

Mountaineering Literature: Journey from Self-Discovery to Transformation

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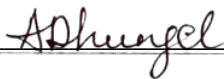
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Letter of Recommendation


We certify that this dissertation entitled “Mountaineering Literature: Journey from Self-Discovery to Transformation” was prepared by Pragya Gautam under our guidance. We at this moment recommend this dissertation for final examinations by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

  
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Approval Letter

It is approved that the dissertation entitled “Mountaineering Literature: Journey from Self-Discovery to Transformation” prepared by Pragya Gautam has been submitted to the Dean's Office, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur. The experts and the following thesis evaluation committee have accepted and evaluated it. It is found that the sincere study, required analysis and systematic presentation of the researcher have made this research acceptable to the evaluation committee.

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Mountaineering Literature: Journey from Self-Discovery to Transformation" submitted to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is an entirely original work of my own and I have made due acknowledgments to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The results presented in this dissertation have not been presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or any other reason. No part of the content of this dissertation has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

Pragya Gautam

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2024

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## Abstract

This research critically examines mountaineering narratives of renowned and legendary mountaineers who recount their awe-inspiring and perilous journeys to majestic peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna. The allure of these majestic landscapes has long captivated adventures and mountaineers, offering a unique blend of beauty, challenge, and danger. Despite the associated hazards, mountaineers are drawn to undertake such extreme challenges. The study explores questions like what motivates mountaineers to ascend such formidable heights. It investigates how climbers perceive their triumphs as profound meditation, fostering self-discovery, personal transformation and ultimately, the pursuit of the sublime.

To address these questions, the researcher employs descriptive, analytical, and interpretative methods to analyze a selection of mountaineering narratives. These include Sir Edmund Hillary's *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest* (1955), Jamling Norgay Sherpa 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), Reinhold Messner's *Annapurna: 50 Years Expeditions in the Death Zone* (2000), and other relevant narratives. Through this analysis, the researcher aims to uncover the psychological, philosophical, and existential dimensions of mountaineering as portrayed in these texts.

Additionally, this research offers a thorough exploration of the expeditions undertaken by women mountaineers, who have embarked on their journeys alongside their male counterparts. Among the noteworthy works examined in this context are 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). These works provide valuable insights into their experiences, struggles, and triumphs in high-altitude mountaineering.

The selection criteria for these primary texts are based on diversity, encompassing narratives from both Western and non-Western perspectives and cultures to ensure a wide-ranging understanding of mountaineering and the experiences that they gain during their brave and bold escapades. Moreover, the inclusion of both male and female perspectives fosters gender inclusivity and ensures a broader exploration of the mountaineering experience.

The primary objective of this research is to identify the purpose and motivation behind embarking on the perilous peaks of Mount Everest and Annapurna as reflected in mountaineering texts. Additionally, the study explores how human hubris in mountaineering converts into trepidation and terror, resulting in the recognition of one's insignificance which ultimately, transforms individuals into resilient, compassionate, and wise beings. Additionally, it analyzes how the formidable terrain serves as a conduit to discover and transform, thereby leading the climbers into the realm of the sublime.

The research methodology for this study is based on the theoretical concept of the sublime, as articulated by British philosopher Edmund Burke and German philosopher Immanuel Kant in their respective works, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1823) and the "Analytic of the Sublime", a section of *Critique of Judgment* (1951). Additionally, it integrates perspectives from philosophers like Emily Brady and J. T. Boulton, who have contributed to the discourse on the sublime.

After a thorough examination of selected texts written by legendary and renowned Everest and Annapurna summiteers, it can be noticed that their motivations extend beyond a mere passion for adventure. These climbers are in pursuit of self-

discovery, transformation, and ultimately the experience of the sublime. Their expeditions testify that ascending a mountain is not just a physical feat but a transformative journey. This journey is marked by the relentless pursuit of defined goals, and daring exploration of the unknown, ultimately, reaching the summit. Despite their numerous risks and challenges, they attain a state of sublime, which allows profound insights and realizations about their place in the universe.

This study makes a significant contribution to mountaineering literature, revealing that mountaineering transcends mere passion, adventure, or the quest for recognition. It affords climbers profound sublime experiences that transcend the mundane world. The transformative nature of these summit experiences fosters a new perspective on themselves and the world.

The knowledge gained from this research is applicable in various sectors. Academicians and government authorities can use this information to design mountaineering courses. Additionally, it provides valuable insights into mountaineering and its impact on human life.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Exploring Sublime in Mountaineering

This research introduces mountaineering literature within the broader framework of travel literature. It includes adventurous climbing stories that capture amazing achievements, including emotions such as awe and terror evoking sublime moments. The thrill of exploration and adventure in mountaineering offers profound joy and transcendence for mountaineers. To comprehend and explore what provokes mountaineers to conquer towering and formidable peaks like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna, the research delves into the narratives of renowned and legendary mountaineers such as 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 Robert'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).

These primary texts present narratives from a wide range of cultural and geographical perspectives, offering a comprehensive understanding of mountaineering. They include historical accounts from legendary figures in the mountaineering community, enriching the study with deep experiences and insights. Additionally, they feature narratives from both men and women climbers. The

exploration delves into key variables including Himalayan and Alpine mountaineering, physiological and psychological challenges, self-discovery, transformation, and most importantly, the profound experiences that elevate individuals to a state of the sublime.

Mountaineers confront the inherent hazards of mountainous terrain including thin air, fierce wind, bone-chilling temperatures, avalanches, and frostbite while also experiencing moments of profound serenity and bliss. This juxtaposition of peril and peace lies in the heart of mountaineering experiences, symbolizing the dual struggle against both nature's external and one's internal limitations. In this context, philosophical notions of the sublime, as articulated by thinkers like Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, and later expanded by contemporary philosophers like Emily Brady as well as J. T. Boulton offer crucial insight. These frameworks help us to understand the complex interplay between the precarious realities of mountaineering and the sublime moments it evokes. Hence the dissertation asserts that mountaineering transcends the mere act of ascending and descending high peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna, it becomes a journey from self-discovery and personal transformation to a pursuit of the sublime, ultimately.

This chapter introduces mountaineering narratives and traces the evolution of mountaineering as an adventurous sport, providing essential background for the study. It examines the relationship between mountaineering expeditions and the attainment of the sublime, drawing on the theories of Burke, Kant, Brady, and Boulton. Moreover, this chapter establishes the groundwork for the research by formulating the problem statement and outlining the core arguments. It presents the research objectives, hypothesis, methodology, and significance of the study, while also

delineating its scope. Furthermore, it includes a review of related literature, and organizes the subsequent chapters, guiding readers through an in-depth exploration of how mountaineering contributes to our understanding of discovery, transformation, and the attainment of the sublime.

Mountaineering originated as a recreational sport in the Alpine region of Europe during the mid-eighteenth century, eventually expanded beyond Europe by the twentieth century as climbers sought new challenges in the uncharted summits of the Himalayas. This progression transformed mountaineering from a mere recreational pursuit into a path of self-discovery, personal growth, and transformation. Confronting the harsh conditions of high altitudes, mountaineers not only test their physical endurance but also encounter profound, often sublime experiences in their lives.

As depicted in the narratives of climbers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa Phuti, and Blume, mountaineering evolves from a physical challenge into a journey to self-discovery. In an isolated and daunting environment, they confront the massive force of nature and realize their insignificance, a tiny particle in the vast universe. The fears or trepidation they face facilitate self-exploration, prompting new thoughts, ideas, and perceptions as they encounter unfamiliar environments, and people. This process leads climbers to uncover their true identities. Similarly, the physical and mental hardships experienced during mountaineering often result in profound personal change. The person who begins the journey at the base camp is no longer the same after struggling with high-altitude landscapes, and extreme weather. These challenges transform the individual into more compassionate, resilient, and wise.

As climbers advance their journeys, they confront the overwhelming power of nature, experiencing both awe and terror. This encounter transforms them, deepening

their understanding of the relationship between man and the natural world, which leads them to the state of the sublime. This transformative experience brings peace, and bliss, as they feel a profound sense of oneness with nature, elevating their soul through self-realizing their true selves. Kant in his “Analytic of the Sublime” articulates this process, “. . . the more attractive, the more fearful . . . is sublime because they raise the energies of the soul above their accustomed height and discover in us a faculty of resistance of a quite different kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature” (120). Kant emphasizes that the sublime is achieved only when one confronts the vastness of nature which helps to unlock a deeper understanding of one’s own capabilities and limitations. It is through mountaineering, that one can rise higher, discover, transform, and ultimately reach a state of sublime.

The global history of mountaineering traces its origins to the ascent of Mont Blanc in 1785, though its formal recognition as a sport did not appear until the late 18th century. Remarkably, during the late 18th and 19th centuries, mountaineers began expeditions of various mountain ranges, including the mountains of South America, North America, the Rocky Mountains, and African peaks. By the 20th century, mountaineering had evolved into an international sport. Climbers set their sights on the towering peaks that exceeded 8,000 meters in altitude, and within fourteen years, nearly all the world's highest mountains received their first ascents. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1950, Maurice Herzog, a member of the French expedition team, achieved the historic feat of conquering an 8,000-meter peak by ascending Mount Annapurna. His accomplishment was surpassed on May 29, 1953, when Nepali mountaineer Tenzing Norgay and New Zealand climber Sir Edmund Hillary reached the summit of Mount Everest. In the following spring of 1953, the Austrian Alpinist Hermann Bul

reached the top of Nanga Parbat, followed by the Italian ascent of K2 of Pakistan, the next year. The chronicle of mountaineering exemplifies the global engagement of mountaineers who embark on expeditions and accurately narrate their sublime experiences in books, making significant contributions to the domain of mountaineering literature.

In mountaineering, climbers are driven by varied motivations ranging from financial gain to the quest for recognition, scientific discoveries, and mystical experiences. This diversity highlights the complex nature of mountaineering where each climber's journey is influenced by his/her unique set of aspirations. Among these varied motivations, the pursuit of sublime experience is particularly noteworthy as it seeks to elevate climbers, transforming their lives through encounters with the grandeur of high-altitude landscapes. The concept of the sublime, with its origins in the work of Greek philosopher Cassius Longinus and further expanded by philosophers like Burke and Kant, forms the theoretical parameter to analyze the primary texts under scrutiny in this study. The sublime, associated with the notion of elevation and upliftment find a compelling expression in mountaineering, particularly in the challenging and perilous environments of high-altitude peaks. Brady, an analytic philosopher, explores the etymology and implications of the sublime in *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, And Nature* and states:

The noun, 'sublime,' originates in the Greek noun "hupsos", or 'height' while its Latin meaning is sublimis, or 'elevated,' uplifted,' aloft'. Its etymology stems from the (probably) sub, 'up to', and limen, 'lintel'. 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 in objects involves a feeling of being elevated or uplifted. (4)

Brady traces the origin of the sublime to the Greek term meaning “height,” exploring its associations with elevation and uplift. The notion is further explored by Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* and Kant in his “Analytic of the Sublime,” a segment of *Critique of Judgment*. Burke intertwines the sublime with the instincts of self-preservation, associating it with terror, and astonishment, while Kant envisions the sublime as vast, boundless, and capable of transcending experiences, provoking a sense of infinity.

The study emphasizes the quest for self-discovery, transformation, and the attainment of the sublime, focusing on notable mountaineers and their expeditions to peaks like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. Among these distinguished figures, Sir Edmund Hillary a renowned New Zealand mountaineer and explorer, reflects on the transformative nature of his Everest journey in *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest*. Hillary recounts his arduous experiences and the historic achievement of becoming one of the first people along with Tenzing Norgay, to summit Everest in 1953. Through his engaging narrative, he presents mountaineering as both a physical and psychological journey, capturing the mountain’s beauty, peace, and grandeur as catalysts for personal growth. He describes *High Adventure* as a definitive, and wonderfully entertaining memoir of his Himalayan quest, vividly dealing with and detailing the agony and triumphs of the climb and exploring the transformation that comes from pushing human limits. He asserts, “Strange companions, no doubt, but symbolical at least of the spiritual strength and peace . . . gained from the mountains” (229), highlighting the profound serenity and sublime beauty he encountered.

Jamling Tenzing Norgay, son of the legendary mountaineer, Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, climbed Mount Everest in 1996. In *Touching My Father’s Soul: A Sherpa’s*

*Journey to the Top of Everest*, co-authored with Broughton Coburn, Norgay shares his profound mountaineering experiences focusing on the themes of spiritual evolution. His narrative delves deeply into his respect for the goddess, *Chomolungama* and the unique bond he feels with his father. Highlighting the goddess's significance, he asserts, "Like a mother, she understands, guides, and protects regardless of where in the universe we find ourselves" (305). For Norgay, Everest becomes a living entity, embodying a unity between himself and nature. Jon Krakauer, a notable mountaineer and author, praises Norgay's book as a narrative of spiritual growth, encompassing struggles, failings, and contradictions. Ultimately, Norgay's journey weaves together a tale not only of mountaineering but also of a son's path to reconcile and harmonize his relationship with his father.

Edmund Viesturs stands out as one of America's foremost high-altitude mountaineers, celebrated for his remarkable achievements of climbing all fourteen of the world's 8,000-meter peaks, without the use of supplemental oxygen, a feat that places him among a few worldwide. His experiences on these expeditions, particularly his reflections on the profound emotions are illustrated in his and David Roberts's book, *The Mountain: My Time on Everest* which reveals both joy and solitude at reaching the summit of Mount Everest. For him, reaching the summit is less significant than the lessons he learns from the journey; the discipline, self-awareness, and resilience he gains are of greater value. He asserts, "Climbing at extreme altitude, I had learned to pace myself so that I was always just on the verge of going hypoxic: not too fast, but also not too slow, or I 'd never get anywhere" (94). Viesturs's narrative exemplifies how such triumphs lead to a heightened awareness, transforming his perception of the natural world and himself.

Another notable figure is Maurice Herzog, a renowned French Alpinist who celebrated his glorious ascent of Mount Annapurna in 1950, marking the first ascent

of an 8,000-meter peak. Herzog's extraordinary journey is chronicled in *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak*, which has become the bestselling mountaineering account of all time. Herzog vividly captures the profound awe that he experienced throughout the ascent and upon reaching the summit. He describes the sensations and vistas that left him both astonished and confused. His famous closing line symbolizes the essence of his expedition. He articulates, "There are other Annapurnas in the lives of men" (223). This statement reflects the lessons learned from climbing such as perseverance, resilience, and humility can be applied to challenges in all areas of life. His achievement is further highlighted by Viesturs who underscores Herzog's significant contribution in the field of high-altitude climbing. Herzog's accomplishment establishes his status as a legendary hero in mountaineering. Despite losing his fingers and toes during the climb, Herzog expresses immense joy at the team's accomplishment, viewing the experience as a fulfillment of his life's ambitions.

Similarly, Reinhold Messner, a distinguished Italian mountaineer, explorer, and author shares his perspectives and experiences in *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 of constant rock falling, and adverse weather conditions. Despite many challenges, Messner and his team remain determined to find a new route on Annapurna, viewing the expedition as a convergence of essential elements in life. He reflects, "Annapurna was all a matter of combining our ideas, strength, and courage to climb the route" (117). Standing at the summit and looking at the breathtaking views of Machapuchare and Dhaulagiri, Messner experiences a profound realization that there is still much to discover about himself, his physical capabilities, and the mountain itself.

Rebecca Stephens, the first British woman to climb Mount Everest on 17 May 1993, recounts her remarkable achievement, and experiences in *On Top of the World*. Stephens's narrative conveys an intense passion and unwavering determination to conquer the world's highest peak. She begins her account by describing the majestic beauty of the Himalayan region, evoking feelings of awe, wonder, and fear. The natural beauty surrounding her becomes so immersive and mesmerizing that it transcends the physical world. She writes, "It would be impossible to do justice in words to the exquisite scene that surrounded us as night faded into day" (87). Stephens emphasizes the importance of leaving behind the material world and fully immersing herself in the wonders of the natural environment, which ultimately leads to a journey of self-discovery and consciousness.

Lene Gammelgaard became the first Scandinavian woman to summit Mount Everest in 1996, and her experiences and accomplishments, she vividly recounts in *Climbing High, A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy*. As a member of Scott Fischer's Mountain Madness expedition, Gammelgaard provides a keen and observant narration of the event of the 1996 Everest tragedy when many mountaineers lost their lives. In her journey, Gammelgaard encounters a snow-covered vertical rock, freezing temperatures, crevasses, avalanches, and treacherous glaciers. Despite the life-threatening risks, she realizes nature's immense power over human ambition to dominate and conquer. Reflecting on this, she asserts, "I just didn't know how high a price Mother Goddess of the world would exact to show us humans the consequences of hubris" (205). Gammelgaard recognizes that Everest demands not only physical endurance but also humility. Hence, mountaineering is a soul-searching pursuit that strengthens both the mind and body offering a sense of bliss and satisfaction, that may lead to a state of the sublime.

Likewise, Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa, a renowned Nepali mountaineer, presents her unique experiences in *Forty Years in the Mountains*, a memoir that draws on nearly four decades of navigating the formidable Himalayan terrain. Her book provides a captivating and dynamic narrative that captures both of her life in the mountains, offering readers an authentic perspective on Himalayan mountaineering. Originating from the heart of the Himalayas, Phuti's journey is deeply rooted in a culture and landscape that are both challenging and awe-inspiring. She describes the mesmerizing vistas that allow her to momentarily escape the realities of life. She writes, “. . . the panorama of these views from the top of the hill was quite sublime!” (234). For Phuti, the awe-inspiring panorama serves not only as a source of beauty but also spiritual experience that deepens her connection to the natural world.

Arlene Blum, the first American woman to lead an all-women's team to successfully ascend Mount Annapurna, has played a pioneering role in high-altitude mountaineering. Her anthology, *Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life* (2007) recounts her shocking journeys to different places, and her narrative, *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* describes her thrilling account of Mount Annapurna climbing. Blum recounts the terrifying moments of her expedition to the summit due to the severe weather, high altitude, and constant rock falls. Upon reaching the peak, she reflects that after years of dreaming, planning, and preparing, her team successfully climbed Annapurna in 1978, securing their place in the history of women's mountaineering.

Mountaineering narratives reveal that mountainous terrains are revered for their awe-inspiring, majestic vistas, that often defy description. The unique topographical features of mountain peaks, with their varied dimensions and sizes, along with striking zigzag patterns formed by glaciers, rivers, and deep, narrow gorges, add to the grandeur of these landscapes. These captivating natural settings,

combined with the challenges they present, have the potential to evoke a sense of tranquility and serenity in climbers. However, despite the beauty of these environments, scaling such high altitudes requires extensive training, unwavering courage, a belief in oneself, endurance, tolerance patience, comradeship, and team spirit. The physical exertion pushes climbers beyond their limitations, ultimately, allowing them to achieve a state of sublime in their lives.

In conclusion, the majestic peaks of the world's highest mountains like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna captivate mountaineers with their awe-inspiring vistas. The charismatic beauty of the snow-covered landscapes creates a meditative atmosphere that balances the dualities of beauty and terror, evoking awe, and ecstasy, and culminating in an aesthetically uplifting experience. This encounter not only immerses climbers in the magnificence of the natural world but also inspires them to newfound energy and purpose, leading them to self-discovery and transformation.

#### Statement of the Problem

Mountaineering narratives often emphasize themes such as recognition, publicity, nationalism, and financial gain as primary motivations for ascending high peaks like Mount Everest and Annapurna. While these factors are well documented, less attention has been given to the deeper personal motivations that drive mountaineers in their search for profound experiences of self-discovery, personal transformation, and the attainment of the sublime. This gap in literature raises significant questions: what truly drives individuals to climb such formidable peaks? How do emotions like awe and fear evolve into experiences of self-discovery, recognition of human insignificance, and transformation into more compassionate, resilient, and wise human individuals? Furthermore, how do these experiences ultimately lead to achieving the state of the sublime? To address these questions, this

study examines the personal narratives of renowned mountaineers such as Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Phuti, and Blum. Their narratives provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of risk, beauty, and human resilience in high-altitude environments and how these elements contribute to self-discovery and the experience of the sublime.

### Research Questions

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

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

### Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are formulated to address the research questions:

- (a) 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.
- (b) 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.

- (c) To analyze how the perilous yet 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.

#### Delimitations of the Study

This research focuses on a close, detailed analysis of the aforementioned narratives authored by foreign and Nepali mountaineers. Using these primary texts, the study explores the sublime experiences and transformative journeys of these mountains.

