation that occurs through these experiences. By confronting the overwhelming forces of nature, mountaineers encounter awe and fear, leading to deep introspection and a journey toward self-discovery, ultimately reaching a state of the sublime.

Existing research on mountaineering emphasizes external motivations such as nationalism, recognition, publicity, and financial rewards for ascending formidable peaks. However, the true essence of mountaineering extends beyond these motivations. At its core, mountaineering is driven by the quest for exploration, self-discovery, and personal growth which remain unexplored in literature. Hence, this dissertation seeks to address this gap by analyzing mountaineering narratives to reveal how climbers are internally motivated to ascend the formidable peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna, ultimately, leading to profound self-discovery, personal transformation, and the attainment of the sublime.

Mountaineering literature encompasses narratives that vividly depict the emotions and experiences of mountaineers, often interwoven with unusual events and achievements encountered on the way to the summits. In his book, *Mystery, Beauty, and Danger* American mountaineer, Robert H. Bates defines, “The pages of mountain literature reflect the varying thoughts and feelings of climbers and the multiple reasons why they climb: the search for beauty, scientific curiosity, love of the unknown, the thrill of pitting one's strength against nature, the joys of companionship in testing physical and mental struggle, and often religious devotion” (2). Bates claims that mountaineering narratives capture the thoughts and feelings of climbers, encompassing various reasons for undertaking such risky and challenging endeavors. The rich tapestry of experiences, emotions, observations, and challenges, encountered during these ascents is meticulously documented by mountaineers in their narratives. These accounts are often infused with wit and charm, which serve to enhance the

aesthetic allure of mountaineering, thereby celebrating the literary history of the mighty-mountains and the intrepid souls who dare to explore their heights.

Hillary, Norgay with Coburn, Viesturs with Roberts, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa Phuti as well as Blum vividly depict the awe-inspiring beauty and challenges of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna in their narratives. They convey the powerful and almost dreamlike experience of encountering nature's breathtaking grandeur while simultaneously confronting the unprecedented forces of nature. Their accounts describe the ethereal beauty of the snowy landscapes, creating a meditative environment that reconciles the dualities of beauty and horror, evoking awe and ecstasy. As these mountaineers pursue celestial heights, they navigate a precarious balance between the inherent dangers of the mountainous terrain, including thin air, bone-chilling temperatures, avalanches, and the profound serenity and bliss. This juxtaposition of peril and peace lies in the core of mountaineering experiences, embodying the dual struggle against the external elements and the internal limitations. According to philosophers like Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, these characteristics are essential to the experience of the sublime. In this context, philosophical notions of the sublime, articulated by Burke and Kant, and others like Emily Brady and J. T. Boulton become particularly relevant. This encounter with the sublime immerses climbers in the beauty of the natural world, inspiring them to discover new energy and transformation within their lives.

The first chapter briefly introduces mountaineering literature and outlines the research questions, objectives, hypothesis, research methodology, and significance of the study, while also delineating its scope. Furthermore, this chapter establishes the foundation for the research by framing the statement of the problem and detailing the major arguments. The second chapter conducts a literature review, tracing the evolution of mountaineering from a recreational activity to an adventurous sport and reviewing the primary texts by various authors. The third chapter focuses on the theoretical framework, examining mountaineering narratives through the lens of the sublime, by drawing connections with influential philosophers Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, Emily Brady, and J. T. Boulton. The fourth and fifth chapters offer textual analyses, focusing on the narratives of male and female mountaineers of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna, exploring their different perspectives. The final chapter concludes with major findings, guiding readers through a detailed understanding of mountaineers' motivations and achievements and their transformative impact on human life.

Statement of the Problem

Mountaineers are driven by an intrinsic motivation that propels them to ascend the formidable peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna. Beyond external rewards, they seek self-exploration, a deeper connection with nature, and a profound understanding of reality often culminating in the experience of the sublime. This aspect in mountaineering literature is unexplored and needs further research to understand why climbers willingly risk their lives on such perilous ascents. It also raises questions about how emotions like trepidation, awe, and fear experienced in extreme environments foster to self-discovery, personal growth and ultimately the attainment of the sublime. The concept of the sublime as articulated by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant provides a theoretical framework for understanding these intense emotional responses. To explore these themes, this study analyzes the personal narratives of renowned mountaineers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa Phuti, and Blum. Their accounts provide insights into the complex interplay of risk, beauty, and human resilience in the high-altitude, elucidating how these elements contribute to self-discovery and personal transformation.