Furthermore, this research integrates the philosophical concepts of the 'Sublime' drawing from the works of the eighteenth-century philosophers Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Adhering to the principles of qualitative research, the primary objective of this study is to delve into the profound engagement of the mountaineers' encounter with the sublime. Furthermore, it seeks to illuminate their transformative journey towards discovery and realization, eventually, in the attainment of a sublime state.

#### Significance of the Study

This research illuminates the inherent allure of mountaineering, which exerts a profound fascination on individuals and resonates deeply within the human psyche. By analyzing the narratives through the lens of the sublime, it reveals that mountaineering provides heightened awareness and a deeper understanding of both nature and the human condition, leading mountaineers at the state of sublime. Furthermore, it helps to perceive mountaineering as a source of knowledge, empowerment, purity, and faith where the inherent dangers are overshadowed by the

profound rewards of experiencing sublime and spiritual elevation. Till now, a comprehensive exploration of mountaineering literature focusing on the sublime experiences of mountaineers has not been conducted. Hence, by analyzing the captivating and transcendent journeys of renowned mountaineers, this research provides valuable insights into their motivations and psychological landscapes.

#### Research Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this research, the researcher uses a qualitative research design. This approach integrates descriptive, analytical, and interpretative methods to examine and analyze the narratives of mountaineering and the sublime experiences of mountaineers during their ascents of Mount Everest and Annapurna. The selected texts for analysis comprise a diverse range of cultural and geographical contexts, offering a comprehensive exploration of the mountaineering experience. The study investigates the motivations behind taking risks while ascending Mount Everest and Annapurna, focusing on how climbers pursue self-discovery, transformation, and the experience of the sublime. It thoroughly examines various mountaineering narratives scrutinizing relevant research and scholarly works. Additionally, secondary sources, including journal articles on mountaineering are consulted to provide comprehensive insights into the subject. A central focus of this study is the critical interpretation and analysis of primary texts, emphasizing climbers' journeys of self-discovery, transformation, and the attainment of the sublime through mountaineering. Moreover, it incorporates the researcher's narrative documenting treks to Everest and Annapurna Base Camps.

From a theoretical perspective, this research explores the philosophical insights of two influential thinkers: Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. Their respective works, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* and the section titled "Analytic of the Sublime" within Kant's *Critique*

*of Judgement*, serve as the foundational philosophical insights for this research.

These critical insights have been used as theoretical parameters to analyze the primary texts under scrutiny. Additionally, the research incorporates the ideas of contemporary philosophers such as Emily Brady and J. T. Boulton to make critical interpretations and analyses of the concepts of the sublime.

In the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke (1729- 1772) introduced a transformative concept of the sublime, positioning terror as its pivotal element. In his significant work, he distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime, attributing distinct characteristics to each. His descriptions emphasize contrast between the dark and the bright, the wild and the rustic and the magnificent. Burke defines the sublime through the prism of terror and the evocation of pain or danger, as a source of profound astonishment. Mountaineers' experiences as depicted in their narratives exemplify Burke's concept of the sublime. The act of ascending vast, obscure, and formidable mountains evokes in climbers a profound awareness of their own insignificance, a realization that transforms them and leads to a state of sublimity. The terror and awe inspired by towering peaks and perilous paths align with Burke's notion that such encounters evoke a powerful emotional response, elevating the mind and spirit beyond the ordinary.

Similarly, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) presented his interpretation of the sublime in *Critique of Judgment* (1790), particularly in the section entitled 'Analytic of the Sublime'. Kant delineates a pivotal demarcation between the beautiful and the sublime, extending significant homage to his English predecessor, Edmund Burke.

Kant defines the sublime by dividing it into two categories: the mathematical, related to vastness and size, and the dynamic, associated with power and force. He draws a sharp contrast between the beautiful which is connected to the form and

definite boundaries of an object, and the sublime characterized by overwhelming power, formlessness, and limitlessness. This exploration aligns with the experience of mountaineering where the vast, formidable, and powerful mountainous landscapes evoke a profound sense of awe and wonder, transforming mental boundaries and leading to a state of transcendence.

Through the use of the concept of the sublime, this research asserts that mountaineering encapsulates a significance that goes beyond the mere act of ascending and descending mountainous terrain. Rather, it becomes a medium for self-discovery, transformative experiences, heightened consciousness, and the achievement of the sublime.

### Hypothesis

The enduring allure of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna continues to captivate adventurers and mountaineers, despite the formidable hazards inherent in such expeditions. This fascination highlights the tension between the allure of these peaks and the dangers they embody, including challenging topography, high altitude, severe weather, avalanches, and crevasses. Mountaineers are drawn to these risks by a desire to confront the forces of nature, test their physical and mental limits, and gain a deeper understanding of their own insignificance within the vastness of the natural world. This conformation leads to personal transformation as climbers navigate fear, awe, and trepidation in their journeys. By this, they change becoming humbler, more compassionate, and resilient. Such transformative experiences elevate them to a state of the sublime, as theorized by Burke and Kant they transcend the ordinary and enter a state of heightened awareness and infinity.

### Organization of the Study

This research is organized into six distinct chapters, beginning with an introduction in the first chapter that familiarizes the area for investigation. It not only

informs readers thematic and aesthetic fascination of mountaineering but also outlines the study's core aspects including the research problem, research questions, objectives, research methodology, and delimitation. Furthermore, it highlights the significance of mountaineering as an activity that invokes sublime experiences within individuals, establishing the foundational context for the research.

The second chapter, titled 'Literature Review' provides a thorough examination of the existing body of mountaineering literature, focusing particularly on primary texts that explore themes of self-discovery, transformation, and the sublime. It begins by defining mountaineering literature, incorporating diverse definitions and perspectives from various authors. The chapter contextualizes mountaineering literature within the broader narrative of human travel and its historical evolution. Moreover, it analyzes contributions from prominent reviewers of primary texts, enriching the scholarly discourse with diverse perspectives on the subject.

The third chapter, designated as the 'Theoretical Framework' delves into the philosophical concept of the sublime, providing the foundation for a thorough investigation into its significance within mountaineering narratives. It begins by tracing the historical and philosophical development of the sublime, from its origins to its evolution over time. A key focus of this exploration involves a detailed examination of Burke's foundational work, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, which provides profound insight into the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of the sublime. Furthermore, the chapter delves into Kant's critical interpretations within his *Critique of Judgment*, focusing especially on the 'Analytic of the Sublime,' to understand its implications for aesthetic judgment and the experience of the sublime. Additionally, it includes the ideas of contemporary philosophers Brady and Boulton, enriching the theoretical discussion.

The fourth chapter, a textual analysis, provides an extensive examination of the narratives of male mountaineers, focusing on their physical and psychological challenges as well as their sublime experiences, while climbing the formidable peaks of Mount Everest and Annapurna. This chapter analyzes five narratives —those of Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner —highlighting the epiphanies they experienced during their expeditions.

The fifth chapter focuses on the mountaineering experiences of women mountaineers as they ascend Mount Everest and Annapurna. It includes an in-depth analysis of the works of four notable women mountaineers such as Gammelgaard, Stephens, Phuti, and Blum. It examines how these women mountaineers overcome challenges and find meaning and fulfillment in their lives. Additionally, this chapter includes a comparative analysis of men's and women's mountaineering narratives, offering valuable insights into the gendered aspects of mountaineering. It also explores the mysterious and mystical allure of Mount Everest and Annapurna as well as the climbers' elevation to a state of spiritual enlightenment.

The concluding chapter summarizes the key findings of the research, highlighting the profound impact of mountaineering experiences and the attainment of the sublime in expeditions to Mount Everest and Annapurna expeditions. It highlights mountaineering as a significant catalyst for self-realization and personal transformation. Furthermore, this chapter not only reflects the research's empirical insights but also examines the broader implication of these findings for understanding the intricate interplay between human beings and nature.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### Appraisal of Mountaineering Literature

This chapter reviews primary texts on mountaineering, offering critiques supported by historical contexts, thematic analysis, and scholarly perspectives. It begins by defining mountaineering literature, drawing from diverse interpretations by prominent authors such as Robert H. Bates, Claire Elaine Engel, and Lene Gammelgaard. The analysis then critically engages with these texts, examining their context and exploring key themes like self-discovery, realization, transformation, and the sublime. Rather than presenting mountaineering solely as an adventurous pursuit of ascent and descent, this research views it as a profound journey in which mountaineers encounter both perils and exultation—a path deeply rooted in self-discovery, transformation and encounter with the sublime.

### Genre of Mountaineering Literature

Mountaineering literature, a subgenre of travel literature, delves into the physical, emotional, and psychological challenges faced by mountaineers during their ascents of towering peaks. It captures both the inherent dangers and the awe-inspiring beauty experienced by mountaineers during their expeditions. Their narratives blend the elements of adventure, challenges, achievements, discovery, transformation, and the sublime. In *Mystery, Beauty, and Danger*, Robert H. Bates, an American mountaineer and author, defines mountain literature by highlighting the diverse motivations behind climbing such as the search for beauty, scientific curiosity, and the need to test human limits against the danger and grandeur of the mountain. Bates articulates:

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 emphasizes that mountain literature, not only reflects the emotional and physical experiences of mountaineers but also delves into the contemplations of human fears and vulnerabilities. He highlights the importance of sacred devoutness during their arduous journeys. Mountaineering literature includes the real-life activities and events of climbers. Gammelgaard in *Climbing High: A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy* underscores the authenticity of mountaineering literature, stating, "The story is about real people and, therefore, what I wrote had a real consequence. I worried about my ability to paint a true picture of the experience . . ." (xv). For Gammelgaard, mountaineering literature captures the heroic narratives of climbers, portraying their indomitable spirit as they confront the daunting challenges of nature.

Mountaineering literature traces its roots to European mountaineering, particularly in the Alps, a range celebrated for its breathtaking beauty and diversity. Walt Unsworth, a notable expert in mountaineering emphasizes the significance of the Alps in *Encyclopedia of Mountaineering*. He describes the Alps as an immense, awe-inspiring landscape characterized by towering peaks, vast thick forests, and serene lakes. His portrayal of the Alps not only highlights their geographical significance but also imbues them with a mystical quality, offering a sanctuary that uplifts the spirit amidst its grand elevations.

Alpine climbing plays a crucial role in the evolution of mountaineering. Historically, in the Western context, mountains were viewed with animosity often

evoking fear and dread. They were deliberately shunned and those who had no choice but to cross them had profound disgust for the rugged landscapes. This aversion was deeply rooted in fear, as mountains were seen as ominous, even dreadful entities.

Showell Styles in *On Top of the World: An Illustrated History of Mountaineering and Mountaineer* elaborates, “In more than one region mountains were thought to be a punishment from the gods for the sins of other human forefathers. Ghosts, monsters, goblins crowd the higher valleys” (xiv). Styles explains how ancient beliefs viewed mountains as a place of divine punishment, depicted as realms populated by mystical creatures, contributing to the prevailing sense of dread.

Similarly, in *Mystery, Beauty, and Danger* Bates mentions Alpine folklore that describes the mythological danger associated with mountains. He asserts, “Some Alpine dragons were described as breathing fire, inhaling birds, and throwing off sparks . . .” (xvi). This narrative reinforces the image of the Alps as domains filled with supernatural threats. The Alpine mountains had abundant folktales related to gods, evil, devils, dragons, and monsters, haunting the isolated peaks, and frequently disturbing the lives of the living.

However, over time, the perception of mountains, particularly in the Alps underwent a profound transformation from fearful and daunting landscapes into revered settings for human endeavor and exploration. Robert Lock Graham (R. L. G.) Irving in *A History of British Mountaineering*, illuminates the shift by highlighting the deep historical and cultural significance of mountains. He notes:

Sinai, Horeb, and the Mount of the Transfiguration are associated with great moments of revelation in human history; the Greeks placed the home of the gods on Olympus, the source of poetry on Parnassus; Leonardo do Vinci, almost unique in his prominence in both art and science, was probably the earliest to climb up to the summer snow line on a spur of Mont Rosa. (2)

Irving's reflection on mountains as both divine sanctuaries and sources of artistic and scientific inspiration encapsulates this cultural shift. Mountains and mountaineering, once feared and avoided have gradually become sites for reverence, symbolizing creativity, and human achievement which are key themes explored in Alpine mountaineering literature.

Over time, mountains have acquired a multifaceted significance, transforming from mere sacred sites to major recreational destinations. Today, individuals pursue mountain climbing not just for the challenge, but for the sheer joy of the experience. This shift has led to the creation of a body of literature focused on mountaineering, capturing the essence of exploration and discovery and the medium for personal transformation, leading ultimately to a sublime state. In *Mountaineering in the Alps: An Historical Survey*, Claire Eliane Engel, refers to George Mallory who later vanished on Mount Everest, emphasizes, “We are not exultant but delighted, joyful, soberly astonished . . . Have we vanquished an enemy? None but ourselves. Have we gained success? That word means nothing here. We have achieved an ultimate satisfaction... fulfilled a destiny . . .” (15). Engel highlights the profound almost transcendental satisfaction climbers experience through their ascent. This theme of personal transformation, central to mountaineering literature, reveals how mountaineering transcends mere physical conquest, becoming a medium for inner growth and self-discovery.

The allure of the Alpine region documented through travel guidebooks, attracted an increasing number of travelers, thereby expanding the fascination with mountains. As Irving highlights early guidebooks were pivotal in this shift. He mentions, “One of the earliest works on the Alps was more than a handbook; it was a solid volume full of information, some of it true, some of it fiction honestly presented as truth. It was called *Itinera Alpina* and was in Latin; it appeared early in the

eighteen century” (9). Irving claims these books provide route descriptions and practical insights, are instrumental in popularizing mountaineering in the Alpine region, marking a significant milestone for mountaineering literature.

Mountaineering literature transcends the mere discovery of new routes or the physical conquest of virgin peaks. It represents a journey of body and mind where climbers confront not only tangible obstacles of cliffs and glaciers but also physical and mental obstacles. Arnold Lunn in *The Exploration of the Alps* posits:

Alpine exploration is mental as well as physical and concerns itself with the adventures of the mind in touch with the mountains as well as with the adventures of the body in contact with an unclimbed cliff. The story of the gradual discovery of high places as sources of inspiration has its place in the history of Alpine exploration, as well as the record of variation routes too often expressed in a language of unvarying monotony. (208)

Lunn asserts the dual journey of the climber both external and internal places mountaineering within the broader framework of human exploration. Engel echoes this sentiment in *Mountaineering in the Alps*, asserting that every Alpine expedition is a voyage of discovery:

An Alpine expedition, even when parties have already accomplished it, is always something of an exploration. Any peak one has not yet climbed oneself is new, can show itself in the most stupendous aspects, and usually does. It is always a quest for the unknown, to quench a thirst for new sensations and new landscapes. The more one climbs, the more one longs for such new aspects to a world one never can see frequently enough. (181)

For Engel, the Alpine expedition is a quest for the unknown, driven by a thirst for new sensations. It is a journey for discovery, an exploration of knowledge, impressions, and feelings. The constant longing for new horizons and sensations drives climbers

beyond the Alps, pushing them toward unexplored peaks of the Caucasus and the Himalayas in search of new challenges and unexplored summits, further expanding the horizons of mountaineering literature.

### Mountaineering Literature Beyond Alps

The celebration of mountain and mountaineering is not only confined to Western narratives. In non-western traditions, mountains and the act of mountaineering are deeply regarded as integral parts of human civilization, evoking wonder, worship, and profound inspiration. Styles in *On Top of the World* highlights references from the Mahabharata and states:

In the Mahabharata, one finds repeated references to the "peaks of famed Kailasa" or the 'shining turrets of lofty Himalaya'. Sages speak from Himalayan recessed, Shiva's abode is among the most inaccessible snows. India, according to K. M. Panikkar, owes the very 'continuity of its civilization' to this cult of the Himalayas . . . many peaks of the greatest mountain range on earth are sacred to the Hindus, Buddhists, or both, for instance, Kailasa in the West, and Kangchenjunga in the East, of the chain.

(xvi)

Styles argues that human fascination with mountains and mountaineering is as old as the mountains themselves, rooted in their whiteness, silence, beauty, and mystery. Moreover, mountaineering literature captures the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of the climbing experiences. The enduring allure of the Himalayan captivates British, French, and other European Alpine climbers, who after perfecting their skills and techniques, sought greater challenges among the world's highest peaks such as Mount Everest, and Mount Annapurna, which exceed 8,000 meters. These expeditions not only test the limits of human endurance but also produce narratives

that enrich the genre of mountaineering literature. As climbers encounter these vast, awe-inspiring landscapes, they transform their experiences into rich stories that convey both the grandeur of nature and the internal struggle of the climbers.

The allure and motivation of the Himalayas and other formidable ranges extend beyond their physical challenges. In *On Top of the World*, Styles explores the diverse motivations behind mountaineering. He asserts:

Some people will be seen climbing for money (Chamoniards after De Saussure's prize, Sherpa . . . 15 of them needed to carry the coins to pay the other 500 in a gigantic Japanese expedition!), some climb for fame (Bourrit), some for the advancement of science (De Saussure), others for home and country (Carrel), or because they 'like that sort of thing' (Shipton), because 'mountains are there' (Mallory), or to 'knock off the bastards' (Hillary). It is also possible to climb mountains for mystical experiences. (xv)

Styles presents a wide range of motivations that highlight the complexity of the human relationship with mountains, making mountaineering literature a rich field of exploration of both the outer world and the climbers' inner journeys.

Mountaineering literature not only captures climbers' struggles and triumphs but also presents the profound beauty of the natural world. The attraction of mountainous landscapes lies in their rugged hills, deep gorges, expansive glaciers, and mighty waterfalls. Bates in 'Are They Sacred, Beautiful, or Horrible,' published in *Mystery, Beauty and Danger* quotes the sentiments of Benoit Marti of Berne, who climbed Niesen in 1558 and expressed his love for mountains, describing:

Who would not admire and love places of this sort? Who would not delight to contemplate them, to visit them, to climb them? Of a truth, those who are not moved by things so beautiful deserve, in my judgment, no better names than

imbeciles, fools, boobies, fishes, and slow tortoises. I am indeed powerless to describe the enchantment and instinctive love which drew me to the mountains, and which make the hours I spend upon the ridges of the Alps the happiest of my life. No walks can give me greater pleasure than those I take among mountains. (2)

Through these words, Marti conveys his deep affection for the mountainous landscapes, emphasizing their incredible beauty and enchantment. He highlights how the mountain's wondrous and astonishing patterns make them places of great charm and loveliness, drawing people to experience their grandeur. This sense of awe, combined with the challenges of mountaineering forms the core component of mountaineering literature.

Edmund Viesturs in *The Mountain: My Time on Everest*, recounts the early twentieth-century expeditions that laid the groundwork for Everest exploration.

Viesturs mentions:

Bold explorers in the second decade of the twentieth century had reconnoitered toward Everest in the course of other expeditions. In 1913, John Noel, who would become the photographer and cinematographer on the British teams of the early 1920s, had reached a pass north of Kangchenjunga and watched as the clouds dispersed and the top thousand feet of Everest came into view. (30)

Viesturs argues that this moment marked the introduction of Mount Everest to the global community, following its initial identification by the British in 1852, later formal naming in 1856 through the efforts of Sir George Everest, the British Surveyor General of India, Surveyor Radha Nath, and Nepali Corporal Tej Bir Budhathoki. The early expeditions and the subsequent attempts, such as George Mallory and Andrew

Irvine's famous and tragic climbs in 1921, 1922, and 1924 exemplify the relentless pursuit of summits that became central to mountain literature. Mallory's legendary response, 'Because it is there' reflects the deeper motivations behind mountaineering. This motivation shared by many climbers, has fueled the production of numerous books that document their experiences, emotions, challenges, and discoveries. These narratives, in turn, have significantly broadened the horizons of mountaineering literature, turning it into a genre that explores not only the technical aspects of mountaineering but also the profound journeys and stories of those who engage with the world's highest peaks.

Before World War II, attempts to climb Everest from the north proved fruitless. However, in 1949, when Nepal opened its borders to foreigners, new opportunities for Himalayan expeditions arose. French mountaineers took the lead in high-altitude exploration with Maurice Herzog and his team achieving a historic milestone by summiting Mount Annapurna in 1950. This marked the first successful ascent of a peak exceeding 8,000 meters. This triumph, followed by other victories in the Himalayas, not only secured their place in the history of mountaineering but also added new dimensions to mountaineering literature. These accounts went beyond celebrating physical achievements but also psychological and emotional aspects of confronting such immense challenges.