Research Questions

The following research questions aim to address the issues identified through the analysis of primary texts:

- What motivates mountaineers to ascend formidable peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna, and how do they articulate their experiences in their narratives?
- How do emotions such as fear, awe, and trepidation in mountaineering evolve into experiences of self-discovery and personal transformation?
- How does the dangerous yet awe-inspiring environment of snow-capped mountains evoke a sense of the sublime? And in what ways are Edmund Burke's and Immanuel Kant's concepts of sublime relevant to these experiences and how are these ideas represented in the narratives?

Research Objectives

The following objectives are formulated to address the research questions:

- To identify the intrinsic motivations that drive climbers to ascend perilous peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna, and analyze how these motivations are articulated in their narratives.
- To explore how human ambition transforms into feelings of fear, awe, and trepidation, leading to personal discovery and transformation. The analysis will focus on how these experiences shift from hubris to humility, compassion, and resilience as reflected in the selected primary texts.
- To analyze the ways in which perilous and awe-inspiring mountain terrain acts as a conduit for climbers' encounter with awe, terror, and vastness, ultimately, leading to the sublime, as theorized by Burke and Kant. Additionally, to evaluate the relevance of these concepts as represented in the selected narratives.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the concept of the 'Sublime' as the theoretical tool to analyze selected primary texts. It primarily draws on Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which focuses on the emotional and aesthetic aspects of the sublime, emphasizing terror and awe as central elements. Additionally, the research incorporates Immanuel Kant's perspectives particularly 'Analytic of the Sublime' from his *Critique of Judgment*, which examines how encounter with natural objects can evoke transformative experience, leading to a state of the sublime. This study integrates both Burke's notion of the sublime, rooted in fear and awe with Kant's more elevated notion, emphasizing on cognitive aspects, transcendence and transformation. It also engages with the interpretations and critiques from contemporary philosophers like Emily Brady and J. T. Boulton to provide a broader context for the analysis.

Sublime

The concept of the sublime, first articulated by the first-century Greek rhetorician Cassius Longinus, forms a foundational pillar in the study of aesthetic and intellectual experience. Emily Brady in *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* elucidates the historical trajectory of the sublime tracing, "The origins of the concept of the sublime are usually traced back to the influential text *Peri Hupsous*, or *On the Sublime*, which has been attributed to the first-century Greek critic Longinus" (12). Brady highlights Longinus's contribution in shaping the concept, emphasizing his focus on rhetoric and elevated language as tools for evoking deep emotional and intellectual response. Brady further explores the etymology of the term "sublime" derived from the Greek noun *Hupsos*, signifying height, and the Latin adjective *sublimis*, which denotes elevation, upliftment, or loftiness. She explains, "Its etymology stems from the (probably) *sub*, 'up to', and *limen*,

'intel'. When the term is attributed to things, it can mean that the thing in question is high or lofty, but it can also mean that the response to certain properties on objects involves a feeling of being elevated or uplifted" (4). Brady argues that the sublime is inherently linked to ideas or objects that elevate the mind to rise above the self and relate to something greater. This connection has an expansive effect on the mind, inspiring a sense of awe and astonishment, and enabling individuals to transcend their ordinary experiences.

Edmund Burke and the Exploration of the Sublime

In the eighteenth century, British philosopher Edmund Burke (1729- 1772) introduced a transformative concept of the sublime, positioning terror as its pivotal element. His significant work, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), delineates a sharp distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. Burke articulates:

For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged, and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, even massive. (124)

Burke attributes distinct characteristics to the beautiful and the sublime, associating each with categories of brightness and darkness, wildness, rusticity, and magnificence. He defines the sublime through the prism of terror and the evocation of pain or danger. The awe and fear inspired by the towering peaks and risky ascents evoke a powerful emotional response, elevating the mind and spirit beyond the ordinary, gradually surrendering into the realm of the sublime.