After summarizing the experiences of renowned mountaineers, it reveals that mountaineering literature emphasizes a dual struggle: conquering one's physical limitation during the climb and wrestling with the complexities of the mind. The overwhelming thoughts, sensations, and emotions that arise during such expeditions are central to the narrative. Engel in *Mountaineering in the Alps: A Historical Survey* describes this dual struggle by stating:

The best mountain literature has always required a dual struggle: against oneself and the obstacles put up by the mountains. Against oneself since, having vanquished one's physical deficiencies during a climb, one has to vanquish a sluggish, shy, or restless mind, to find the right tone to convey to the reader some idea of the rushing stream of thoughts, sensations, and impressions in which surprise, wonder and fear are intermingled. (272)

Engel describes that mountain literature involves two types of struggles: one against the physical challenges of the mountain and the other against one's inner struggle. To overcome physical difficulties, the climbers must conquer their own minds such as tiredness, shyness, and anxiety. The challenge for the writer is to find the right way to describe thoughts, feelings, and experiences, mixing surprise, wonder, and fear.

Mountaineering literature, therefore, can be understood as an extensive compilation of narratives that weave together the physical and psychological challenges of mountaineering with deep reflections on human experience. It encompasses diverse works, including adventure stories travel accounts reflective essays that contemplate not only the geological features of mountain landscapes but also the narratives of personal discoveries and transformation. The intricate interplay between human experiences, and environmental dynamics, mountaineering literature deepens our understanding of the ethos of mountaineering. It reveals mountains as more than just physical obstacles, they become the symbol of inner struggle and personal growth.

#### Tracing the Evolution of Travel: A Historical Perspective

Traveling is an integral part of human existence, be it long distance voyages across the world or an ascent to a mountain peak. Travelers have various motives for embarking on their journeys but their main focus is for learning. As noted by Carl

Thompson in *Travel Writing* whether people travel for recreation or in a professional capacity, all are expected to seek useful knowledge. He asserts, “. . . all travelers were supposed to set out in search of useful knowledge, regardless of whether they were traveling recreationally or in some professional capacity, and regardless of whether they were traveling within the British Isles, or to Europe, or some more remote destination . . .” (45). Thompson claims that travel aims to provide useful knowledge regardless of its purpose. It is a quest, a journey for discovery, realization, and consciousness.

The genre of travel writing, encompassing both adventurous and non-adventurous accounts, comprises vivid narratives that brim with incidents, anecdotes, and subjective impressions of travelers. This diverse corpus of writing centers around travel whether it is factual or fictional. Jonathan Raban reveals in *For Love and Money: Writing, Reading, Travelling*, "Travel writing is a notoriously raffish open house where different genres are likely to end up in the same bed. It accommodates the private diary, the essay, the short story, the prose poem, the rough note and published table talk with indiscriminate hospitality" (253). Raban contends that travel writing blends factual reports with fictional elements, scientific details with poetic allusions, descriptions with visual illustrations, and other features. Accordingly, the boundaries of the travel writing genre are flexible rather than fixed. In the same way, the considerations of travel are difficult to establish. In *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Peter Hulme writes, "The parameters of travel are almost impossible to set. Xavier de Moistre wrote about a voyage around his bedroom and laid it down in the travel writers' handbook" (97). Hulme argues that travel is essentially, a movement through space, whether it involves epic journeys to distant lands or a mountain hike. Along the way, the traveler documents or narrates their experiences, producing a diverse range of materials that may be either fictional or non-fictional.

Human impulses to travel and explore new places date back to ancient times and have been motivated by various reasons, such as conducting trade, visiting religious shrines, or making war. Lionel Casson in *Travel in the Ancient World* highlights that as early as 1500 BCE, some individuals began to travel for recreational purposes and their writings focused on personal travel experiences and information about various places and people.

In the medieval era, travel texts began to blend factual and fantastical elements, combining plausible descriptions of the people and the places with accounts of monstrous or miraculous beings. These travel accounts emerged in first-person narration and gradually developed in the form of the pilgrimage narrative. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387) provides a vivid description of travel while Marco Polo's travel narrative from the late Middle Ages became the most influential of its time.

Early modern travel writing was influenced by the voyages of Christopher Columbus, which took place between 1492 to 1504 and marked a turning point in the genre. Columbus's emphasis on firsthand observation and empirical inquiry, rather than relying on the works of earlier authors, established a new emphasis on eyewitness accounts. Styles references to Columbus in *On Top of the World* and asserts:

The man was beginning his long quest for knowledge of his world, impelled by curiosity or avarice or the sheer love of adventure. The last, perhaps, has been the chief driving force behind all voyages of discovery, desert journeys, and mountain ascents; and behind the love of adventure. (3)

Styles contends that traveling is the key factor for discoveries and transformation. It helps to identify the unknown that helps to realize our position on earth. During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, travel writing gained importance and was considered a highly

diverse and heterogeneous genre. For centuries, it primarily took the form of travel, voyages, and discoveries. However, editors and publishers began to release extensive collections of travel accounts and documents such as Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffics and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589), and Samuel Purchas's *Purchas His Pilgrims* (1625). Despite focusing only on the New World and discoveries, the travelers of this era showed interest in various cultures and countries of Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. In the latter part of the 16th and 17th centuries, overseas travel became more popular. Travel books began to reflect quests for romances, picaresque fiction, and protagonists encountering a sequence of adventures and misadventures. Examples of these can be seen in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), a play, *The Travels of Three English Brothers* (1607) by John Day.

During the latter part of the 18th century, domestic tours within Europe became increasingly fashionable. While some tourists continued to undertake the traditional Grand Tour, others preferred to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the landscape. The Grand Tour, which involved an extended visit to the European continent, particularly France and Italy, was a popular pastime. Some travelers engaged in sightseeing purely for recreational purposes, while others explored the hills and the mountains. Following their explorations, a wide variety of books on the subjects were produced, contributing to the growing prestige and popularity of travel writing. During the 18th and 19th centuries, travel was regarded as a means of both explorations for knowledge, and tourism. John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and William Dampier's *New Voyage Round the World* (1697) provide notable examples of how travel generated knowledge and was considered a requirement for personal development.

In the early history of travel literature, the genre evolved through three distinct phases. From 1880 to 1900, it was characterized by a long, realistic, and instructional narrative of heroic adventure. Between 1900 and the onset of World War I, travel writings became less didactic, shifting towards a more subjective, and literary style. Within the interwar years, the literary travel book acquired a newfound sense of speed with the expansion of the European and American railway networks. Prominent travelogues of the 1920s included T.E. Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1920), D. H. Lawrence's *Sea and Sardinia* (1921), and *Mornings in Mexico* (1927), etc. Travel writing continued to maintain its popularity through the works of authors such as Rosita Forbes, H. V. Morton, and Richard Halliburton. The 1930s is widely regarded as the golden age of literary travel writing with notable contributions from writers such as George Orwell, Graham Greene, Peter Fleming, Robert Byron, Ernest Hemingway, etc. The British tradition of literary travel writing was continued in the post-war era with the works of Eric Newby, Norman Lewis, Colin Thubron, and Jan Morris. These authors' accounts of their personal travel experiences replete with anecdotes, tales, and subjective impressions are key hallmarks of the travel writing genre.

As the popularity of travel literature increased, so did its production, making it a highly popular literary genre in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thompson in *Travel Writing* mentions, "When home and abroad, occident and orient, center and periphery were unproblematic allies defined. Perhaps [travel books] are popular for the very reason they are so deceptive. They create the illusion that there is still an uncontaminated Elsewhere to discover" (5). Thompson asserts travel allows individuals to observe and discover more in life, leading to self-discovery and the attainment of gratification. Citing Mark Cocker, Thompson asserts, ". . . travel is one of the greatest doors to

human freedom, and the travel book is a medium through which humans celebrate this freedom” (6). Cocker highlights the liberating power of travel, viewing it as a pathway to personal freedom. Travel writing reflects the freedom inherent in exploring new places and perspectives.

In its broader sense, travel encompasses various adventurous activities from sea voyages to hill hiking, trekking, and mountaineering. Among these, mountains, with their majestic peaks and rugged landscapes, stand out as alluring destinations for exploration. Traversing these terrains allows individuals not only experience the beauty and challenges of nature but also undergo a journey of liberation and self-discovery. In this broader context, travel writing and mountain and mountaineering literature are deeply connected, sharing the common themes of exploration, self-discovery, and celebration of freedom. Both reflect the essence of venturing into the unknown and embracing the beauty and challenges that nature presents.

#### Literature Reviews on Men's Mountaineering Narratives

Mountaineering literature has a rich historical lineage, however, scholarly reviews on this domain are noticeably limited. The trend of reviewing mountaineering literature has been occasionally overlooked, and often disregarded as lacking scholarly merit. Nevertheless, certain reviewers actively undertake critical evaluations of the narratives centered around Mount Everest and Annapurna. These reviews exhibit a range of perspectives: offering either commendations for the literary compositions or there are critical assessments of the author's approach, as well as the overall literary value of the text. Some esteemed figures such as Robert H. Bates, Maurice Issermn and Steward Weaver, Reinhold Messner, John Hunt, and Gregory McNamee, David Durkan, as well as book publishers have contributed to the field

with notable assessments and compilations that gather wide recognition as eminent collections within the domain of mountaineering literature. The reviews presented herein constitute a selection of critiques focusing on the primary texts that are under scrutiny in this research.

Sir Edmund Hillary's *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest* constitutes a focal point of my scholarly inquiry, owing to the author's honesty in the narrative depiction and the profound experiences that he shares, marked by acts of bravery, agony, and glory inherent in his Everest odyssey. A critical evaluation of Hillary's literary contribution is presented in Jonathan Dore's review entitled *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest by Edmund Hillary*. Dore argues that Hillary's narrative needs no external commendation, asserting, "For as long as humans are thrilled by the sight of a mountain, the first-hand accounts by the principle involved in the first ascent of the highest of all mountains will continue to be real, referred to, deconstructed, and enjoyed" (1). Dore asserts that Hillary's firsthand account of summiting Mount Everest stands on its own merit. He asserts that such a narrative will remain impactful and relevant as long as people are captivated by the awe of mountains. The value of Hillary's work lies in the authenticity of his experience, which according to Dore, will continue to be analyzed, and enjoyed. He suggests that human fascination with mountains ensures the lasting significance of Hillary's story.

Hillary's narrative vividly captures his first steps on the mountainside, describing the transformative moment, ". . . its powerful lights sparked into life a fairy-land of glistening snow and stunted pines and frozen streams. When I crawled into my bunk at two in the morning, I felt I was in a strange and exciting new world"

(1). Hillary's excitement and sense of awe heighten as he beholds the beauty of the mountain for the first time. Accompanied by Tenzing, Hillary embarked on the ascent of Mount Everest in 1951 and achieved the historic feat on May 29, 1953. Despite negotiating a perilous and arduous route, the victory was great. Hillary vividly describes the moment, stating, "Ahead of us the slope changed from ice to snow, and we hoped to find easier going. But the snow had been packed by the wind into such a hard surface that we obtained little relief" (196). Despite the treacherous terrain, Hillary and Tenzing successfully reached the summit. The 1955 edition of *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest*, received notable praise. It highlights:

In defiance of these torturous conditions, Hillary remains enthusiastic and never hesitates in his quest for the summit. Despite the enormity of his and Norgay's achievements, he regards himself, Norgay, and the other members of his expedition as hardworking men, not heroes. And while he never would have reached the top without practiced skill and technical competence, his thrilling memoir speaks first to his admiration of the human drive to explore to understand, to risk, and to conquer. (2003)

The editor emphasizes the remarkable determination and patience manifested by the legendary 1953 team as they ascended Everest.

Mountaineering is often seen as a journey of self-discovery and transformation, ultimately leading to transcendence. This theme is well-documented in mountaineering literature where the act of climbing a mountain like Everest serves not only as a physical challenge but as a path to a higher state of being. Etienne Jacquemet in his 2017 article "Why Do People Come to See Mount Everest? Collective Representations and Tourism Practices in the Khumbu Region," published

in *Journal of Alpine Research / Revue de géographies Alpine* captures this notion of transcendence, noting, “The ascent brings about a change in the status of those who climb the mountain and allows them to transcend the human condition. Individuals find themselves purified, and renewed physically and spiritually” (6). Jacquemet emphasizes the spiritual and physical renewal that climbers experience in their journey to Everest.

The concept of transcendence is also echoed in the historical accounts of mountaineering. Durkan in *Penguins on Everest* examines the British Mount Everest Expedition of 1953, led by Hillary and Tenzing. Durkan highlights a powerful moment when Tenzing reflects on reaching the summit, “Tenzing followed and they plodded on to reach the summit at 11.30 together. Tenzing recalls, “. . . my mountain did not seem to me to be a lifeless thing of rock and ice, but warm, friendly and living” (146). Durkan asserts that Tenzing is not merely a physical entity but a living presence, reflecting his deep connection to the mountain. In this realization, Tenzing sees himself as one with Everest, symbolizing his attainment of the sublime. This moment represents the ultimate merging of human experience and nature, a testament to the transcendence that mountaineering can inspire.

Hillary and Tenzing’s expedition has been reviewed in various ways by different individuals. In *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes*, Isserman and Weaver highlight one such reaction from Alfred B. Fitt of Gross Pointe, Michigan, who wrote to James Ullman on the very day that the news arrived in the United States of Everest’s ascent. Fitt expressed mixed feelings, stating:

A New Zealander named Hillary and a ‘native climber’ presumably a Sherpa . . . have gotten to the top. My first reaction was depression. Somewhere in your

book, or perhaps in Younghusband's or Frank Smyth[e]'s, there is a discussion of the usefulness of an unclimbed Mt. Everest. Now the mightiest mountain has succumbed; puny man has stood on the top of the world. What next? (294)

This excerpt reflects Fitt's ambivalence towards the conquest of Everest. Many celebrate the achievement, Fitt views the event as a sense of loss, expressing that Everest's mystique had diminished. His reaction highlights the contrasting emotions of humanity's triumph over nature.

Jamling Tenzing Norgay with Broughton Coburn in *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest* intertwines the accounts of conquering Everest with the historical ascent of his father and the spiritual ethos of the Sherpa community. Acknowledging the profound spiritual evolution depicted in Norgay's account, Jon Krakauer, in the introduction to the book highlights its narrative significance by asserting, "*Touching My Father's Soul* is thus a story of spiritual evolution, with its concurrent struggles, failings, and irreconcilable contradictions" (xvii). Praising the book as a brilliant work, Krakauer commends the book as the best of the bunch and marvels at the pages. On the cover page of Norgay's book, *The Wall Street Journal* mentions the distinctive quality of Norgay's narrative, emphasizing not only the portrayal of the challenges and excitement inherent in mountain expeditions but also the acute depiction of climbers' attitudes. It states:

What I value most in [Norgay's] account is not his description of the hardships and thrills that are part of any mountain expedition, or even his account of the dramatic events of this unforgettable episode as good as both passages are but his acute sense of the climbers' attitudes. Everest takes on a spiritual quality, almost as if it were an animate being. (2001)

*The Wall Street Journal's* review suggests that Norgay's account of the Everest expedition imbues the mountain with spiritual quality, portraying it as a sentient entity.

Norgay's historic and illuminating expedition in 1996, following the footsteps of his legendary father, is a testament to the profound faith, respect, and attention to mountain, particularly the deity, *Miyolangsangma*. Norgay states, "She continually increases the longevity, wealth, and power of those who worship her. It is the power of *Miyolangsangma*, one Khumbu Lama said, that has delivered us all the foreign tourists and their wealth. Faith is what she asks in return" (220). Despite the superstitious and conservative, Norgay's expedition stands as historic and enlightening.

Tom Brokaw, author of *The Greatest Generation* reviews Norgay's book stating, "Jamling Tenzing Norgay teaches us all the enduring lessons of faith and the humility evoked by high and wild places" (2001). Brokaw emphasizes that Norgay's narrative highlights the knowledge and reverence for nature and the natural world. This realization fosters humility, and compassion in individuals as they come to terms with their smallness against the vastness of nature.

Dalai Lama frames Norgay's Everest expedition as a deeply spiritual experience, emphasizing the cultural and religious significance of the mountain. In the foreword of *Touching My Father's Soul*, the Dalai Lama asserts, ". . . he regards it as a pilgrimage. It is a pilgrimage on the one hand in tribute to his renowned and courageous father, but also because of the traditional Tibetan sense that such mountains are the abode of divine beings" (xi). Lama refers to Norgay's journey as a 'pilgrimage' highlighting the transcendence nature which bridges the earthly and the divine. Hence, this perspective suggests that mountaineering whether in Everest or

Annapurna, transcends the external motivations of conquering physical peaks. Instead, is a meditative journey where mountaineers connect with divine powers, transcending the ascent into a spiritual quest rather than physical achievement.

In *The Mountain: My Time on Everest*, Ed Viesturs, in collaboration with David Roberts, present a fascinating story of his Everest climbing endeavors. The text unfolds as a comprehensive and reflective account wherein Viesturs provides a detailed account of his experiences, weaving together the broader context of his mountain journey and its impact on the rest of his life. Within the introductory segment of Viesturs's work, Tom Hornbein, a distinguished author, delineates the mountain's dual nature as:

First is a rich and introspective account of Ed's eleven Everest expeditions, integrated seamlessly within the broader context of his mountain journeys and of the rest of his life. The other part of this twofer is a concise, compelling account of the history of our human affair with the highest mountain on the earth, from the discovery of Peak XV's height through early exploration to its first ascent in 1953 to the pioneering of new routes in new seasons and climbing in increasingly purer style. (i)

Hornbein's critique highlights Viesturs as the best-known and the first American to climb all fourteen greatest peaks. His narrative constructs a fusion between the personal and all-embracing context of his mountaineering odysseys.

Notably, Jon Krakauer, the acclaimed author of *Into Thin Air* extends commendation to Viesturs in the broader context. Viesturs is praised for his selflessness in aiding others, even at the risk of personal danger or even the sacrifice of his own goals. Krakauer's sentiments prominently featured on the cover page of Viesturs's work, where he asserts:

Ed Viesturs is not merely one of our strongest mountaineers; he is also one of the most remarkable. He has demonstrated that it is possible to climb the world's highest peaks without taking reckless chances, and without sacrificing one's honor or integrity. He has never hesitated to help other climbers in need, even when it meant putting himself in danger or sacrificing his opportunity to achieve a summit. Ed, simply put, is a genuine American hero. (2013)

In alignment with Krakauer's perspective, Viesturs emerges as a figure recognized for unwavering bravery and leadership in mountaineering. His passion for climbing began with his 1987 expedition to Mount Everest, and turns as a transformative journey undertaken alongside his partner, Eric Simonson, an experienced veteran and guide for Rainier Mountaineering Inc. (RMI). This expedition marked a seminal moment shaping Viesturs's trajectory as a distinguished mountaineer.

In the archives of high-altitude mountaineering, the French mountaineers earned a prominent position after their successful ascent of Mount Annapurna (8,091m.) in 1950, the tenth-highest peak in the world. Maurice Herzog is a legendary French mountaineer and in 1950, he became the first person to conquer an 8,000-meter peak, Annapurna. His narrative, *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak* (1997) has a thrilling, gallant, and moving story. In the foreword to the 1952 Edition of Herzog's work, Eric Shipton, a luminary in mountaineering authorship articulates his perspective on the significance of the climbing achievement. Shipton expresses, "The story of the climbing of Annapurna is a remarkable one; in some respects, it is unique. Those with experience of the problems of high altitude climbing know well how small the chances of reaching the top of a peak of more than 25,000 feet in any given season" (vii). Shipton's foreword stands as a reflective

commentary, offering insights into the substantive and seminal nature of Herzog's narrative, acknowledging the exceptional quality of the accounts of the ascent of Annapurna. In Herzog's narrative, Conrad Anker, a noteworthy reviewer, provides insight with the observation:

The ascent of Annapurna in 1950 by the French expedition was the first real foray of humans into this realm. The story of the climb, as recounted by Maurice Herzog in *Annapurna*, brings this time frame alive in the minds of readers. The awe-inspiring terrain the team explored before even setting foot on the mountain was just a prelude to what would become one of the twentieth century's most incredible adventures. (v)

Despite being the most successful mountaineering account, Herzog's work has been criticized vividly. Messner, in his analytical examination within the pages of *Annapurna: 50 Years of Expedition in the Death Zone*, provides a critical perspective:

Many of the passages in Herzog's book sound as if they are fairy tales, and the characters are far too noble to be real—Terray, Lachenal, Oudot. A whole bunch of superhuman! Things were very different, more human, contradictory often to the point of despair. And of course, there were tensions within the team, jealousy, and mistakes. This Annapurna epic, however, the tale of courage, camaraderie, and loyalty after and beyond the time of the expedition, became the most successful mountaineering story of the century. (74)

Messner raises questions concerning the accuracy of the character portrayals and stresses on the presence of human complexities and contradictions within the team. Nevertheless, Herzog's portrayal, capturing the harsh realities, valor, comradeship, and unwavering allegiance, establishes it as a prominent and enduring chronicle in the realm of mountaineering.