Immanuel Kant and the Exploration of the Sublime

In the eighteenth century, German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) presented his interpretation of the sublime in the 'Analytic of the Sublime' part of his *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Kant draws a key distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, paying significant homage to his English predecessor, Burke. However, Kant goes further than Burke by linking terror, fear, and awe as catalyst for transcendence.

Like Burke, Kant emphasizes the sharp contrast between beauty and the sublime: beauty is associated with form and defined boundaries while the sublime is characterized by overwhelming power, formlessness, and limitlessness. He writes, "The beauty in nature is connected with the form of the object, which consists in having [definite] boundaries. The sublime, on the other hand, is to be found in a formless object, so far as in it or by occasion of it boundlessness is represented . . ." (114). Kant further divides the sublime into two categories: the mathematical sublime and related to size and the dynamic sublime, related to power.

This exploration aligns with the experience of mountaineering where the vast, formidable, and powerful landscapes evoke awe and wonder, propelling the mind into a sublime state.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative approach, combining descriptive, analytical, and interpretative methods to examine the mountaineering narratives. It analyzes narratives to explore the motivations, and emotional responses such as fear, awe, and terror, and the transformative experiences climbers. The selected texts encompass a diverse range of narratives including Sir Edmund Hillary's *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest* (1955), Jamling Tenzing Norgay and Broughton Coburn's *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest* (2001), Edmund Viesturs and David

Roberts's *The Mountain: My Time on Everest* (2013), Maurice Herzog's *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-meter Peak* (1997), and Reinhold Messner's *Annapurna: 50 Years Expeditions in the Death Zone* (2000). Additionally, this study also includes narratives by women mountaineering authors such as Rebecca Stephens's *On Top of the World* (1994), Lene Gammelgaard's *Climbing High: A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy* (1999), Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa's *Forty Years in the Mountain* (2016), and Arlene Blum's *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* (2015). The selection of these texts is based on their representation of renowned figures from diverse backgrounds and cultures and the inclusion of both men's and women's climbers' perspectives.

From a theoretical perspective, this research draws on the philosophical insights of Cassius Longinus and focuses on the works of two influential thinkers: Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* and "Analytic of the Sublime" section in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, provide the foundational philosophical concepts for this research. Burke's approach is based on observation and experience, focusing on how mountaineers describe their sensory and emotional responses such as fear, terror, and awe in their narratives and connect them to the elements of the sublime. In contrast, Kant's approach is more cognitive and philosophical, emphasizing that the sublime is not found in the object itself but in the mind's capacity to transcend sensory limitations. His analysis focuses on climbers mentally process, the vastness and danger they encounter, leading to self-realization and personal transformation. Additionally, the research incorporates the critical interpretations of scholars such as Emily Brady and J. T. Boulton to enrich the analysis of the concepts of the sublime. Furthermore, it includes reflections on the researchers' own journeys to Everest and Annapurna Base Camps, demonstrating how mountaineering as well as trekking foster self-discovery, confidence, and knowledge.

The study begins identifying the main themes, motivations, and experiences of the mountaineers as they confront the forces of nature. The focus then shifts to key concepts such as terror, fear, and awe and transformative moments that arise from these encounters. Drawing on the philosophy of Burke's and Kant's theories of the sublime, the study interprets these experiences. Burke's concept of the sublime originates from the external world's ability to evoke terror and awe, making it an empirical and sensory experience, whereas Kant's sublime is a product of the mind, with natural objects triggering reflection that leads to sublimity. My analysis has taken both Burke's empiricism notion and Kant's transcendentalism, emphasizing the dual role of body and mind in experiencing the sublime.

Textual Analysis

Mountaineering literature reveals that climbers are driven by diverse motivations while attempting high peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna. A close analysis of narratives by climbers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, and others suggests that their motivations extends beyond external goals. These climbers embark on their journeys with a deep desire for self-exploration, discovery, and transformation, spurred by the awe-inspiring and challenging terrain of snow – capped mountains. Ultimately, this pursuit leads them to a state of the sublime.