Similarly, Durkan in *Penguins On Everest* references Herzog's *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak*, highlighting the essence of high-altitude mountaineering through the quote from Chris Bonington. Bonington captures the core of Himalayan mountaineering as:

Climbing on the Himalayan giants is like walking a shaking tightrope with the potential of disaster constantly with you. For the allure of danger, the mystery of the unknown, the sheer beauty of the mountains around you, and the drive of ego. All of this is captured by Maurice Herzog in 'Annapurna'. It is what makes the book one of the great classics of expedition literature. (127)

Bonington explores why individuals pursue such perilous endeavors, suggesting that the attraction lies in a combination of factors: the thrill associated with danger, the allure of venturing into the unknown, the breathtaking beauty of the surrounding mountains, and the pursuit of personal glory or self-discovery.

In "Facts and Fiction in Maurice Herzog's *Annapurna*" Agnieszka Kaczmarek mentions, "Besides, the French expedition to the Himalayas is not shown as the satisfaction of a few gentlemen's caprices to scale an eight-thousander, but as exploration: a great deal of hesitation, doubt, error and then, quite suddenly, a discovery" (81). Kaczmarek highlights that mountaineering is not merely about reaching summits but about engaging with the human and natural world, becoming each ascent a journey of exploration and revelation.

In the same way, in "The Golden Age Postponed (1940–1950)," a chapter from *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes*, Isserman and Weaver provide an insightful review of Herzog's *Annapurna: The First Conquest of 8,000-Meter Peak* as:

Annapurna could be read as both a story of heroic triumph over the natural world and an equally or even greater spiritual transcendence over suffering. In his review for the *New York Herald Tribune*, James Ramsey Ullman described the books as ‘a gallant and moving story, in some ways a terrible story,’ which he predicted would become ‘one of the classics of climbing literature. (253)

Isserman and Weaver claim that the narrative serves a dual purpose: it is both an account of an epic triumph over the formidable forces of nature and a deep, spiritual journey through immense suffering. Ullman, in his review also characterizes the book as both heroic and harrowing, predicting its future status as a classic book. Both Isserman and Weaver applaud Herzog’s heroic ascent and his captivating portrayal of the climbers’ audacious ascent and their profound engagement with the sublime aspects of nature, which they find both extraordinary and enthralling.

In the critical evaluation of Maurice Herzog’s *Annapurna: The First Conquest of 8,000 Meter Peak*, Viesturs, in *The Will to Climb* praises the accomplishments of Herzog’s expedition to Annapurna. Viesturs emphasizes Herzog’s renowned closing statement in ‘Annapurna’ asserting its universal application to human lives. In the words of Viesturs, "Annapurna ends with the most famous closing line in mountaineering literature: "There are other Annapurnas in the lives of men". I wholeheartedly subscribe to Herzog’s belief that lessons learned in the mountains can be translated into other realms of life" (49). Viesturs consistently interpret this assertion as the notion that each individual possesses their own metaphorical Annapurna.

However, Viesturs criticizes Herzog’s narrative for its apparent oversight of Louis Lachenal, Herzog’s companion during the ascent of Annapurna. Despite their collaborative summiting of the peak, Viesturs laments the disparate trajectories of their post-summit lives. While Herzog enjoyed a distinguished career, such as mayor

and minister of youth and sport, Lachenal received no recognition. Viesturs expresses his discontent, stating, "What is vexing, and puzzling, and ultimately very sad is that Annapurna gave Louis Lachenal no sense of fulfillment to match Herzog. The loss of his toes plunged the man into anguish and despair" (50). Viesturs's discerning comments and admiration for Lachenal's plight are commendable, shedding light on an aspect of the narrative that warrants further consideration and recognition.

Reinhold Messner's remarkable achievement of ascending Mount Annapurna in 1985 from the Northwest Face side, is documented in *Annapurna: 50 Years of Expeditions in the Death Zone*. As a leader of a small group of inexperienced high-altitude mountaineers, Messner confronted formidable challenges arising from the perilous rock fall, hasty terrain, and adverse weather conditions. The cover page of Messner's book, *The Mountain Books*, serves as an introduction to Messner's mountaineering career that spans from 1969 to the present. It claims:

Since 1969, Reinhold Messner has gone on more than one hundred expeditions to the mountains and deserts of the earth. Recognized as one of the greatest mountaineers of all time, Messner does without expansion bolts, oxygen masks, or satellite phones. He has achieved a great many first ascents, conquered all fourteen of the world's 8,000-meter peaks, succeeded in traversing Greenland, and provided an answer to the mystery of the Yeti.

(2000)

*The Mountain Books* highlights Messner's persona as a heroic high-altitude mountaineer, embracing challenges that test the limits of human endurance and resolution. Messner's courage and contributions to Himalayan mountaineering are prominently recognized by Isserman and Weaver in *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extreme*. They note, "His succession of achievements, high ideals, and relentless self-promotion combined

to make him the best-known Himalayan mountaineer of his generation, his fame rivaled only by that of Chris Bonington" (431). This acknowledgment underscores Messner's significant impact on and legacy within the realm of high-altitude mountaineering.

Moreover, Isserman and Weaver highlight Messner's discovery and realization at the summit, "Messner sees Everest as an 8,000-meter extension of himself. . . . Messner was entranced by the image of himself he saw reflected in nature" (436). This reflection shows how Messner's expedition led to a profound self-awareness as he recognized his connection with the natural world. After reviewing Messner's journey, Isserman and Weaver comment on his transformative experience at the summit of Annapurna where he realizes his own insignificance and union with nature.

#### Reviews on Women's Mountaineering Narratives

In addition to providing reviews on male mountaineers' endeavors, this research also includes reviews on women mountaineers and their narratives. The analysis and commendations of these accounts offer valuable insights, enriching the scholarly discourse on women's mountaineering. Reflecting on the history of women's Himalayan expeditions, Isserman and Weaver mention, "So it was quite an innovation in Himalayan climbing in the year after World War II when women began appearing on expeditions without their husbands—and sometimes without any male climbers other than Sherpa" (341). As Isserman and Weaver, the women overcame fear and hesitation, demonstrating remarkable determination to reach the summit of the world's highest peaks. Their efforts not only challenged traditional gender roles but also highlighted the resilience and strength of women mountaineers.

The publication, *Mountaineering in Nepal: Facts and Figures, 2020* by the Government of Nepal, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, Department of Tourism presents statistical data about the accomplishments of women mountaineers in reaching the summit of Mount Everest. As of December 2019, the documented figures indicate that four hundred and seventy-one women have achieved this feat. Among these distinguished mountaineers, Lene Gammelgaard, Rebecca Stephens, and Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa emerge as notable exemplars of aspiration, ambition, and determination, having successfully ascended the summit of Mount Everest, with Arlene Blum attaining a similar achievement on Mount Annapurna. These women stand as examples of exceptional resilience, fortitude, and skill in the realm of mountaineering.

Rebecca Stephens became the first British woman to ascend the formidable heights of Mount Everest in 1993. The chronicle of her remarkable journey is encapsulated in the publication entitled *On Top of the World*, a work published by Macmillan. Her journey began with the ascent of Mont Blanc in 1990, followed by climbs of Mount Kenya, Kilimanjaro, and ultimately, with the ascent of Mount Everest. As noted on the cover page of *On Top of the World*, the book publisher, Macmillan emphasizes, "Not just about mountaineering, *On Top of the World* is an inspirational story of how Rebecca Stephens in accepting new challenges changed her life" (1994). For Macmillan, mountaineering is not about the thrill of reaching the summit or facing vulnerabilities and fears. Rather, it is a narrative of how individuals accept new challenges leading to consciousness and personal transformation.

Similarly, in the essay, "Climbing like a Girl: An Exemplary Adventure in Feminist Phenomenology," Danne Chisholm reflects on Lynn Hill's climbing experiences, stating, "As I practice going the farther while expending the least amount

of energy, I discovered a new consciousness in my climbing. I learned to appreciate how subtle shift in my attitude could greatly affect the quality of my movements” (16). Like Stephens, Hill considers mountaineering as a source of knowledge, revealing one’s capacities and consciousness.

Mountaineering, while challenging and formidable, continues to attract a large number of climbers. Despite the risks, Stephens achieves her dream of scaling Mount Everest through her physical strength and courage. Within her narrative, Stephens reflects multifaceted facets of the mountain’s allure and the elation upon reaching the summit. Moreover, she shares her sublime encounters replete with vulnerabilities, fears, and, most importantly, her dependence on the expertise of her fellow climbers. On the cover page of Stephens’s work, the mountain photographer John Cleare, remarks, “*On Top of the World* tells the story of how Rebecca Stephens fulfilled her dream of climbing Mount Everest the preparation, the courage and the sheer determination it took to approach this challenge. Above all, it is the extraordinary account of how one woman’s passion took her to the top of the world” (1994). Cleare’s commentary centers on Stephens’s unwavering determination and her aspiration to become the first British woman to ascend Everest.

Lene Gammelgaard, a Danish climber, and author, became the first Scandinavian woman to ascend Mount Everest, reaching the peak from the South East Ridge in 1996. Her narrative of this remarkable ascent is chronicled in the book entitled, *Climbing High: A Woman’s Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy* (1999). About Gammelgaard's work, Andrea Gabbard, the author of *Mountaineering: A Woman’s Guide Book and No Mountain Too High: A Triumph over Breast Cancer* remarks, "Climbing High is a concise, passionate account of the 96 Everest tragedy, and a welcome addition to the growing library of books about extreme challenges surmounted by women" (28). Gabbard argues Gammelgaard's remarkable passion for

summiting and her safe return as an astonishing experience. *The Seal Press*, featured on the cover page commends Gammelgaard's keen analytical prowess and insightful writing:

With a keen, observant eye and incisive writing, Gammelgaard puts the events of the 1996 Everest tragedy in a new perspective. She describes eloquently the passion and commitment it takes to face the daunting challenge of climbing in the 'death Zone' above 26,000 feet, the complex personal relationships forged in the pursuit of such a dangerous venture, and the majestic, unparalleled beauty of the world at high altitude. (1)

*The Seal Press* emphasizes the unforgettable and meaningful nature of Gammelgaard's story, notes her skill in guiding readers through weeks of determined training her exhilarating arrival in Nepal, and her arduous climb to the summit. Blum, the author of *Annapurna, A Woman's Place* praises Gammelgaard on the cover page and states, "An honest and deeply personal account of the May 1996 Mount Everest." Blum characterizes the book as a chronicle of Gammelgaard's personal feelings during that pivotal period.

The courage and adventurous spirit of women mountaineers in Nepal have garnered widespread recognition. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of the Nepal government, through the Department of Tourism, published *Mountaineering in Nepal: Facts and Figures, 2020*, presenting the data on Nepali women who successfully summited Mount Everest and other Mountains in Nepal up to December 2019. Pasang Lhamu Sherpa became the first Nepali woman to achieve this remarkable feat, scaling Mt. Everest in 1993, through East Ridge. Unfortunately, she lost her life while descending from the summit.

Following her footsteps, Lhakpa Sherpa became the second Nepali woman to successfully summit *Sagarmatha* in 2000, from the South East Ridge. Subsequently, Pemba Doma Thaktopa Sherpa accomplished this feat in 2002, and Moni Mulepati added her name to the list of successful Nepali woman mountaineers in 2005. As a result, more than forty Nepali women have accomplished the feat of summiting Mount Everest, earning a distinguished place in the history of women's mountaineering.

In *Forty Years in the Mountains* Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa provides a detailed account of her mountaineering and skiing experiences. The book has received honors from *Annapurna Post Daily* as mentioned on her cover page, featuring it as "This book chronicles the author's joys and sorrows and the odyssey of her success. Her journey from the lap of the Himalayas till she prepared this book was not an easy one". *Annapurna Post Daily* acknowledges the book as a narrative of her struggle and hardships, challenging conceptions about the Sherpa, Mount Everest, and adventurous life. Phuti emphasizes in Author's Note that the book exclusively captures her personal experiences, presenting them with honest objectivity, and fairness grounded in the reality of her journey from the Himalayan foothills to the creation of this work.

Mountaineering for women in Nepal presents unique challenges, as described in Wendy Hillman's article, "Issues for women trekking in Nepal: '3 sisters adventure trekking' guides." Hillman mentions:

For women, especially in the family, taking care of others usually takes priority, limiting her freedom to and freedom from and hence her [time to spent on] leisure. The concomitant notion is lack of entitlement which as well as commitment to the ethic of care also includes women's sense that they are inferior and do not deserve to have [any connection] leisure. (4)

Hillman emphasizes the social constraints placed on women, where their leadership and capabilities are often overshadowed by families and social expectations. Women are not only limited by time but also lack entitlement to leisure activities like hiking, trekking, and mountaineering. Phuti shares a similar story of overcoming limitations and becoming the summiteer of the highest mountain in the world.

Arlene Blum's *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* chronicles her expedition to Annapurna on September 15, 2015. The editorial reviews of her book highlight the historical significance of the expedition, noting that in August 1978, thirteen women left San Francisco for the Nepal Himalaya to make history as the first Americans and the first women to scale the treacherous slopes of Annapurna 1, the world's tenth highest peak. Expedition leader Blum tells her dramatic story: the logistical problems, storms, and hazardous ice climbing; the conflicts and reconciliations within the team; the terror of avalanches that threatened to sweep away camps and climbers. As the reviews, the expedition presents sublime experiences characterized by passion, humor, and unwavering honesty. The book examines the intricacies of the journey, offering a detailed account of the various elements that shaped the historical ascent of Annapurna 1 by a group of pioneering women.

Despite the remarkable achievements and sublime experiences recounted in Blum's narrative, her account has faced sharp criticism. Galen Rowell and his girlfriend Melinda Sanders criticized Arlen's book due to personal conflict during the K2 expedition and urged *National Geographic* magazine not to print and publish her article. Isserman and Weaver view:

According to Rowell/Sanders's letter, it was 'bald-faced racism' to claim that the 1978 Annapurna expedition was 'women's achievement.' The real work of getting to the summit, Rowell/ Sanders argued, had been done by the two male

Sherpas who had accompanied the two successful women summiteers. Not only that, but the 'escapade' had been a 'co-educational, co-habiting expedition in which women slept with men, who were piled into sexual relations with booze.' Rowell / Sanders professed shock that the expedition had concluded 'with one woman marrying a Sherpa'. (426)

This critique reflects broader gender biases and reveals a tendency to undermine women's achievement in mountaineering. Such tension exemplifies the challenges faced by women in receiving recognition for their accomplishments. Despite these obstacles, women mountaineers continue to demonstrate bravery, patience, and commitment, both in the field of mountaineering and documenting their success, and achievements through the narrative writings.

In addition to evaluating primary texts, a substantial number of reviews delve into the mountaineering experiences associated with Everest and Annapurna. Within the scope of critiques centered on the Everest expedition, Ellis J. Stewart in *Everest: It's Not About the Summit* emphasizes that the summit itself does not constitute the sole focus. He contends:

What I take away from these experiences is what I have learned about life-my life in particular, the person I was, and the person I have become. I learned these valuable lessons the hard way, ultimately learning that life is not always about the achievement of dreams and aspirations. It is more often than not about the entire process and the steps we take to achieve the goal, regardless of whether it is achieved or not. (336)

Stewart asserts that while reaching Everest's summit may be the ultimate goal of mountaineering, it is only a small part of the overall adventure. For him, the true value lies in discovery, learning, realization, and experience of the sublime, elements far outweigh the pursuit of climbing as an end in itself.

Despite the critical appraisals of Mount Everest and Annapurna within the discourse, most reviews focus primarily on summarizing the narratives and critiquing the author's external motives like name, fame, and conquest. These assessments often overlook the mountaineers' inner motivations that is psychological and emotional journey, discovery, personal transformation, and the pursuit of the sublime. This leaves a gap in understanding how climbers evolve through their experiences and transcend physical challenges to reach the state of the sublime. The dissertation aims to address this gap by focusing on the internal transformation experienced by mountaineers in coming chapters.

## Conclusion

Mountaineering literature is a broad term that encompasses diverse range of narratives concerning mountaineering than the landscapes of the mountains. The historical trajectory of mountaineering literature originates from human's inherent impulse to travel far and wide, and to challenge the spirit to hazardous and precarious conditions, which subsequently evolve into quest narratives leading to the realization of the ultimate truth of human existence. Initially, the climbers who subsequently, transform into writers, begin their journey, as they are lured by the splendor and magnificence of the mountain peaks. However, gradually they undergo a transformative process and begin appreciating the mountain's magnificence and awe inherent in the mountainous landscapes. Consequently, the climbers/authors seem to suggest that they experience a new perspective, perceiving the world through an entirely new dimension.

### Chapter III: Theoretical Framework

#### Illuminating the Sublime Philosophy in Mountaineering Narratives

This chapter introduces the concept of the sublime as a theoretical framework for examining, interpreting, and analyzing the narratives of renowned mountaineers who have ascended towering and formidable peaks like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. In mountaineering, climbers often encounter awe, vastness, and the overwhelming power of nature which are the key elements of the sublime as defined by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant in their respective works. Accordingly, this chapter explores mountaineering narratives through the perspective of the sublime, highlighting how these emotions evoke self-discovery, transformation, and transcendental experiences for climbers, ultimately leading to the sublime state.

This study examines the mountaineering narratives of Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Phuti, and Blum, focusing on their motivations for pursuing the sublime through the ascents of Mount Everest and Annapurna. These narratives reveal a complex blend of emotions such as terror, fear, awe, and exhilaration which are key characteristics of the sublime. The researcher employs the concept of the sublime as a theoretical tool to understand what drives individuals to undertake such expeditions. For this research, Burke's treatise *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, and Kant's discussion in the 'Analytic of the Sublime,' from his *Critique of Judgment*, serve as the foundational texts for constructing the research's theoretical framework. Additionally, the study incorporates contemporary perspectives from Emily J. T. Boulton, enriching the discourse with modern interpretations of the sublime. These philosophers collectively regard the sublime as an aesthetic dimension that surpasses

ordinary beauty by invoking a sense of vastness and greatness beyond all possibility of calculation, measurement, and even imitation.

### Origins and Historical Overview of the Sublime

The concept of the sublime, first articulated by the first-century Greek rhetorician Cassius Longinus, forms a foundational for this study. Brady, a professor of environment and philosophy in *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* elucidates the historical trajectory of the sublime, “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 claims that Longinus focuses on rhetoric and elevated language as tools for evoking heightened emotional and intellectual responses.

Brady further explores the etymological origin of the term ‘Sublime’. She traces its lineage to the Greek noun *Hupsos* signifying height, and the Latin adjective *sublimis*, which denotes elevation, upliftment, or loftiness. This exploration into etymology underscores the inherent associations of the term with the notions of grandeur and exaltation. She elucidates, "Its etymology stems from the (probably) *sub*, 'up to', and *limen*, 'lintel'. 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 intrinsically linked with uplifting ideas or objects that inspire the mind to rise above the self and relate to something greater. This connection has an expansive effect on the mind, creating feelings of astonishment.

While Longinus provides a foundational definition of the sublime, Brady explores its deeper sources, content, and character through rhetorical devices and stylistic means, identifying the 'power of grand conceptions' and the 'inspiration of vehement emotion' as its central elements of the sublime. She elaborates:

For the true sublime naturally elevates us: uplifted with a sense of proud exaltation, we are filled with joy and pride as if we had ourselves produced the very thing heard. This elevation of the mind and the accompanying feeling of pride, or a kind of admiration for one's capacities, is a common theme in eighteenth-century accounts. (13)

Brady highlights Longinus's emphasis on the sublime as both an intellectual and emotional experience, akin to a personal achievement. This interconnection between cognitive elevation and emotional fulfillment, according to Brady, is prevalent in eighteenth-century discussions on the sublime.