Sir Edmund Hillary a renowned New Zealand mountaineer and explorer recounts his awe-inspiring experiences and historic achievement of being the first person to set foot on the summit of Everest in *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest*. Hillary portrays Everest climbing as an exhilarating but demanding quest. On the cover page, he describes, "*High Adventure*" as a definitive and wonderfully entertaining memoir of the Himalayan quest, vividly detailing the agonizing climb. He asserts, "At first glance, it was an

exceedingly impressive and indeed a frightening sight” (219). Hillary’s description is striking yet alarming which begs the question, “Why is he seeking to take on this perilous journey, despite fully knowing the risks it entails?” Hillary’s confessions suggest his surrender to the boundlessness of the natural force, which has left an impression of the vastness of the landscapes’ ruggedness and at the same time its exceptional ethereal beauty that creates a sublime impression in the mind. The sublime encompasses a complex emotional feeling that combines delight and terror when encountering the grandeur, vastness, and majesty of nature. Emily Brady in *The Sublime Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* asserts, “The tranquil, contemplative emotions of beauty, associated with qualities of harmony and order, find a new contrast in feelings of awe and astonishment, with accompanying bodily reactions of agitations, trembling, even shaking” (40). Brady argues that the sublime entails highly pleasing and uplifting sentiments intertwined with a profound sense of awe and astonishment creating a sense of horror and admiration in the beholder. Hillary’s journey, culminating in reaching the summit of Mount Everest at 11.30 AM on May 29, 1953, with Tenzing Norgay, epitomizes the transformative power and surrendering to the realm of the sublime through his arduous labor and perseverance.

Jamling Tenzing Norgay, the son of an eminent figure Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, climbed Mount Everest in 1996. In his narrative, *Touching My Father’s Soul: A Sherpa’s Journey to the Top of Everest*, Norgay recounts the spiritual thrills of mountaineering. His journey offers insights, illustrating the captivating beauty of the Himalayan region and the awe-inspiring sight of Mount Everest. His portrayal evokes feelings of exhilaration and upliftment, emphasizing his deep emotional connection to the mountain. Norgay asserts, “The mountain itself came alive for me, as it had for him. He had waited and worked all his life for this moment, and the mountain rewarded him for his effort and patience: it changed from a lifeless, uncaring, and dangerous mound of rock into a warm, friendly, and life-sustaining being” (256). Norgay’s account reflects the impact of his expedition, fulfilling his long-cherished aspiration, and revealing the transformative power of the mountain. Reflecting upon Norgay’s Everest expedition Tom Brokaw, a distinguished author of *The Greatest Generation* provides an insightful perspective. On Norgay’s book cover, Brokaw asserts, “Jamling Tenzing Norgay teaches us all the enduring lessons of faith and the humility evoked by high and wild places”. Brokaw argues that Norgay emerges as an exemplar, imparting enduring and invaluable lessons about life and nature.

Edmund Viesturs stands out as one of America's foremost high-altitude mountaineers, known for his exceptional feats of scaling all fourteen of the world's 8,000-meter peaks without supplemental oxygen. His thrilling experiences and profound sentiments regarding nature and human lives are illustrated in his narrative *The Mountain: My Time on Everest*. Viesturs reflects on his overwhelming happiness and solitude, "I realized there was nowhere higher to go. I'd reached the summit of Mount Everest. A sense of incredulity washed over me. I was alone in the universe. At the moment, no one on Earth stood higher than I did" (96). This passage conveys the profound and awe-inspiring moment of standing at the top of Mount Everest. Viesturs feels a deep sense of solitude, totally isolated from the rest of humanity yet one with nature. There is no living soul around, except him and Mount Everest, which makes him realize that his triumph is over himself and nature. This unique position emphasizes his great achievement and the unparalleled perspective it offers, yet at the same time makes him aware of his place in the world.

Another notable figure is Maurice Herzog, a renowned French Alpinist who celebrated his triumphant ascent of Mount Annapurna in June 1950, marking the first ascent of an 8,000-meter peak. Herzog's narrative *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak*, has become the bestselling mountaineering account of all time. In his account,

Herzog paints a vivid picture of thrilling as well as terrific moment at the summit, expressing, "I felt as though I were plunging into something new and quite abnormal. I had the strangest and most vivid impressions, such as I had never before known in the mountains" (142). Herzog's description shows a profound sense of awe and wonder that takes him at the state of the sublime.