This dialogue extends to the idea that the sublime is linked to grandeur, possessing the ability to uplift and broaden the mental landscapes. Boulton, in his critical edition of Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* reinforces this perspective by highlighting Longinus's exploration of the technical means for producing sublime effects and its impact. Longinus's theory demonstrates that the essence of the sublime lies in its association with magnificence, its potential to elevate and expand the mind, and its capacity to invoke powerful expressions and intense emotional reactions. He particularly emphasizes, ". . . the sources of the sublime the first two is, "the faculty of grasping great conceptions", and "passion, strong and impetuous" (xlvi). Boulton argues that Longinus's conception of the sublime is characterized by an overwhelming sense of awe and astonishment that captures the listener's attention. The Longinian tenets of sublime, according to Boulton are that, "The Sublime therefore must be Marvelous, and Surprising. It must strike vehemently upon the Mind, and Fill, and Captivate it Irresistibly" (xlvii). Boulton claims that the Longinian sublime employs descriptions such as "extraordinary", "surprising", and "marvelous" to articulate the sublime's impact, noting that these terms recurrently appear in the writings of subsequent

authors. The emphasis on the sublime's capacity to astonish and elevate the mind underscores the enduring influence of Longinian thought on the conceptualization of the sublime in literary and philosophical discourse.

The scholarly discourse on the sublime reached its pinnacle during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period marked by a profound engagement with aesthetic categories including the sublime, beauty, ugliness, and the picturesque. The prominence of the sublime within academic discourse can be seen in the influential works of eminent philosophers such as Burke, Kant, Friedrich Schiller and Arthur Schopenhauer. Their contributions were instrumental in elevating the theory of the sublime. Although the first significant theory of the sublime was written by Burke, the notion had already been postulated by British authors like John Dennis, Joseph Addison, John Baillie, and Alexander Gerard.

With the advent of the eighteenth century, the philosophical and aesthetic dimensions of the sublime, as conceptualized by Longinus began to permeate British thought. This idea came from the works of Nicolas Boileau's *Despreaux* who has translated and published his translation of Longinus's *On the Sublime*. Based on the ideas of Boileau, Dennis's *Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, Gerard's *Essay on Taste*, and Baillie's *An Essay on the Sublime* play pivotal roles in introducing and adapting Longinian ideas within the British context. In *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethnics, and Nature* Brady highlights this transition, stating, "Through his translation of *Peri Hupsous* into French, as well as his own discussions, Boileau is usually credited with bringing Longinus's sublime into British thought" (13). Brady highlights Boileau's significant contribution through his translations and discussions of Longinus's work which contributed a crucial role in emphasizing the sublime's significance in British aesthetic and philosophical discourse.

Advancing the discourse further, John Dennis emerged as a key figure in exploring the sublime, particularly its emotional resonance and psychological impact on the reader. H. S. Monk in *A Study of Critical Theories in 18<sup>th</sup> Century England*, posits Dennis as a foundational thinker in the realm, noting:

John Dennis was the first to investigate both the nature of the sublime object and its effect on the mind of the reader. Dennis is singularly important for his emphasis on passion. . . . There are, in his view, two types of passion, ‘Vulgar’ and ‘Enthusiastic’, and the latter is of six kinds: Admiration, Terror, Horror, Joy, Sadness, and Desire. (45)

Monk claims that Dennis’s work is particularly notable for his delineation of passions into ‘Vulgar’ and ‘Enthusiastic’ categories, with the latter comprising complex emotions such as horror, terrible joy, and a sense of being infinitely pleased, yet simultaneously terrified.

Further illustrating this idea, Marjorie Hope Nicolson examines Dennis’s experiences in the Alps, as recounted in *Mountain Gloom, and Mountain Glory*. Nicolson highlights a moment where Dennis describes the simultaneous awe and danger of being on the edge of a precipice, articulating the profound emotional ambivalence that defines the sublime:

In the very same place, Nature was seen as Severe and Wanton. In the meantime, we walk’d upon the very brink, in a literal sense, of Destruction; one Stumble and both Life and Carcass had been at once destroyed. The sense of all this produc’d different emotions in me, viz, a delightful Horror, a terrible Joy, and at the same time, that I was infinitely pleas’d I trembled. (277)

Nicolson argues that Dennis’s reflection on this experience marked by a delightful horror, a terrible joy, embodies the sublime’s ability to evoke deeply ambivalent

emotional states. She further argues that Dennis's articulation of this psychological complexity makes his work a crucial advancement in the evolution of the sublime, moving beyond Longinus's initial frameworks.

Nicolson asserts, "Longinus, he granted, knew the Sublime, but he did not understand its true nature enough to explain it to others. Most of all, Longinus had been concerned only with the effects of the sublime" (281). Nicolson contends that Dennis is more influential and comprehensive in his opinions regarding the sublime than Longinus. Furthermore, Nicolson regards Dennis's contribution to the understanding of the sublime as, ". . . three-fold: he analyzed, as had no previous writer, the causes of sublimity; he developed its effects upon psychological grounds unknown to Longinus; he based his conception, not upon rhetorical theories but his own experience and attitudes native to the English . . ." (281). Nicolson claims that Dennis's comprehensive approach, integrating analysis, psychological insight, and personal experience highlights Dennis's crucial role in advancing the discourse on the sublime, setting the stage for further explorations by subsequent thinkers.

This progression is evident in the works of Joseph Addison in the eighteenth century, who, as Boulton, observes, built upon Dennis's insights into the sublime. In the analysis of Burke's theory, Boulton highlights Addison's contributions, noting, "In the *Spectator* papers 411–421, he divides the "Pleasures of the Imagination" into those arising from the "Great, Uncommon, or Beautiful. By treating the Great and Beautiful as separate qualities he undoubtedly helps to establish the distinction which Burke fully develops between the sublime and the beautiful" (xlix). Boulton claims that Addison's contribution can be seen in his distinction between the 'Great' from the 'Beautiful' which, Burke later elaborates extensively.

Addison's fascination with the Alps and their awe-inspiring landscapes illustrates the growing eighteenth-century interest in the sublime and its ability to evoke awe and wonder. Brady in *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* highlights Addison's ability to contrast the beauty of landscapes with their vast and overwhelming immensity. She explains, "For though they may sometimes appear as beautiful or strange, they can have nothing in them of that vastness and immensity, which afford so great an entertainment to the mind of the beholder. . . . There is something bold and masterly in the rough careless strokes of nature . . ." (16). Brady argues that this appreciation for the grandeur of natural landscapes resonates with the sentiments of contemporary writers like John Baillie and Alexander Gerard, although the broader philosophical discussion is largely framed by the ideas of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant on the Sublime.

#### Edmund Burke's Exploration of the Sublime

In the mid-eighteenth century, Edmund Burke (1729–1772) introduced the concept of the sublime, positioning terror as its pivotal element. His seminal work, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* published in 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 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's distinction is stronger than his predecessors, attributing distinct characteristics to each category with meticulous precision. Burke's discourse is diverse from the ancient theory of Longinus which primarily focuses on grandeur and elevation. Instead, Burke redefines the sublime through the prism of terror and the evocation of pain or danger, as a source of profound astonishment. This reimagining of the sublime represents a pivotal evolution in eighteenth-century aesthetic thought, emphasizing the physiological and psychological impacts of vast, obscure, and formidable elements in nature and art.

By positioning terror at the heart of the sublime experience, Burke expands the scope of aesthetic appreciation, moving beyond mere beauty. His analysis offers a divergent emotional landscape evoked by the sublime and the beautiful, positing that each domain elicits distinctly different affective responses from the observer. Burke articulates:

On closing this general view of beauty, it naturally occurs, that we should compare it with the sublime; and in this comparison, there appears a remarkable contrast. . . . They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; however, they may vary afterward from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them. (182)

Burke's assertion highlights the inherent contrast between the serene allure of beauty, rooted in pleasure, and the compelling force of the sublime grounded in pain and terror. Burke further contends that the sublime's profound emotional impact is primarily derived from its association with pain, which he argues, is more potent than pleasure.

Burke's detailed theory of the sublime and the beautiful is presented in four distinct sections: an introductory background, an in-depth analysis of the sublime, a comprehensive examination of beauty, and a concluding exploration of the causes underlying the sublime and the beautiful. This structured approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of the concepts and their interrelations.

The central concept of Burke's treatise is the notion of taste which he articulates as comprising three fundamental components: pleasure, imagination, and the faculty of reasoning. This tripartite model reflects the influence of Burke's intellectual predecessors like David Hume's assertion of taste as a subjective sentiment, Alexander Gerard's emphasis on the imaginative aspect of taste, and Immanuel Kant's conceptualization of taste as a subjective yet universally resonant faculty. Burke's engagement with the concept of taste is marked by a critical awareness of its complexity and inherent challenges in a precise definition. In the *Inquiry*, Burke observes, "The term taste, like all other figurative terms, is not extremely accurate; the thing which we understand by it, is far from a simple and determinate idea in the minds of most men, and it is, therefore, liable to uncertainty and confusion" (3). This acknowledgment highlights Burke's recognition of the term's figurative nature and the multifaceted, often elusive understanding of taste in the collective consciousness.

In the first section of his work, Burke sets the groundwork for his philosophical exploration of the sublime, engaging with an array of pertinent concepts including novelty, pain and pleasure, delight, joy and grief, the sublime, passion, and beauty. Burke inaugurates his discourse with an examination of novelty, which he associates with human curiosity and the pursuit of experiences capable of invoking both pain and pleasure. While considering the relationship between pain and pleasure,

Burke emphasizes the positive nature of both, rejecting the idea that they exist solely as opposing forces. In 'Pain and Pleasure', he articulates, " I can never persuade myself that pleasure and pain are mere relations, which can only exist as they are contrasted; but I think I can discern clearly that there are positive pains and pleasures which do not depend upon each other" (35). Through this assertion, Burke argues that pain and pleasure possess an inherent, independent quality, transcending a mere binary opposition.

Furthermore, Burke delves into the concept of delight, intricately weaving it with the experiences of pain and danger. He elucidates it by stating, "As I make use of the word delight to express the sensation which accompanies the removal of pain or danger, so when I speak of positive pleasure, I shall, for the most part, call it simply pleasure" (41). Burke claims that delight encompasses the complex interplay between the experiences of pain or danger and the subsequent relief or removal of such states.

Moreover, Burke examines the role of passion as a catalyst for the sublime, delineating various passions, including beauty, solitude, sympathy, imitation, and ambition. He posits that these passions, by invoking feelings of terror, horror, excitement, and danger, act as conduits to the sublime experience. In this context, Burke highlights the concept of infinity as a significant source of the sublime, suggesting its capacity to overwhelm the mind with a form of delightful horror. He then outlines the fundamental characteristics that constitute the major sources of the sublime which, include terror, obscurity, power, vastness, succession and uniformity, difficulty, magnificence, light, and color, among others. Through this comprehensive analysis, Burke not only articulates the multifaceted sources of the sublime but also offers a nuanced understanding of how these elements interplay to evoke the profound and overwhelming experience associated with the sublime.

Burke delineates the distinction between the concept of the sublime and the beautiful within his philosophical framework. He articulates that beautiful objects are characterized by smallness, smoothness, delicateness, and an absence of remarkable strength with clear and bright color, often signifying beauty. In contrast, the sublime is characterized by vastly different attributes, leading Burke to emphasize the divergence between these two aesthetic categories:

They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; however, they may vary afterward from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passion. (124)

Burke asserts that both the sublime and the beauty are indeed ideas of very different categories, one being founded on pain and the other on pleasure. Thus, the sublime evokes a more intense emotional response compared to the gentle and elusive nature of beauty. In the work entitled "Heart of Sky Heart of Earth: The Role of Sacred Mountains in World Religions and Primal Traditions," David Q. Bassler echoes this sentiment by noting, "Unlike the aesthetics of beauty, the sublime does not initially bring a sensation of pleasure or satisfaction. Rather, there is a sensation of anxiety and discontent" (71). Bassler claims that the sublime encompasses a complex emotional blend of delight and terror, resulting from an encounter with the majesty, vastness, and grandeur inherent in certain experiences.

This study finds the distinctive nature of Burke's theory, particularly for its explicit attention to various effective emotions including terror, obscurity, solitude, silence, and puzzlement which he argues are key components of the sublime

experience. Additionally, Burke delineates power, infinity, and vastness as intrinsic qualities of the sublime, offering a comprehensive and convincing analysis that stands out for its clarity and depth of insight into the sublime's essence. Brady highlights the innovative aspects of Burke's theory, noting its departure from previous interpretations and breaking new ground as:

It shows influences from past theories, but it also breaks new ground in at least three ways: First, by identifying the sublime with fear and terror, it offers a more violent, less mild version, quite distant from notions of grandeur and beauty. Second, it emphasizes sensation and physical reactions rather than associations, thus breaking away from the influence of Hume and presenting a theory that stands alone in many ways. Third, it is interested more in an analysis of objects and causes than criticism and art, revealing a more abstract standpoint than other theories. (28)

Brady claims the distinctiveness and significance of Burke's theory of the sublime. First, by linking the sublime to fear and terror, Burke departs from earlier, conceptions of grandeur and beauty. Secondly, Burke emphasizes the importance of sensation and physical reaction rather than association, and third Burke's analysis of objects and causes rather than focusing on a theory and criticism. These aspects collectively highlight the originality and depth of Burke's insights, positioning his work as a cornerstone in the ongoing discourse on the sublime.

In the later eighteenth century, the aesthetic appreciation of art began to incorporate elements such as terror, obscurity, and the Infinite, all of which contribute to emotional responses, akin to the sublime. Burke's theoretical framework on the sublime notably found its expression in Gothic architecture, renowned for its capacity

to evoke awe or terror, with its emphasis on suspense and uncertainty, effectively utilizes these elements as a powerful tool in crafting a sublime experience.

#### Immanuel Kant's Discourse on the Sublime

In the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant (1724–804), presented his interpretation of the sublime in the 'Analytic of the Sublime' section of *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Kant also distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime, paying homage to his English predecessor, Burke. In Boulton's edition of Burke's *Enquiry*, Boulton mentions that Kant acknowledged Burke's influence, stating that, "He (Kant) acknowledges that 'the empirical exposition of aesthetic judgment may be a first step towards accumulating the material for a higher investigation' Burke, he affirms, 'deserves to be called the foremost author in this method of treatment' (xxxvii). Boulton interprets this as a profound tribute, positioning Burke as a foundational figure in the philosophy of the sublime.

Werner S. Pluhar translated Kant's *Critique of Judgment* including the first introduction which asserts, "Kant had discussed the sublime, along with the beautiful, empirically in his *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and Sublime* of 1764" (lxix). According to Kant, the sublime, like beautiful, is an object of our liking, the feeling of pleasure, and a judgment about the sublime is an aesthetic judgment that is reflective and disinterested and claims universal validity and necessity. But in the case of the sublime, the pleasure is indirect and negative. Kant while making the judgment of the sublime focuses on its nature and writes, "Since the sublime in art is always confined to the conditions that [art] must meet to be in harmony with nature. All sublimity involves vast magnitude; and nature, Kant says, is most sublime in its 'chaos' in its 'wildest and most rule less disarray and devastation'" (246). To Kant, sublimity is aesthetic magnitude that includes largeness and greatness.

According to Boulton, Kant identifies three distinct manifestations of the sublime namely:

. . . the awful, the lofty and the splendid. The 'awful' sublime is concerned with horror, the feeling aroused by the profound loneliness of a desert; the 'lofty' Kant illustrates by the calm admiration excited by the vast simplicity of the Pyramids; and the 'splendid', connected with the impression created by magnificence, is illustrated by St. Peter's in Rome. (cxxvi)

Boulton claims that Kant's conceptualization of the sublime transcends Burke by encompassing a broader spectrum of emotional responses, including admiration, respect, and reverence. This expansion reflects Kant's great engagement with the extraordinary and transcendence facets of existence, enriching the philosophical discourse on the sublime.

In 'Analytic of the Sublime,' Kant examines the interplay between the aesthetics of the beautiful and the sublime. He articulates, "The beautiful and the sublime agree that both please in themselves. Further, neither presupposes a judgment of sense nor a judgment logically determined, but a judgment of reflection" (113). Through the assertion, Kant argues that both concepts are predicated on aesthetic reflective judgments, characterized by their inherent capacity to please independently of sensory or logical predicates. Moreover, Kant highlights the disinterested nature of both the beautiful and the sublime.

Expanding on this foundational premise, Kant delineates the distinct emotional resonances elected by the beautiful and the sublime. He observes, "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 draws a

sharp contrast between the two, with beauty connected to the form of the object and having definite boundaries whereas the sublime has overwhelming power, formlessness, and limitlessness. Elaborating on Kant's discourse, Brady elaborates on Kant's concepts of the sublime as:

The feeling associated with the sublime is complex, involving a mix of pleasure and displeasure, and is ultimately what Kant calls a 'negative pleasure. This negative pleasure is described as a form of admiration or respect and, as such is not a strict positive pleasure, as we might find in the pleasure associated with the beautiful, which 'brings with it a promotion of life. (57)

Brady claims that the sublime involves a complex mixture of pleasure and displeasure, standing in contrast to the positive pleasure associated with beauty. This delineation is essential to understanding Kant's nuanced framework for categorizing aesthetic experiences and the corresponding emotional responses they elicit.

Kant's exploration of the sublime expands introducing division within the concept of the sublime itself: the mathematical and the dynamic, which pertain respectively to the notions of size and power. In the mathematically sublime the vast magnitude is above all one size (largeness), as in the case of 'shapeless mountain masses'. Kant describes the mathematical sublime as a phenomenon of immense vastness. He articulates, "We call that sublime which is absolutely great. But to be great and to be a great something are quite different concepts (magnitude and quantitas). In like manner to say simply that anything is great is quite different from saying that it is absolutely great. The latter is what is great beyond all comparison" (115). Kant's analysis distinguishes between greatness and absolute greatness: the former reflects a subjective assessment, while the latter represents an unmatched enormity, a grandeur beyond comparison, encapsulating the essence of the sublime.

According to Kant, the mathematical sublime is characterized by an overwhelming size that makes everything else insignificant. The scale of this sublime is such great that goes beyond all comparisons, making it unique and unparalleled.

Kant delves into an alternative manifestation of the sublime, known as the dynamic sublime, which centers on the formidable power inherent in natural phenomena. This aspect of the sublime is associated with nature's awe-inspiring and authoritative presence over humanity. Kant articulates this concept through the notion of 'Might' referring to the formidable and fearsome forces of nature. In his critical work, *Critique of Judgment*, especially in the section 'Of the Dynamically Sublime in Nature', Kant elucidates, "Might is that which is superior to great hindrances. It is called dominion if it is superior to the resistance of that which itself possesses might. Nature, considered in an aesthetical judgment as might that has no dominion over us, is dynamically sublime" (119). Kant defines the dynamic sublime as nature's overwhelming power that challenges human action. The essence of the dynamic sublime, as Kant noted, lies in the sheer magnitude of nature's force, as illustrated by Brady:

Bold, overhanging, as it was threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens, bringing with them flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder, volcanoes with their all-destroying violence, hurricanes with the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean set into a rage, a lofty waterfall on a mighty river, etc., make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. (60)

Kant argues that the dynamic sublime invokes a different aspect of human experience than the mathematical sublime. Rather than overwhelming senses with size, it presents nature as an embodiment of power, evoking awe and humility in response to its indomitable force. This distinction highlights how the dynamic sublime instills a

sense of humility and awe through the recognition of nature's overwhelming power. Kant suggests that encounters with the sublime generates a complex emotional response, blending fear with a sense of empowerment. This strength arises not from fearlessness but from recognizing our own resilience. He expounds:

The sight is more attractive, the more fearful it is, provided only that we are in security; and we willingly call those objects sublime because they raise the energies of the soul above their accustomed height and discover in us a faculty of resistance of a quite different kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature. (120)

Kant emphasizes that the allure of nature's terrifying aspects is magnified when we observe them from a position of safety. This paradoxical attraction to fear-inducing elements of nature serves to elevate our mental faculties, revealing an inner capacity to confront and withstand nature's formidable power.

Kant discusses the interplay between human limitations and the vastness of nature, stating, "In the immensity of nature and the insufficiency of our faculties to take in a standard proportionate to the aesthetical estimation of the magnitude of its realm, we find our limitation . . ." (120). Kant acknowledges that nature's vastness humbles us, highlighting human finitude compared to its immeasurable scale. Despite this recognition of our limits, Kant observes, ". . . nature is here called sublime merely because it elevates the imagination to a presentation of those cases in which the mind can make felt the proper sublimity of its destination, in comparison with nature itself . . ." (120). Kant argues that this encounter with the sublime not only humbles us but also elevates our understanding of our potential. It reveals the sublime experience is not merely an encounter with the vastness of nature but a journey toward realizing the power of the human spirit to transcend the natural world through imagination and reason.