Similarly, Reinhold Messner, a distinguished Austrian-Italian mountaineer, explorer, and author describes his perspectives and inspirational experiences in his narrative, *Annapurna: 50 Years of Expeditions in the Death Zone*. He recounts the harrowing first ascent of the Northwest Face of Annapurna in 1985, a climb fraught with challenges, characterized by its steepness, dangers, and the constant risks of rock falls and adverse weather conditions. Despite these challenges, Messner and his team pursued the conquest of a new route on Annapurna. At the summit, he feels like a Greek hero, Narcissus who fell in love with his reflection in a pool. In *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes*, Maurice Isserman and Stewart Weaver assert, "Messner sees Everest as an 8,000-meter extension of himself." Like Narcissus in the ancient Greek myth, Messner was entranced by the image of himself he saw reflected in nature" (436). Like Isserman and Weaver's assertions, Messner finds himself in the reflection of nature. This shows Messner's mountaineering endeavors, that his drive to climb is just by a desire to understand and discover himself in the majestic and challenging natural landscapes. Amidst his laborious ascent, he experiences a shift, realizing his insignificance and acknowledging his limited understanding of life, body, and the natural world. He articulates, ". . . I realize again and again just how little I do know about myself and my body, myself and the mountain" (131). Messner's realization highlights the constraints of human knowledge and smallness in front of the massive force of nature.

Rebecca Stephens, the first British woman to climb Mount Everest in 1993, shares her remarkable achievements, and experiences including pain, fear, terror, and bliss in *On Top of the World*. Her narrative reflects her burning passion and determination to scale the world's highest peak. Stephen commences her account by describing the beauty of the Himalayan region, evoking not only the feelings of astonishment, and awe that surpasses her extreme physical discomfort. At the summit, she experiences an overwhelming sense of wonder and amazement which she describes, "I saw my salvation: a platform of snow. In a panic, ice-axe swinging, crampons flying, I scurried up to it with the speed of the devil" (178). Stephens highlights the importance of the summit which helps her to forget the material world and immerse and surrender into the lap of nature.

Furthermore, Lene Gammelgaard became the first Scandinavian woman to summit Mount Everest in 1996. She recounts her accomplishments and exciting moments in *Climbing High, A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy*. Despite the inherent danger and difficulty, involved in the ascent, she expresses pride in being the first Danish woman to scale the world's highest mountain. She summarizes her journey to the Everest summit as, "Something in which you get to know your limitations and learn to accept that there are some things you'll never fully master, but that there is much you can train for, and that experience is the key to greater adventures. The mountains are the real thing, and they treat everybody alike (147). Gammelgaard believes mountaineering is a soul-searching sport that enhances the mind and body which teaches lessons, leading one to the ultimate transformation in life.

Likewise, Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa, a distinguished Nepali mountaineer, presents her unique as well as genuine experiences in *Forty Years in the Mountains* (2016). Drawing from nearly four decades of personal experiences in the high Himalayan terrain, her book offers an

engaging and lively narrative about Mount Everest. Phuti's journey begins in the heart of the Himalayas, and *Forty Years in the Mountains*, chronicles her odyssey of success and struggle, contributing valuable insights and experiences, including difficulties, danger, and challenges that helped her discover and transform, and ultimately reach at the state of the sublime.

Arlene Blum, the first American woman to lead an all-women's team, has played a pioneering role in high-altitude mountaineering. Her narrative, *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* describes her thrilling account of Mount Annapurna of 1978. Throughout the expeditions, Blum observes terrifying moments but when she reaches the summit, she feels relief, complete satisfaction, joy, and euphoria. Blum and her team celebrate their collective achievement, experiencing the emotions of freedom, relief, and satisfaction. In a moment of shared jubilation, they come together, arms linked, to sing an old song that resonates deeply with their current sentiments and the essence of their expedition. The lyrics, "T' is a gift to be simple, 'it's a gift to be free' tis a gift to come down where we ought to be. . ." (236). The song symbolizes the spirit of their journey, emphasizing the virtues of simplicity, freedom, and satisfaction.