## Boulton's Interpretations of Burke's and Kant's Sublime

After reviewing Burke's and Kant's interpretation of the sublime, the researcher recognizes that both philosophers have made significant and lasting contributions to the history of sublime theory. Nonetheless, Kant's conception of the sublime is more intricate and profound. Boulton highlights the fundamental differences between these two philosophical stances, noting:

Burke's theory is linked with the passions relating to self-preservation; it turns on pain and danger; and it conceives the sublime as provoking astonishment. To Kant, astonishment is only the first stage. In his view, we feel physically helpless in the face of fearsome natural objects, but because we are independent of nature the mind is conscious of its essential power. Consequently, a feeling of physical inferiority is succeeded by a sense of intellectual or moral superiority. (cxxxvi)

Boulton's comparative analysis sheds light on the distinct approaches of Burke and Kant towards the sublime, highlighting the fundamental differences in their ideas. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the significant contributions of Burke to the discourse on the sublime, which have enriched the philosophical exploration of this aesthetic concept.

In an extensive analysis, Boulton recognizes numerous parallels in the concept of the sublime between Burke and Kant. Both philosophers acknowledge that the sublime emerges from encounters with phenomena that invoke feelings terror, obscurity, vastness, limitedness, infinity, and magnificence. Boulton articulates this convergence, noting:

Both Burke and Kant refuse to accept the sublime as a manifestation of the beautiful; both agree that the sublime is to be found in objects that suggest 'limitlessness', to both, the sublime puts a strain on the imagination; both

writers recognize the importance of ‘ succession’ each insists, though Kant more emphatically, that ‘ instead of the object, it is rather the cast of the mind in appreciating it that we have to estimate as sublime; and they agree that natural objects are sublime when they are ‘a source of fear is sublime’.

(cxxvii)

Boulton claims both philosophers agree that natural objects attain a sublime quality through their capacity to instill fear. Kant inserts certain aspects of Burke's ideas and shapes them according to his philosophical framework and points out some weaknesses in Burke. Boulton further elaborates, "It must be said that he points to the central weakness in Burke's empirical system: it depends purely on egoistic judgments, on the individual's appraisal of personal sensory experiences, and no universal laws can be laid down" (cxxvii). Boulton asserts despite criticism of Burke's theoretical approach, Kant offers a profound acknowledgment of his English predecessor, Burke. This acknowledgment highlights both the influence and divergence in their explorations of the sublime.

In his concluding remarks, Boulton claims that Kant's philosophical ideas were shaped by Burke's principles, though with notable distinctions. The contributions of both Burke and Kant to the philosophy of the sublime have had a lasting impact, influencing a broader range of writers and intellectuals.

The interplay between the philosophical concept of the sublime and the lived experiences of mountaineering reveals a profound connection that transcends the traditional boundaries of discourse. Burke and Kant's exploration of the sublime emphasizes its association with the awe-inspiring aspects of natural landscapes, such as their vastness, power, and the sensations of horror, and pain, alongside their beauty. These elements possess a unique duality, simultaneously captivating and intimidating

observers, evoking a multifaceted emotional response that includes fear, awe, and a sense of infinity. Such dynamics are vividly reflected in the narratives of mountaineers, recounting life-threatening ascents of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna.

Mountaineering, with its demanding ascent across rugged terrains, embodies the philosophical notion of the sublime. Mountaineers confront natural challenges like formidable landscapes, high altitudes, extreme weather, avalanches, crevasses, and steep rocks, through their collective strength and knowledge. Amidst these dangers, they engage in deep contemplation, striving to transcend the immediate perils and access the sublime experience, which fosters a profound, almost celestial bliss. This process of overcoming physical risks to achieve an elevated mental state parallels the philosophical discussion of the sublime presented by Burke and Kant.

Kant's discourse on the sublime resonates with the mountaineers' encounter with the magnificence and terror of the natural world. In mountaineering, the sublime emerges from an overwhelming experience of confronting fearful and awe-inspiring landscape that lead to heightened awareness and a deeper understanding about nature and human condition. Brady elaborates this concept, stating such experiences are sublime because they "elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all- powerfulness of nature" (64). Brady argues that this concept resonates with the philosophical notions of Burke and Kant who regard the sublime as an aesthetic experience attainable only through an elevated state of mind. They assert that this heightened state can be attained through engagement with nature's risky challenges such as mountaineering.

## Sublime Beyond Burke and Kant

The concept of the sublime resonates strongly not only in German aesthetic theory but also in its impacts on British Romanticism. In German, Friedrich Schiller and Arthur Schopenhauer followed Kant and produced essays like *On the Sublime* (1793), *Concerning the Sublime* (1801), and *The World as Will and Representation* (1819). Similarly, Romantic poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge have woven their experiences with the natural world into their creative expressions, celebrating the multifaceted manifestations of nature. In the Ph. D dissertation entitled, "Hearing the Sublime: Signification of the Sublime in Solo Piano Literature of the Nineteenth Century," submitted to the Temple University Graduate Board, Gretchen Lindsay Hull mentions:

In Wordsworth's poem composed near Tintern Abbey, he writes of a "sense sublime," a "motion and a spirit" permeating "all thing." The subject of the poem is Wordsworth's changing emotional response to a natural scene, which matures into calmer, more introspective contemplation in later years.

Coleridge's poem, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is also imbued with a sense of the natural sublime, as Mariner tells a tale full of the fearful danger of the sea. (2)

Hull argues that Romantic poets perceive nature not merely as an environment but as an entity characterized by its vastness and dynamic force. Echoing this sentiment, Brady asserts, "The Romantic poets are known for celebrating nature in all its forms, from the everyday, rural places so carefully observed by John Clare to the wild and rural natures of the English Lake District seen in Wordsworth and Coleridge" (100). Brady claims that Romanticism infuses the sublime and other aesthetic experiences into writers' consciousness, enriching their literary works with profound emotional depth and complexity.

Brady illustrates this point by referencing Wordsworth's depiction of the sublime in book XIII of *The Prelude* where he describes, ". . . the subject is ascending Mount Snowdon with a friend on a warm summer night, darkness and mist creating a sublime atmosphere, when 'for instantly a Light upon the turf/ Fell like a flash: I look'd about and lo! / The Moon stood naked in the Heavens at height / Immense above my head. . . . Themes of infinity and the power of domination of nature appear (103). Brady argues that Wordsworth's profound sense of nature's vastness and the overpowering dominion of natural forces transcends mere visual perception. Similarly, Coleridge and his contemporaries perceived the sublime as an expression of nature's boundless or endless essence. Through their poetic works such as *Lyrical Ballads*, *Home at Grasmere*, *The Sublime*, and *The Beautiful*, they tried to capture the ineffable quality of the natural world, portraying it as a source of awe, wonder, and deep philosophical contemplation.

The exploration of the sublime extended beyond British philosophical discourse, finding a resonant echo in North America, particularly within the realm of nature writing and transcendentalist thought of writers such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and John Muir. They were influenced by the Romantic conception of the sublime, incorporating its awe-inspiring and aesthetic dimensions into their reflections on nature. Thoreau's *The Maine Woods*, John Muir's *Nature Writings: The Story of My boyhood and Youth* and Frederick Turner's *John Muir: From Scotland to the Sierra* describe the awesome and sublime atmosphere of different places. These authors articulated the dual aspects of nature's grandeur, encompassing both its overwhelming majestic and its inherent beauty. John Muir, in particular, vividly captures the sublime wilderness of the mountainous terrains in his essays. Brady highlights Muir's ascent of Mount Ritter noting, "The only sounds were

the gurgling of small rills down in the veins and crevasses of the glacier, and now and then the rattling report of falling stones, with the echoes they shot out into the crisp air" (110). Through Muir's narrative, Mount merges not only as a figure of natural beauty but also as an embodiment of the sublime's disturbing silence and imposing presence.

As a philosophical concept, the sublime had less interest in the twentieth century but continued to influence Romantic thought and the arts. It found new expression in sublime landscapes, mostly in paintings by artists like Thomas Cole, and Frederic Church as well as Salvator Rosa, J. M. W. Turner, and others who sought to depict sublime subject matter through visual art. In the same period, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924–98), a leading French philosopher closely studied Kant's aesthetics in *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (1991), focusing on the sublime and the art. This demonstrates how the Kantian and Romantic sublime is found in the visual arts.

#### Pursuing the Sublime in Mountaineering Narratives

The philosophical concept of the sublime as articulated by thinkers like Burke and Kant provides a rich framework for analyzing mountaineering narratives related to Mount Everest and Annapurna. In addition to Burke and Kant, the ideas of Brady and Boulton also offer valuable insights into understanding the sublime in this context. The interplay of these philosophical perspectives with the physical and emotional experiences of mountaineering reveals how these ideas continue to shape a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between humans and the vast, awe-inspiring natural world. By merging these philosophical frameworks within the lived experiences of mountaineers such as Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, and others, this study appreciates both the beauty and terror that nature presents.

Through a Burkean and Kantian lens, this analysis asserts that mountaineers in the process of climbing encounter the massive forces of nature and undergo a transformation. Burke emphasizes that the sublime is rooted in emotions like fear, terror, and astonishment. As Brady summarizes Burke's notion, "... the source of the Burkean sublime is terrible objects, or that which is 'fitted in any sort to excite ideas or pain and danger,' and the feeling evoked by the sublime is the strongest we are capable of experiencing" (23). These emotions remind individuals of their insignificance in the vast universe, leading to a humbling awareness of their vulnerability. In this sense, Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephen, and others, are not only confronting the physical dangers of mountaineering but also engaging with the sublime. Their encounters with nature's challenges humble and transform them, what Burke would describe as a state of the sublime.

Kant's concept of the sublime shifts the focus from fear and terror to the mind's internal response to the vastness of power. He describes the sublime as a mental movement, akin to a vibration, where the mind rapidly alternates between repulsion and attraction. Unlike Burke, who centers on external fear, Kant links sublimity to the capacity for rational thought and liberation. For Kant, the sublime emerges from a confrontation with the size and power of nature, and our potential for transcendence. In the mountaineering narratives of Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Blum, Gammelgaard, and others, these climbers are not simply overwhelmed by fear, they experience awe at the grandeur of the mountains, which evokes a sense of liberation and elevation, achieving a state of the sublime.

Kant's theory aligns closely with the central thesis of the research, shifting from physical experiences to the cognitive process of liberation and transcendence.

He explains how emotions expand the mind, and lead toward infinity. His focus is on the vast, mighty force of nature which evokes powerful sensations and elevates the mind to a higher level. This cognitive elevation resonates in the research, exploring how fear and the vastness of mountaineering trigger the mind to transcend toward infinity. He illustrates how the sublime creates a relationship between the self and the world, evoking an elevated feeling in response to awe-inspiring, vast, formless, and mighty objects that possess transcendental power. Brady asserts, “The aesthetic apprehension of this formlessness is what engages the mind in the particular way that gives rise to negative pleasure, awareness of the ideas of reason, and seeing ourselves as sublime” (75). Kant argues that physical experiences like mountaineering, trigger and expand the mind into a state of purity and peace. While Burke emphasizes mountains as vast and terrifying objects that provoke the sublime, Kant’s focus is on cognitive elevation which is more relevant to this study. Hence, mountaineering is not merely the physical act of ascending and descending high mountains like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna, it is a mental journey that leads from self-discovery to personal transformation, and ultimately, to a sublime state.

This analysis integrates Burke’s empiricism and Kant’s transcendentalism, emphasizing the dual role of body and mind in experiencing the sublime. Burke’s theory provides a foundational understanding by highlighting the sensory nature of the sublime. He focuses on the physical effects of the objects, associating them with fear, and terror. In contrast, Kant’s theory addresses a higher level of understanding, focusing transformation of these emotions into transcendence, a key theme in the narratives of Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Stephens, Gammelgaard, and others. This theoretical framework supported with evidence from these narratives will be further expanded in the subsequent chapters.

## Conclusion

This chapter concentrates on developing a theoretical framework for the research, employing the concept of the sublime as a key theoretical tool. The sublime, a philosophical concept articulated by Burke and Kant, is central to this study. Additionally, the ideas of Brady and Boulton are incorporated to further justify and expand Burke's and Kant's interpretations. Within this theoretical framework, the chapter analyzes the elements of the sublime, seeking to identify how mountaineers achieve the sublime state in their ascents of Mount Everest and Annapurna.

## Chapter: IV: Men in Himalayan Mountaineering

This chapter examines the narratives of renowned mountaineers who ventured into the sacred realms of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna, focusing on both their physical and inner journeys. It examines Hillary's *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest* (1955), Norgay and Coburn's *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest* (2001), Viesturs and Roberts's *The Mountain: My Time on Everest* (2013), Herzog's *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak* (1997), and Messner's *Annapurna: 50 Years of Explorations in the Death Zone* (2000). These narratives are analyzed to address key issues regarding mountaineers' motivations and the transformative nature of their climb. By applying Burke's and Kant's theories of the sublime, the chapter offers insights into how these mountaineers encounter awe, terror, and transcendence during their expeditions. It begins by highlighting the diverse traditions of mountaineering, arguing that climbing Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna leads climbers from self-discovery and personal transformation to ultimately, the attainment of the sublime state.

### From the Alps to the Himalayas: A Study of Diverse Mountaineering Traditions

Mountaineering, which originated in the European Alps and later extended to the Himalayas presents unique challenges to climbers, distinguished not only by physical demands but also by the duration and nature of these expeditions. Alpine mountaineering typically requires intense mental and physical effort over a shorter duration, whereas Himalayan expeditions demand sustained exertion, resilience, and endurance over weeks or even months. This prolonged effort in the Himalayas necessitates climbers to possess a high degree of tolerance, cooperation, and willingness to prioritize the group's needs over individual's ambitions.

Mountaineering, whether in the Alps or the Himalayas encompasses two primary styles: expedition style, commonly employed in Himalayan ascents, and alpine style, typically associated with climbing in the Alps. Viesturs elucidates the expedition style approach in *The Will to Climb* describing:

On an expedition style ascent, the team builds a series of solid, well-stocked tent camps up the mountain, covering the same terrain many times to supply those camps with ample gear and food. Hundreds or even thousands of feet of thin nylon ropes are fixed over the pitches, to make load-carrying easier and safer than leading the pitches was initially. From the highest camp, near the apex of this logistical pyramid, at least two climbers go to the summit. If there is time and the weather holds, second third, and even fourth pairs also go for the top. An expedition-style assault on a major peak usually lasts from one to three months. (69)

Viesturs argues that this approach, characterized by its methodological preparation and extensive logistical support, is particularly suited to the prolonged and demanding nature of Himalayan mountaineering. Maurice Herzog's expedition of 1950 was of expedition style. He asserts, "All the nine members of the Expedition will have more than one reason for cherishing this record. Together we know toil, joy, and pain. My fervent wish is that the nine of us who were united in the face of death should remain fraternally united through life" (xi). In Herzog's expedition, along with nine members, there are many other supporters, and the planning extended days, weeks, and even months. Conversely, the alpine style originating from the challenging ascents of the Alps involves a more direct and minimalist strategy. Viesturs further explains the alpine style of climbing as:

. . . the climbers place few or no fixed ropes, and their camps are supplied only with the lightest of tents or with bivouac sacks. . . . Then, carrying all the gear

and food they might need, they go all out in a single push for the summit. It's usually a one-shot deal: if the climbers can't get to the top on their main thrust, they typically use up all their hardware setting up rappel anchors to get down the route. A second attempt is usually out of the question. (70)

Alpine style, according to Viesturs is favored for its speed, efficiency, and minimal impact on the mountain environment. Messner in *Annapurna: 50 Years of Expeditions in the Death Zone* asserts, "On this expedition, I saw my job primarily as leading a small group of relatively inexperienced high-altitude mountaineers into Base Camp" (107). Messner's preference is for small groups of two or three mountaineers. A similar notion is articulated by Durkan in *Penguins On Everest*, "It is where small groups, often just two or three climbers, use an agent to arrange permits and porter support to the base camp, from here. They are self-sufficient and climb unsupported, which means no fixed ropes, no fixed camps, no oxygen, and no porter support on the climb" (129). Durkan argues that in alpine style, the climbers are self-sufficient, independent, and carry all they need.

The adaptation of alpine style in the Himalayas marks a significant shift in high-altitude climbing techniques, beginning notably in 1957 with the Spartan Austrian expedition. Durkan asserts in *Penguins On Everest*, "The inauguration of Alpine style climbing in the Himalayas could have been the Spartan 1957 Austrian expedition to the Karakorum, led by Kurt Diemberger. They had no base camp support, no high altitude porters, no oxygen, and no fixed ropes" (129). Durkan argues that this ethos inspires subsequent climbers like Messner, Peter Habeler, and others to embrace alpine-style climbing the Himalayas, characterized by its reliance on climbers' self-sufficiency, absence of supplemental oxygen, fixed ropes, and Sherpa support, aiming for summit in a single, continuous push. However, the pursuit of such a feat poses an extremely challenging, even for the most skilled and experienced high-altitude mountaineers.

Moreover, it is important to realize that mountaineering is no means over upon reaching the summit rather, it is during the descent, that the mountain demands terrible penalties. Mountaineering, both in Alps and the Himalayas requires overcoming fear and self-doubt, and pushing oneself to their physical and mental limits. The journeys encompass much more than merely ascending and descending; entail extending oneself, striving towards a distinct goal, and venturing into the unknown to reach the summit. Patience and caution are the decisive factor in all types of mountaineering. Therefore, mountaineers, who embark on such ventures, taking risks and challenging the boundaries of the unknown, deserve recognition for their courage and determination and at the end of their journey, unknowingly, attain sublimity.

#### Ascending Himalayas and Shaping New History: A Brief Survey

The word 'Himalaya' signifying 'the abode of snow,' is also revered as Giriraj or the 'king of Mountains,' and occupies a significant position in Hindu mythology, folklore, and historical narratives. In "The Himalayas: A Mystic's Viewpoint," Swami Paranand Tirth elucidates the sacredness of the Himalayas through religious and literary references. He highlights:

The earliest text mentioning the Himalayas is the *Rig Veda*. Singing the praise of the supreme deity, the poet-sage refers to the Himalayas: 'It is to Him to whom belong these celestial mountain ranges'. These sages also describe its stretch as 'the expanse of the two arms of the great being'. The epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and the *Puranas*, describe this as the region where the gods dwell, and the landscape is evoked beautifully in classical poetical works. According to the *Skanda Purana*, 'As the sun dries the morning dew so does the mere sight of the Himalaya dissipate the sins of man'. (348)

Tirth draws on the ancient texts to illustrate how various traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, revere the Himalayas as a divine realm that connects the physical and spiritual world. K. K. Mandal presents a similar notion:

Reflection of the Himalayas in the Ancient Indian Texts: A Note” where he cites, “The first century BC Greek historian Apollodorus quoted by Strabo, affirms that Bactrian Greeks, led by Demetrius I and Menander, conquered India and occupied a larger territory than the Greeks under Alexander the Great, going beyond the Hypanis towards the Himalaya. (119)

Mandal emphasizes that the Himalayas hold equal importance for Greeks, with their vastness and richness. Despite their sacred and historical significance, the highest peaks in the world are also a source of awe and wonder and are considered a focal point for mountaineering and adventure. With its vast and rugged landscape of the Himalayan region, it remains a prime destination for trekking, climbing, skiing, and other outdoor pursuits.

To appreciate the significance of the Himalayas, it is essential to understand their geographical formation. Sher Bahadur Gurung in *Mountain Peaks of Nepal Himalaya* explains:

The Himalayas uplifted when the Indian subcontinent started pushing northward against the Eurasian plate for the past 40 million years, whereas USGS claims that it has been uplifted since 50 million years ago. The tectonic movement, gravity, and erosive forces shaped the mountain peak featured on the Earth's surface. (63)

Gurung argues that the unique geological formation of the Himalayas adds to their allure drawing adventurers and enthusiasts from around the world.

Similarly, in *The Himalaya Experience*, Jonathan Chester, an Australian leading adventure photojournalist, introduces the Himalayan region as:

The Himalayas are the most significant mountain chain on earth. It features the highest summits in the world, divides continents, and dramatically affects the earth's weather patterns. The name Himalaya came from the Sanskrit words hima (snow) and alaya (abode). . . . In its broadest sense, the Himalayas stretches 2,500 km across Asia, from west of the Indus River in the west to the Brahmaputra River in the southeast. (86)

Chester elucidates that the Himalayas are the highest mountain range in the world, containing one of the most dynamic and complex mountain systems. It displays great climate variability due to the high range that rises over 20,000ft. above sea level.

Chester, further adds that more than 100 peaks exceed this limit and the most famous are Mount Everest, Mount Annapurna, Nanga Parbat, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Kanchenjunga, Nanda Devi, and many others. The aesthetics of these Himalayas have captivated people for ages, as mentioned in *Nepal Parbat*, published by the Nepal Mountaineering Association in 2016, “The Himalayan Peaks have enthralled viewers since ages. The mountains were revered and worshipped by the people living in the vicinity” (28). Despite the inherent risks associated with the region's high altitude and rugged terrain, the Himalayas remain a source of awe-inspiring beauty and inspiration for all.

Among the Himalayan peaks, Mount Everest is the highest which is situated in the northeast corner of Nepal, on the border with Tibet, and is partially concealed by its remarkable neighboring peaks. In *Everest, the Mountaineering History* Walt Unsworth refers to Sir Francis Younghusband who describes the mountain's demeanor as:

Mount Everest for its size is a singularly shy and retiring mountain. It hides away behind other mountains. On the north side, in Tibet, it does indeed stand up proudly and alone, a true monarch among mountains. But it stands in a very sparsely inhabited part of Tibet, and very few people ever go to Tibet. From the Indian side, only its tip appears amongst a mighty array of peaks which being nearer look higher. (2)

Youngusband's observation suggests that despite its immense size, Mount Everest seems a reserved and timid peak while standing prominently and independently on the northern side. Unsworth's analysis implies that Mount Everest assumes a protective and benevolent role by keeping a watchful eye on humanity.

On May 29, 1953, the Lord Hunt expedition, led by Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary, achieved the historic triumph of ascending Mount Everest and reaching the summit of the world's highest peak. While the world knows it as Mount Everest, the Nepali name for it is *Sagarmatha*, a term derived from the combination of two words 'Sagar' and 'Matha'. 'Sagar' means heaven or sky and 'Matha' means the head. In essence, it is referred to as the Goddess of the Sky or head of the Great Blue Sky. As articulated by Harka Gurung, a Nepali geographer, in his article "Introduction: Mount Everest," published in *Peaks and Pinnacles:*

*Mountaineering in Nepal:*

The world's highest peak is known by many names. The Nepalese call it *Sagarmatha* which means 'head in the sky' or euphemistically 'sky is the limit'. The Chinese first named it *Jolmo Lungma* and now is called *Qomolangma* a new phonetic rendering. The Tibetan name *Chomo Lungma* can be translated as 'Goddess Mother of the Earth. (83)

Gurung mentions that numerous other descriptive names for Mount Everest exist in various writings, but to Nepali, it is *Sagarmatha*, representing the Goddess of the Earth, the mother goddess, and the head of the world.

While ascending Mount Everest, the majority of summiteers follow the conventional route which entails a trek from Lukla to Namche whereas others prefer to take the Bhote Kosi valley to Thame and from Thame to Khunde and Khumjung villages before proceeding to Tengboche, Pangboche, Dingboche, Lobuche and ultimately Everest Base Camp. However, the former route which encompasses straight from Kathmandu to Lukla and Namche to Dingboche and Gorakshep, remains popular among mountaineers, due to its breathtaking view of the mountainous terrain. Upon reaching the Base Camp, climbers embark on a series of ascents, beginning with Camp I situated at 5,943m., which offers views of the Khumbu Icefall. The next stage includes Camp II, situated at 6492m., known as Southwest Face, followed by Camp III, situated at 7,315m. Thereafter climbers ascend to Camp IV known as South Col, at an elevation of 7,925m., and proceed to the South Summit at 8,751m., ultimately, reaching the summit of Mount Everest at 8,848.86m. It is noteworthy that the route along this ascent is marked by the prominent presence of two important Glaciers namely the Khumbu Glacier and Kangshung Glacier, both feature prominently along the path to the summit.

Mountaineers are driven by various motivations to climb Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. Many experienced mountaineers assert that the allure lies in the extreme conditions including frigid temperatures, loftiest ranges, snowstorms, avalanches, and crevasses which evoke a sense of elation in seeking to conquer the unconquerable. However, climbing such heights, is a perilous and formidable undertaking, due to physical challenges such as altitude sickness, extreme weather conditions, fatigue, endurance, and technical obstacles. The mental challenges are even more serious, arising from isolation, loneliness, fear, anxiety, and tension caused

by lack of oxygen. Those who embark on this journey are intrepid and adventurous, driven by a deep motivation to confront these hazards which requires not only psychological strength but also a positive outlook.

This sentiment is echoed in H.P.S. Ahluwalia's perspective in *Faces of Everest* where he writes, "Everest demands extreme physical stamina, top technical skill, indomitable courage and perhaps in a much greater measure mental endurance because of several months of privation and hardships. Also indispensable for success is good luck with the weather" (xix). Ahluwalia emphasizes that Everest climbing is hazardous, and treacherous, requiring daring mountaineers with strong determined, and positive mindsets. After their success, mountaineers discover their insignificance in the face of nature's immense power, undergo a transformation, and reach a state of the sublime. These motivations allure mountaineers from around the world to the highest mountains like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna.

#### Men's Mountaineering Narratives: Journeys from Transformation to the Sublime

Mountaineering, whether on Mount Everest or Annapurna, is an audacious pursuit that demands immense physical, mental, and emotional effort as climbers engage in a brutal struggle with the unforgiving elements of rock and ice. Engaging in such an adventure in the natural environment is a conscious decision to undertake a challenge that tests one's physical, mental, and emotional capabilities. This choice signifies a willingness to endure fear, uncertainty, and discomfort, with the understanding that success ultimately brings the reward of exhilaration and triumph. As British adventurer Colin Mortlock explains, as paraphrased by Tracey J. Dickson in *Introduction to Risk, Adventure, and Risk Management*:

To adventure in the natural environment is consciously to take up a challenge that will demand the best of our capabilities- physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is a state of mind that will initially accept unpleasant feelings

of fear, uncertainty, discomfort, and the need for luck because we instinctively know that if we are successful, these will be counterbalanced by opposite feelings of exhilaration and joy. (4)

Dickson emphasizes that mountaineering is a desire to confront and overcome danger with the rewards being peace, solace, and bliss. For renowned mountaineers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner, the drive to conquer Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna was by the desire for self-discovery, and transformation, which ultimately led them to experience the sublime.

Sir Edmund Hillary, a legendary mountaineer, achieved the historic value of being the first person to successfully summit Mount Everest in 1953. Before his achievement, numerous climbers had attempted to conquer Mount Everest but nobody had succeeded. Initially, Hillary was driven by the thrill of exploration but as the journey progressed, it evolved into a deeper sense of satisfaction and relief. Reflecting on his accomplishment, Hillary recounts, “I felt a quiet glow of satisfaction spread through my body satisfaction less vociferous but more powerful than I had ever felt on a mountain top before” (227). Hillary’s motivation to climb Mount Everest began with the excitement of discovery and culminated in a profound sense of peace and fulfillment.

In his enthralling account, *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest*, he recounts the intricate details of his extraordinary expedition and the profound encounters that define his ascent. Throughout the narrative, Hillary paints a vivid and awe-inspiring picture of his perilous journey to the summit, which underscores his immense courage and unwavering determination. Hillary’s expedition commences from Namche Bazar, a unique mountainous bazaar, of Nepal. Within the pages of his narrative, he conveys captivating, and electrifying experiences. In his own words:

The rivers formed through great gorges; the hillsides were clothed in dense forest, broken only here and there by a sheer rock face or a sharp crag. And then, high above the early autumn tints, towered the unbelievable peaks of the Khumba region- mighty ice-fluted faces, terrific rock buttresses, and razor-sharp jagged ice ridges soaring up to impossible summits. (30)

Hillary's portrayal of the mountainous landscapes is not only captivating but also engrossing, drawing the reader into the vibrant tapestry of his narrative. The Himalayan terrain is marked by its challenging features, including steep gorges, towering peaks, sheer rock, and passes that challenge even the most experienced mountaineers. As Hillary undertakes his gradual ascent of Everest, he encounters a series of obstacles and challenges, including deep and unstable snow masses. In his narrative, he describes one such challenging moments as:

Only a short distance ahead of us was a great shelf that stretched across the middle of the icefall. But barring our way from it was a tangled mass of unstable-looking crevasses and ice blocks. The heavy monsoon snow turned out to be a blessing. It bridged the crevasses and filled in between the ice blocks. We plowed our way through it with determination and scrambled up onto the middle shelf. (35)

Hillary's acknowledgment of the fear and challenges due to the unbalanced mass of ice and the crevasses reflect terror in his journey. Despite the terror, the path astonishes him. This idea of terror and awe resonates with Burke's notion of the sublime. In *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke argues that terror by creating an unnatural tension and violent emotions in the nerves, becomes a source of the sublime. He states, "Whatever is fitted to produce such tension, must be productive of a passion similar to terror, and consequently must be a source of the sublime, . . . (134). This articulation finds a

parallel in Hillary's harrowing yet exhilarating journey, where despite the terror and the prevailing tension, he and Tenzing pressed on with unwavering resolve, driven by a profound desire to traverse uncharted territories.

On the way, Hillary was struck by the magnificence of the surroundings noting the vivid colours and shimmering light. The Khumbu Icefall, in particular, appeared magnificent. Hillary articulates, "It was like being in a new world. A world of crimson and gold and above it the slender white purity of soring ice and the deep dark blue of the sky. For ten days we climbed and explored in a country that men had never seen" (40). Hillary notices the unique shapes and forms created by the shifting snow and ice, at times resembling a great wall, and at others a domed structure that seemed to entrap the climbers. The constantly evolving patterns and textures of the snow combined with the dazzling glow of the sun create a thrilling and unforgettable spectacle that even astonishes the beholders.

In addition to vividly depicting the breathtaking natural beauty, Hillary provides a compelling account of his company, and his fellow climbers including George Lowe, Band, Gregory, and the Sherpas Ang Nyima and Tenzing. Together, they confront the daunting challenge of traversing the perilous Khumbu Icefall, a vast expanse that presents an imposing and awe-inspiring spectacle, evoking a mixture of fear and fascination in their collective consciousness. In the formidable landscape, Hillary becomes happy and sad when he reflects, "At first glance, it was an exceedingly impressive and indeed a frightening sight" (219). As Hillary ventures deeper into this terrain, he experiences a mixture of sensations, pleasure, and displeasure, stemming from the sheer scale and steepness of the snow-covered slopes which are both awe-inspiring and intimidating. This idea aligns with Kant's theory of the sublime which involves a complex emotional response. Kant describes the

sublime as a feeling that blends pleasure and displeasure, a paradoxical sensation he terms, 'negative pleasure'. Brady rates Kant's concept, noting, "The mixed feeling of the sublime involves both attraction and repulsion" (57). In Hillary's experience, the overwhelming sight of the landscape evokes both fear and admiration, reflecting the dual nature of the sublime. The danger repels and the grandeur attracts, creating a sense of awe that compels mountaineers to continue.

Despite the inherent challenges, Hillary's team members persist in their ascent, navigating with great care and precision, even while bearing the burden of heavy loads that posed challenges to maintaining balance. Hillary reflects on this by stating, "Well, I don't think you 'd kill yourself, but you wouldn't be feeling too bright by the time you hit the bottom' . . . (196). The team's unyielding determination compelled them to spend countless hours acclimatizing to the high altitude and exploring the terrain. They want to discern the easiest and most feasible routes through the steep and hard slopes covered with deep, loose snow powder. This intensive process demands focused concentration and relentless effort.

The adversities, unwavering determination, passion, and daunting courage propelled Hillary and Tenzing to reach the summit of Mount Everest, marking a monumental moment in mountaineering history. Hillary captures the perilous nature of their ascent, stating, "My whole training told me that the slope was exceedingly dangerous, but at the same time I was saying to myself: 'Ed, my boy, this is Everest\_\_ you have got to push it a bit harder!' (218). Hillary's internal dialogues capture the dual nature of mountaineering, where climbers engage in both a psychological and physical battle, confronting the terrifying yet exhilarating aspects of the climb.

Hillary's experience on Everest reveals the insignificance of humans before the massive force of nature. This realization helps to transform into humbler and more compassionate. Despite the inherent danger, there is a profound and awe-inspiring

experience that resonates with Kant's conception of the sublime, characterized by chaos, wilderness, and irregularity, along with the overwhelming power of nature. Brady asserts, "Kant emphasizes the 'unruly disorder', 'chaos', and 'devastation' of sublime nature. This idea of 'raw nature' appeared frequently in early discussions of the sublime" (127). Kant's notion of the sublime matches Hillary's experiences on Everest with the mixture of fear, wonder, and awe, leading to personal discovery and transformation.

Hillary's and Tenzing's extraordinary achievements stand as evidence of their courage and unwavering determination. Hillary captures the moment as a mix of joy and relief, reflecting the complexity of emotions such as an achievement evokes. He describes it, ". . . mixed with the relief was a vague sense of astonishment that I should have been the lucky one to attain the ambition of so many brave and determined climbers. It seemed difficult at first to grasp that we'd got there" (227). Hillary's descriptions reveal the emotional duality that is common in sublime experiences. The triumph is accompanied by astonishment and its improbability. This blend of emotions like joy, relief, and disbelief reflects the profound impact of reaching such a formidable goal.

This historic triumph in mountaineering was marked by a profound moment of satisfaction as Hillary describes in his narrative, "I felt a quiet glow of satisfaction spread through my body a satisfaction less vociferous but more powerful than I had ever felt on a mountain top before. I turned and looked at Tenzing. Even beneath his oxygen mask and the icicles hanging from his hair, I could see his infectious grin of sheer delight" (227). This sense of accomplishment is layered with emotions, relief, astonishment, elation, and bliss, all intermingling within the sublime atmosphere of the achievement. Hillary further asserts, "Wherever we looked, icy peaks and somber

gorges lay beneath us like a relief map. Perhaps the view was most spectacular to the east, for here the giants Makalu and Kanchenjunga dominated the horizon and gave the idea of the vast scale of the Himalayas" (228). From the vantage point, Hillary and Tenzing observe the awe-inspiring spectacle and believe that the remarkable sight is merely a few miles away.

Hillary and Tenzing were integral members of the 1953 British Expedition to Mount Everest, under the leadership of John Hunt. Hunt's emphasis on the importance of teamwork underscores the pivotal role played by the collective efforts of the team members in their ultimate triumph. Their experiences and achievements resulted in happiness, bliss, and contentment within the team. In *The Ascent of Everest*, Hunt summarizes the essence of the climb, noting the struggle between man and the mountain:

. . . the tussle between men and a mountain reaches beyond the scope of mountain climbing in its physical aspect. It seems to me to symbolize man's struggle to come to terms with the forces of nature; it speaks eloquently of the continuity of this struggle and of the bond between all those who have taken part in it. The opponent wasn't other parties, but Everest itself. (6)

Hunt portrays the struggle as symbolic of man's endeavor to reconcile with the forces of nature, highlighting the struggle and the bond shared among mountaineers. When Hunt's members reach the summit, they realize that it is not a man who tames nature, but nature that humbles the spirit of man. The sheer magnitude and unpredictability of nature made them realize their interconnectedness with the world and their insignificance within it. In this context, Brady draws ideas from Kant in her work, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, and suggests:

[I]f we lose ourselves in contemplation of the infinite greatness of the universe in space and time, meditate on the past millennia and on those to come; or if the heavens at night actually bring innumerable worlds before our eyes, and so impress on our consciousness the immensity of the universe, we feel ourselves reduced to nothing. (97)

Brady claims that in such a state of contemplation, a feeling of oneness emerges. Emphasizing this notion, Brady further asserts that individuals, 'are therefore not oppressed but exalted by its immensity' (98). This realization takes the climbers to discover their true nature, realizing the immense power of nature and leading to a state of sublime.

Mount Everest, renowned for its breathtaking physical beauty, presents challenges, and risks even to intrepid mountaineers like Hillary and Tenzing. These challenges arise from the mountains' extreme altitude, stiff rocky cliffs, and thick layers of snow. Despite the obstacles, Hillary and Tenzing achieved the historic feat of reaching Everest's summit forever drawing their names in the history of mountaineering.

Jamling Tenzing Norgay, the son of the legendary mountaineer, Tenzing Norgay Sherpa provides a distinct perspective on Mount Everest in his work, *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest*. His motivation for ascending Mount Everest is rooted in a long-deferred aspiration and quest for spiritual growth. In the introduction to Norgay's book, Krakauer writes, "I was driven primarily by a need for understanding. I felt that only by following my father up the mountain, by standing where he had stood, by climbing where he had climbed, could learn about him: (xvii). This shows that Norgay's journey is a quest for knowledge, seeking to understand both his father and the mountain itself.

Norgay commences his narrative by portraying the picturesque beauty of Tengboche and the double-humped peak of Ama Dablam. His journey leads him and his team on a side trip through the yak pastures, passing Pangboche, Dingboche, and Lobuche, and ultimately at the Everest Base Camp. There, he acknowledges the hardworking porters who tirelessly accumulate their burdens into a mounting heap. Gazing upon the formidable Khumbu Icefall Norgay describes, "The Khumbu Glacier's twisted mass of unstable ice that protrudes menacingly from the high valley between Lhotse and Everest" (76). Norgay further asserts that mountain landscapes create a unique blend of fear and awe, discovering the insignificance of human existence in front of the vast nature. He writes, "The Khumbu Icefall is a labyrinth of house-sized blocks of ice, towering seracs, and gaping crevasses, all seemingly frozen in mid-creation, sculpted with an artistic combination of randomness and cosmic order" (90). Norgay's observation aligns with Burke's philosophy, where the sublime is found in the interplay between beauty and terror. Brady articulates, "Whatever therefore is terrible, about sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror, be endowed with greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous" (57). Burke argues that the profound impact of mountains lies not just in their grandeur but in their ability to evoke a deep sense of awe and danger. Norgay's journey encompasses both the physical challenges of the ascent and emotional and spiritual encounters with the sublime aspects of nature.

Norgay approaches the mountain with reverence, and devotion, despite the daunting challenges. He portrays Mount Everest as a sacred guardian deity residing in the heart of the Himalayas. This perspective echoes the sentiments of Khim Lal Gautam in, *Pandhrau Chuli [Peak XV]* where he discusses the notion of Eastern philosophy that regards the entire Himalayan range as divine. He articulates:

पूर्वीय सभ्यतामा समग्र हिमालयलाई ईश्वरको स्वरूप मानिएको छ । नारद पुराणमा शैलानां हिमवन्तो च . . . भनी हिमालय भगवानको एउटा रूप हो भनिएको छ । श्रीमद्भागवद् गीतामा श्रीकृष्णले यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः भनी स्थावर वस्तुहरुमा आफु (भगवान विष्णु) हिमालय भएको बताएका छन् । हिमालयको रूप लावाण्यले संसारलाई मोहित पार्छ नै, यहाँका कणकणमा दिव्य चेतना र दैवीशक्तिको बास रहेको विश्वाससमेत गरिन्छ ।

(२२५) (In the Eastern civilization, the entire Himalaya is regarded as divine. In the *Narayan Purana*, it is mentioned that Himalaya is considered as the portrait of the divine. In the *Shreemada Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna refers himself as the Himalaya. The magnificent form of the Himalaya enchants the world and in its every particle holds a divine consciousness and presence of celestial power, (my trans.; 225).

Gautam acknowledges that the Himalayas are seen as dwelling places of deities, embodying tranquility, endurance, and vitality. Norgay, in his narrative, intertwines the physical landscape of the Himalayas with the divine, highlighting a profound connection between the region's geography and its resident deities.

Furthermore, Norgay weaves together his mountaineering endeavors with those of his father, creating a tapestry of shared experiences. He reflects, "Patience. Again I invoked my father's teaching on patience. He had reached the top only on his seventh attempt. Seven is lucky for our family and for the Sherpa. My grandmother Kinzom had seven sons, and my father had seven children. A party of seven is considered auspicious when travelling or working" (218). Norgay emphasizes the continuity of his family legacy in mountaineering, highlighting the transmission of values and wisdom through generations.

Norgay's journey offers profound insights, vividly capturing the 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. He 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 perceives Mount Everest as a living deity, transformed from a lifeless mound of rock into a warm and life-sustaining being. Norgay's feeling of transformation resonates with the ideas of Kant who describes the transformative journey in human life. His account reflects the profound impact of embarking on his expedition, fulfilling a long-cherished aspiration and revealing the transformative power of the mountain.