After examining the narratives, it becomes clear that the unique topographical features of mountain peaks, with their diverse dimensions and sizes, and striking zigzag patterns created by glaciers, rivers, and deep, narrow gorges, offer profound lessons about life. The individual undergoes significant personal change in response to the magnificent terrain and awe-inspiring vistas, which evoke a sense of one's smallness in the face of nature's vast power. Major HPS Ahluwalia reflects these sentiments in *Faces of Everest* "The man who has been to the mountains is never the same again. He gains immensely from the mountains. He becomes conscious of his own smallness and loneliness in the immeasurable universe" (204). These captivating natural landscapes and elevated experiences have the potential to evoke a sense of tranquility and serenity in climbers. Yet, despite the natural beauty, scaling such high altitudes requires extensive training, unwavering courage, a belief in oneself, endurance, tolerance, patience, comradeship, team spirit, and the appreciation of physical exertion. These qualities enable climbers to discover their true personal limitations and ultimately experience transformative growth.

Furthermore, the study conducts a thorough exploration of the evolution of mountaineering, tracing its trajectory from the Alpine region to the Himalayas, with particular emphasis on the distinctive attributes of the Alps that have facilitated the growth of mountaineering. Additionally, the chapter undertakes a comparative analysis of the mountaineering experiences of both men and women, highlighting self-discovery, transformation, and the moments of sublime revelation.

Major Findings

This study has discovered that mountaineers such as Sir Edmund Hillary, Jamling Tenzing Norgay, Edmund Viesturs, Maurice Herzog, Reinhold Messner, Rebecca Stephens, Lene Gammelgaard, Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa, and Arlene Blum have conquered the highest peaks of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna and their journeys have transformed their lives completely. Their passions for personal challenge, adventure, and a thirst for self-discovery and transformation, have led them to understand humans lives and nature. The objective-wise findings are as follows:

An analysis of the mountaineering narratives of Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa Phuti and Blum reveals that their intrinsic motivation for climbing Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna transcend nationalism, recognition, or publicity. Instead, their motivations arise from a blend of personal challenge,

the thrill of adventure, and the desire to explore unknown, unclimbed landscapes in the pursuit of discovery. More significantly, these mountaineers are driven by a quest for the knowledge, self-discovery and transformation.

Initially, human hubris and the desire to dominate and conquer nature drive mountaineers to attempt the formidable summits of Mount Everest and Annapurna. However, as they ascend higher into the perilous death zone above 26000 feet, the terrifying challenges of high-altitude climbing provoke feelings of pain, and fear, forcing them to confront their own mortality. Through this journey, they discover their insignificance in the face of nature's overwhelming power. The experiences of climbers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and others illustrate how the breathtaking terrain and inherent dangers of these mountains deepen their understanding of both themselves and the vastness of nature. This intense interplay fosters personal -transformation, making them humbler, more compassionate, resilient, and wise.

Mountaineering is not merely about conquering physical summits but also an internal journey as seen in the experiences of climbers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and others. Their ascents are deeply intertwined with awe, fear, and wonder, evoked by the mountains' majesty, yet terrifying presence. Their narratives reveal moments where beauty and terror merge, heightening their awareness of solitude and vulnerability. The juxtaposition of beauty and terror in climbing creates an intense emotional experience fostering self - understanding, and realization of nature's immensity, ultimately leading climbers to what Burke refers to as the sublime. Confronting mortality in extreme conditions evokes a deep reverence for life and the natural world. By overcoming, adversities, embracing solitude, and facing nature's overwhelming forces, climbers reach a state of transcendence, which arises from the mind's response to nature's immensity and power. For Kant, the sublime is the product of the mind's ability to confront and comprehend such grandeur.

After analyzing the narratives of both men and women mountaineers, the research reveals that both emphasize extreme physical and mental challenges, profound personal growth, self-discovery, and deep reverence for nature. Women's narratives consistently highlight awe-inspiring moments, personal growth, societal challenges, and gender-related obstacles. Whereas men's narratives emphasize technical and physical challenges focusing on obstacles, conquest, and achievement. In the same way, a thorough analysis of the narratives of both men and women mountaineers reveals that they share the universal difficulties posed by topography, weather conditions, crevasses, and avalanches. Despite this, women have personal problems due to their biology, as openly described in the accounts of Lene Gammelgaard, Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa as well as Arlene Blum. Hence, women have an additional tension while climbing the peaks. In addition, women's narratives often prioritize caution and safety, taking a more familiar approach to mountaineering. Their narrative styles tend to be more expressive and engaging, reflecting a lived perspective on their journeys. The narratives of Stephens as well as Gammelgaard, in particular, stand out for their emotional and moving tone. Furthermore, the long-term impact of women's expeditions is celebrated differently, illustrating a nuanced understanding of achievement and success within the context of mountaineering. They apply their success to serve as role models and instructors in the field of mountaineering as we see in Lhakpa Phuti and Gammelgaard who are internationally recognized as the model in the field of mountaineering.

Mountaineers from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds approach mountaineering with different perspectives. Nepali mountaineers like Norgay and Lhakpa Phuti highlight the cultural and spiritual significance of the mountains, emphasizing community, the role of the Sherpa, and mountaineering as a means of livelihood rather than a heroic endeavor. In contrast, foreign climbers such as Hillary, Messner, and Gammelgaard focus more on conquest, achievement, challenges, personal triumph, and the notion of

heroism. Despite these differences, both groups share many characteristics like deep respect and reverence for Everest and Annapurna, the physical and mental endurance required for such expeditions, and a strong drive to accomplish their goals.

The findings of the study show that the narratives highlight mountaineers' deep reverence to the natural world. The intrinsic drive towards adventure and the quest for self-discovery, transformation and the sublime are pivotal in the pursuit of towering peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna. Despite the absence of tangible rewards, their engagement with the mountains is marked by a profound sense of awe and dedication recognizing their insignificance in the vastness of nature. Climbers like Hillary, Norgay, Herzog, and others illustrate their deep connection, motivation not solely for the physical conquest but by a profound immersion in the primal and eternal essence of the natural world.

Conclusions

Mountains have always captivated humanity with their awe-inspiring vista that promises an experience beyond physical beauty. Beyond the visual grandeur, the journey through mountains holds a deeper symbolic significance as both the ladder of discovery and a path to personal transformation. Much like ascending a ladder, the mountain of life presents many trails, challenges, and triumphs. The arduous trek through these majestic terrains serves as a metaphor for the challenges and difficulties of life's pursuits, urging individuals to confront obstacles to achieve personal growth and transformation.

Moreover, mountains hold spiritual significance, often regarded as higher places of existence that allow mountaineers to connect with the divine or divinity. Through the accounts of pioneers like Hillary, Norgay, Herzog, Gammelgaard, Stephens Lhakpa Phuti, and others, the summit experience is frequently described as encountering a sense of divinity. The towering peaks seemingly touching the heavens, inspire spiritual elevation. Renowned scholar, Bates highlights the deeper symbolic significance of mountains as ladders of life, and sources of transcendence. Bates posits that the highest belief can be found in the worship of mountains. This perception resonates with literary scholars alike, and mountaineers perceive the mountain as a sanctuary for inner exploration, self-discovery, and transformation of consciousness.

The life-threatening rigors of the climbs, juxtaposed against the breathtaking panoramas catalyze a significant transformation which the mountaineers' narratives claim leads to the realm of sublime. As depicted in the narratives of Blum, Stephens, Gammelgaard, Norgay, and others, their climbs encompass challenges, anxieties, humor, and sincerity. Through these profound experiences and understandings, the dissertation has attempted to demonstrate that mountaineers undergo a transformative journey, attaining a consciousness that resonates deeply within their existence.

Knowledge Contribution

This dissertation significantly contributes to the field of mountaineering literature by demonstrating that the genre extends beyond merely depicting natural beauty and the physical triumphs of mountaineers. It highlights how mountaineering literature reveals the indomitable spirit of mountaineers as they confront the awe-inspiring and often terrifying beauty of the natural world. It also explores how this literature serves as a vehicle for self-discovery, and transformation in mountaineers' lives, ultimately leading them toward the sublime state.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research could delve into how mountaineering literature addresses the mysterious and mystical aspects of mountaineering. Additionally, scholars might explore the

impact of modern technology on contemporary mountaineering narratives as well as examine the ethical and environmental effects of mountain overcrowding, and waste management.

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