While describing his physical and emotional experiences of summiting Everest, Norgay skillfully incorporates mountaineering terminologies such as third lung, the tattered hulk of a helicopter, groans and squeals of the glacier, shrugged and shifted, Sherpa Oxygen, a labyrinth of the house-sized blocks of ice, the tools of our trade, shrouded in fog and many more that are integral to the mountaineering. These expressions not only enhance the narrative's texture but also deepen the reader's understanding of the sublime.

In *The Mountain: My Time on Everest*, Edmund Viesturs with co-author David Roberts, artfully chronicles his expeditions and the profound experiences the journeys had on their lives. Viesturs provides a detailed account of his experiences, intertwining the physical challenges of mountaineering with his personal growth. He describes his motivation for climbing Mount Everest, as stemming from a blend of excitement and apprehension, viewing the mountain as a place to confront these emotions. Initially, Viesturs is drawn by the thrill of the challenge, ultimately, he discovers his own identity through the climb, achieving a state of realization. He

asserts, "I learned a lot about life and about myself during my twenty-three-year span of campaigns on Everest" (311). For Viesturs, the journey to high mountains is a source of self-discovery and transformation, leading individuals to experience the sublime.

Viesturs's Everest expedition begins from the base camp where he finds himself impacted by the mountain's imposing presence and solemnity. Employing literary devices, Viesturs draws a striking comparison between the atmosphere of Everest Base Camp and the Sword of Damocles. He unveils this analogy by describing:

. . . the massive wall that you can count on to be free of avalanches and falling rocks. The big snow slides that spill from the massive slopes high above the buttress seem fairly predictable, triggered by certain patterns of snowfall and wind direction. But what worried us most were the cliffs of ice that were poised above us, like so many swords of Damocles. (68)

In this narrative, Viesturs describes the towering wall as an immense structure, fraught with the danger of avalanches and falling rocks, likened to Damocles' throne. The perilous environment makes him realize within himself as King Damocles who has a sharp sword above his head and thinks anytime he is going to die. In Viesturs's portrayal, the massive wall, the potential for avalanches, and falling rocks look like the dreadful sword of the king, Damocles. Viesturs's depiction of the wall as a threatening entity invokes a sense of fear and apprehension.

Similarly, Viesturs in his narrative, highlights the multifaceted nature of the sublime experience. He recounts an intense moment involving an unexpected avalanche, a moment fraught with imminent danger and terror, yet undeniably sublime. Viesturs states:

We'd been on the route for only fifteen minutes when an avalanche came down from somewhere far above— we could hear it, but saw nothing.

Terrified, we hung from our jumar, the front points of our crampons planted in the slope, and hugged the wall. As I wrote that evening in my diary, "All I could see was power rushing past my light beam as I gripped my jumar and tried to breathe without choking on the spindrift scary! Finally, it stopped. We both started getting the heebie-jeebies. (71)

Viesturs's account highlights how the sublime is deeply intertwined with sensations of fear and terror arising from encounters with challenging natural forces such as avalanches. This aligns with Burke's theory of the sublime, which, as Brady explains, is rooted in, ". . . terrible objects, or that which is 'fitted in any sort to excite ideas of pain and danger', and the feeling evoked by the sublime is strongest we are capable of experiencing" (23). Both Viesturs and Burke suggest that these extreme experiences of danger and awe are central to the sublime, as they provoke the strongest feelings of fear and admiration.

Viesturs and his team approach Mount Everest with great caution and deliberation. They undergo a lengthy process of acclimatization to prevent losing consciousness and risking their lives. Viesturs displays patience and meticulousness, as evidenced by his description of waiting and watching. He articulates, "Waiting, watching, waiting! We paced around camp all day like expectant fathers at the maternity ward. We watched the upper mountain with binoculars all day" (10). Viesturs acknowledges that climbing a high mountain requires careful consideration and sometimes entails overcoming various obstacles, including acclimation. The Yellow Band, which has the texture of a roughly troweled concrete wall, and the Grey Band presents significant challenges for him.

Viesturs's triumph over the challenging slopes and his eventual summit encapsulates the essence of Burke's interpretation of the sublime, where joy and sorrow intertwine against nature's grand backdrop. Burke articulates, ". . . in grief, the pleasure is still uppermost and the affliction we suffer has no resemblance to absolute pain . . . (37). Burke suggests that the real pleasure in facing grief comes from the overarching presence of nature, suggesting that any hardship or danger, when overcome, enhances the sublime experience. This resonates with Viesturs's endeavors, where his mixture of elation and hardship upon reaching the summit mirrors Burke's notion that true pleasure transcends mere happiness.

During his climb, Viesturs recognizes the importance of movements, as he encounters various physical and mental challenges, such as crawling through the snow or climbing the vertical long ladder. He maintains strict discipline and decision throughout his ascent. He is dynamic to overcome any challenges in life. According to Jim Whittaker's autobiography, *A Life on the Edge*, "Among the Americans, Ed Viesturs was unnaturally strong. In miserable conditions that drove others back down, he made carry after carrying to the high camps, without supplemental oxygen. But that was the problem; he wanted to summit without oxygen" (89). Whittaker claims that Viesturs understands the multifaceted nature of climbing and prepares himself to face obstacles accordingly.

Viesturs's ambition, determination, patience, and endurance eventually led him to triumph over Mount Everest. Upon reaching the summit, he experiences a profound sense of awe and relief, despite extreme exhaustion. He articulates, "Then, at once, 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 that moment, no one on Earth stood higher than I did" (96). Viesturs's relentless pursuit to conquer the world's highest peak, fueled by his passion and determination, epitomizes the sublime experiences as outlined by Kant, and cited by Brady:

The sublime is awe-inspiring greatness in extent or degree which invites approach; but the fear that in comparison with it, we will disappear in our estimations at the same time is a deterrent. And if we are in a safe place, the collecting of our powers to grasp the appearance, along with our anxiety that we are unable to measure up to its greatness, aroused surprise. (54)

Brady argues that the sublime emerges from the overwhelming sight of nature, where fear, terror, and pain are eclipsed by astonishment. Viesturs's achievement mirrors the concept, where his elation at reaching the summit transcends physical limitations, leaving him without appetite, dehydrated, and mentally absorbed. In this state of total absorption, immediate physical concerns fade in the face of sublime victory. These experiences align with Brady's that sublime experiences transform ordinary perceptions, elevating the individual beyond mundane realities to a realm of awe and wonder.

Viesturs is celebrated as America's foremost high-altitude mountaineers and the recipient of the Explorers Club's Lowell Thomas Award for outstanding achievement in mountaineering. Beyond his climbing, he is equally recognized as the best author. David Breashears commends Viesturs and his co-author Roberts for their well-researched and compelling history of the most dangerous Himalayan peaks. Breashears focuses on Viesturs's dual role as a renowned mountaineer and key contributor to the exploration and documentation of mountaineering stories, blending sublime experiences.

The French mountaineers earned a prominent position after their successful ascent of Mount Annapurna, the world's tenth-highest peak in 1950. Maurice Herzog and his team created a new epoch in the field of high-altitude mountaineering. In his work, *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak*, Herzog presents a detailed account of the expedition. His motivation for climbing Annapurna stemmed,

from a quest for knowledge, driven by the desire to understand the vast, uncharted, and unconquered world of the great mountain ranges, ultimately leading them to discovery, realization, and transformation in life. Herzog captures this sentiment, stating, "Annapurna, to which we had gone empty-handed, was a treasure on which we should live the rest of our days. With this realization we turn the page: a new life begins. There are other Annapurnas in the lives of men" (223). Herzog's journey begins with the pursuit of knowledge and ends with the realization that the lessons learned in the mountains can be applied to other aspects of life. The expedition highlights not only the physical challenges but also the profound personal growth and achievement associated with such a significant mountaineering endeavor.

Herzog's narrative begins in Delhi and takes the reader through the lively and noisy crowd of Nepal to the bank of the Kali Gandaki River. While on their journey, Herzog and his team encounter the impressive Dhaulagiri, mountain, which his friend Lachenal describes as:

An immense ice pyramid, glittering in the sun like a crystal, rose more than 23,000 feet above us. The south face, shining blue through the morning mists, was unbelievably lofty, out of this world. We were speechless in the face of this tremendous mountain whose name was so familiar to us, but the reality so moved us that we couldn't utter a word. Then slowly the reasons for our being here conquered our awe and aesthetic pleasure. (13)

Lachenal's description of Dhaulagiri as an immense ice pyramid evokes a sense of awe, leaving the climbers speechless in the face of such overwhelming natural beauty. This moment reflects what Brady describes, ". . . a different set of emotions in aesthetic appreciation. The tranquil, contemplative emotions of beauty, associated with qualities of harmony, order, find a new contrast in feelings of awe and

astonishment, . . ." (40). In Brady's assentation, the climbers' reaction to the immense and formidable landscape captures this shift, where the grandeur of the mountain transcends simple beauty and becomes a sublime experience. As they proceed their way to Marpha, they find cheerful locals and the prayer flags fluttering around add to their excitement. Herzog ensures that they respect the religious observances of the people and pass on the left to the prayer walls adorned with slabs of rock inscribed with the classic mantra. Herzog posits, "We came upon several prayer walls adorned with slabs of rock upon which we read the classic inscription: '*Om mane padme hum.*' We were careful to respect the religious observances of these peoples and to pass on the left to the wall" (42). Herzog asserts that the religious vibes of the place add extra energy to the climbers' minds and the beautiful portrait of the walls with colorful pieces of clothing create a magical scene in the hills.

As they reach near to summit, Annapurna reveals her secrets, and the distant crystal mountain, Dhaulagiri, and the outstretched arms of Nilgiris add to the awe-inspiring landscape. However, the climbers soon confront the formidable Sickle-shaped glacier, with its towering vertical walls, jagged ridges, and hanging glaciers. The glacier's vastness creates awe, astonishment, and fear, making them realize their own insignificance in the face of nature's power. This reflects Brady's observation that "As the overwhelming aspects of sublime objects evoke feelings of admiration and astonishment, they also force the subject into a position of awareness of comparative weakness and strength—a feeling of being small and insignificant but also a kind of admiration of the self" (42). The climbers in awe of the glacier's magnitude, not only feel their vulnerability but also experience a heightened sense of self-awareness in confronting such immense natural forces.

On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1950, the team reached the summit at an elevation of 8,075 meters from Northwest Ridge. They have inconceivable, sublime experiences and feel impatient due to the victory. Herzog describes:

Astonishing happiness welled up in me, but I could not define it. Everything was so new, so utterly unprecedented. It was not in the least like anything I had known in the Alps, where one feels buoyed up by the presence of others—by people of whom one is vaguely aware, or even by the dwellings one can see in the far distance. (143)

Herzog's description captures the profound and indescribable emotions that escort such a monumental achievement as reaching the summit of Mount Annapurna.

Conquering the unconquerable, leads Herzog to different states of mind, from extreme joy to bliss, delight, and pleasure as he stands atop the highest point on earth.

Everything is new, pure, and undefinable. He further mentions, "It was impossible to build a cairn; there were no stones; everything was frozen. Lachenal stamped his feet; he felt them freezing. I felt mine freezing too, but paid little attention. The highest mountain to be climbed by man lay under our feet!" (145). Herzog's extreme joy of touching the highest point of the earth is unimaginable. There is neither cold nor any anxiety, a lived sublime experience. A vivid and unnatural puzzling scene creates a tremendous impression that he mentions as:

This was quite different. An enormous gulf was between me and the world. This was a different universe- withered, desert, lifeless; a fantastic universe where the presence of man was not foreseen, perhaps not desired. We were braving an interdict, overstepping a boundary, and yet we had no fear as we continued upward. I thought of the famous ladder of St. Theresa of Avila. Something clutched at my heart. (143)

Herzog compares his achievement of summiting Mount Annapurna to a spiritual ascent, drawing on the metaphor of St. Theresa of Avila's ladder. His powerful emotional reaction indicates a quest for spiritual enlightenment, self-discovery, and transformation which he feels he attains at the summit. His profound experience aligns with Kant's notion presented in his "Analytic of the Sublime" as, ". . . nature is here called sublime merely because it elevates the imagination to a presentation of those cases in which the mind can make proper sublimity of its destination, in comparison with nature itself" (120). For Herzog, the overwhelming majesty of the mountain elevates his spirit, allowing him to transcend the physical realm and reach a higher state of inner realization, where the mind's capacity for sublimity surpasses the grandeur of nature itself.

Reinhold Messner's 1985 ascent of Mount Annapurna from the Northwest Face side, is documented in *Annapurna: 50 Years of Expeditions in the Death Zone*. His motivation for the climb arose from a desire to explore a challenging unapproached route, to test human limits, and to gain a deeper understanding of life and the natural world.

As a leader of a small group of inexperienced high-altitude mountaineers, Messner faces challenging conditions due to the steepness, dangerous rock fall, and adverse weather. On the way to Annapurna, the team is immobilized by extreme conditions. Though terrified by lightning, snowstorms, and avalanches, these powerful forces also leave a vivid and wonderful image in their minds. Messner describes the predicament as, ". . . with no visibility, it was impossible to make a move; we would have been unable to feel our way, either up or down. We would have been lost, even though there were two of us. We felt safe in the tent, but what if the

fabric should tear?" (119). In this moment, Messner conveys his fear and uncertainty as he waits for the weather to improve. In other words, Messner is perceiving the sublime. Messner states, "After a terrible day's walk, what now appeared out of the black clouds and the thin sleet was sheer horror. . . we don't know where we are, we don't know why we are here or even who we are. We only know that we are all so small and insignificant. I just hope to God it lets us live for a little longer" (134). This quote captures Messner's realization of human insignificance in the face of overwhelming power. Hence, the climb is not just a physical challenge, but a journey of self-discovery, leading to the profound realization of existence, and survival.

Messner's experience supports Burke's definition of the sublime where he states, "Whatever therefore is terrible, about sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror, be endued with the greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look on anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous" (57). Burke claims that terrifying objects reveal the true condition of human nature. In the face of nature's massive force, human hubris falls away making people confront their smallness and recognize their place in the universe. Despite the danger, Messner and Hans remain optimistic and manage to avoid excessive worry by conserving energy. Messner further states, "To be frightened and to be thinking at the same time costs you a lot of energy, so I tried at least to avoid any further thought. Surely we could dispense with caution in the tent at least? So, turning the flame of life down low for a while, we dozed the night away" (120). Messner's experiences three issues: first, he highlights the challenges and the risks associated with climbing the majestic Annapurna; second, he centers on the importance of being cautious but always positive even in adverse conditions or situations; and third his realization of how the untamed, wild, but sacrosanct landscape is steadily veering him towards a deeper appreciativeness of self, life, and living!

In his book, Messner's depiction of his ascent near the summit of Annapurna captures the profound beauty and wonder of the natural landscape. The atmosphere transforms as the sun intermittently appears, playing a game of hide and seek with the cloud. This magical scene draws Messner's attention:

From time to time the sun made an appearance, but it had no power. The pale light and the clouds, loose swirls of mist and vague patches of light dancing on the broken rocks far below, lent our world something ethereal. And from the west a new bank of mist came in, piles of gloomy fog, more and more of it, filling the Kali- Gandaki. A wedge of cloud boiling up from below violently pushed the last remains of the blue sky apart. (122)

Messner reflects that even near the summit, the sun is pale and weak, its usual strength diminishes. The loose mist, clouds, and jagged rocks illuminate the world as an ethereal place. As the mist from Kali-Gandaki and a segment of cloud push apart the patches of blue sky, the sublime picture creates a lasting impression on the climbers' minds. This description evokes awe and wonder at the grandeur of nature, which aligns with the characteristics of the sublime, as described by Burke and Kant.

When Messner and his friend, Hans reach the top of the firm dome of snow, they feel a sense of pride in their accomplishment. From this vantage point, they can see a different landscape. Messner explains, "Machapuchare appeared for a brief moment from behind a gray veil of mist, there were tatters of blue sky and Hans' ice-encrusted face. A huge ban of clouds hung before and above Dhaulagiri. Like an island" (124). Messner's description conveys peace, purity, beauty, and the etherealness of the mountain. Amidst his laborious ascent, he experiences a profound shift, in realizing his insignificance and acknowledges his limited understanding of life, his 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 introspection highlights the constraints of human knowledge and understanding particularly, in front of the majestic and unfathomable nature of mountains. Despite his awareness of his smallness when confronted with the formidable and potent forces of nature, Messner does not abandon his quest, his mission to be victorious over the daunting landscape, but at a later stage to transcend everything and merge and be one with nature and the natural world. His experiences can be referred to Kant's philosophy which Brady explains, "About these fearsome, powerful forces, we feel physically small. This feeling is possible only under the conditions of being physically in a safe place" (60). The reference to Kant and Brady's work provides support to Messner's reflections where he explicates his charged feelings of transcendence and perceiving life in its reality.

Mountaineering is widely acknowledged as a perilous undertaking, yet its allure continues to attract many enthusiasts and adventure lovers. Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner have successfully summited the highest mountains of the world and made beautiful stories of their achievements. They confront with the challenging forces of wild nature. While terror often accompanies with extreme environments and ultimately leads to awe and astonishment. These ideas resonate with Burke's theory of the sublime, where he asserts that powerful and dangerous entities evoke terror and fear, but the great danger inspires wonder and astonishment. Boulton explains in his introduction to Burke, "Things then that are powerful, and likely to hurt, are the causes of Common Terror, and the more they are powerful and likely to hurt, the more they become the causes of Terror, which Terror, the greater it is, the more it is join'd with wonder, and the nearer it comes to astonishment" (xlviii).

This notion summarizes the mountaineers' experience that terror, faced on the dangerous slopes transforms into awe and astonishment. In mountaineering, ascending to great heights provides fresh perspectives on things and objects. As mountaineers progress upwards, they transform, being different from the person they were at base camp because their beliefs and potential are elevated with every step. In *Moving Mountains*, Julie Miles Lewis, a British motivational speaker, and author asserts:

Vast open spaces allow you to rise above or move away from your current context, widen your perspective, and come up with new solutions. They are free of the usual multitude of distractions of everyday life and assist in bringing back a sense of focus to what matters most. They offer time and space for deep reflection, self-renewal, and relief from the stress and strains of life in the city. Away from the noise of the city you can contemplate life's big questions and experience the restorative power of Mother Nature. Relaxing into 'nothingness' is very powerful. (144)

Lewis expounds on the liberating effect of vast open spaces, stating that they enable one to transcend their current context, broaden their outlook, and conceive innovative solutions. Lewis emphasizes mountaineering as a means to escape from the distractions of everyday worries and self-doubts and brings a consequent awareness of a higher reality.

Through climbing, Hillary, Norgay with Coburn, Viesturs with Roberts, Herzog, and Messner discover a hidden power and a transformed outlook toward life and living. This transformation is transmuting, enriching, and enlightening. In this regard, Lewis further recounts her experience of mountaineering and inner transformation in *Moving Mountains*:

On the way down from the mountain I sensed that something very significant had shifted within me: a newfound sense of courage and confidence to step out and make a difference, to leave a positive footprint on the planet through my passion for people and the outdoors in a unique way. It's fair to say that through climbing the mountain I found a new sense of clarity, direction, and purpose for my life and was open to the possibilities ahead. (15)

Lewis claims that her mountaineering experience can be interpreted as a transformative event that leads toward new understanding and direction in life. While on the Everest and Annapurna expeditions, Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner gain a new sense of courage and confidence which is seen as a form of self-discovery and self-realization. They proclaim that the experience of summiting the peak, not only alters one's personality but transforms one's overall outlook toward life and living.

Climbing, the highest mountains like Everest and Annapurna, poses the ultimate challenge even for experienced mountaineers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner, due to extreme height, terrible weather, and unpredictable terrain. Yet it presents a unique opportunity to behold the majesty and grandeur of nature, leading from self-discovery to heightened awareness. Indeed, daring, adventurous, and proficient climbers acknowledge that the allure of mountains lies in their beauty, might, solitude, and risk, all essential components for attaining sublime experiences. These climbers comprehend the significant risks and perils associated with climbing, yet the ethereal and unrivaled beauty of the summit makes it more tempting, yielding immense joy, bliss, and contentment.

The innate human desire for exploration has been an intrinsic part of our nature since ancient times. Throughout early civilizations, individuals venture into uncharted territories in pursuit of the unknown and the seemingly unconquerable.

Many embrace risks as a fundamental part of life, recognizing that without them, true adventure cannot be experienced. However, the motivation behind such risky behavior is not easily discernible. In the article, "Mountaineering Risk, Safety, and Security," Ian Wall highlights the historical association between humans and the perception of risk in the mountains:

If we look back into the history of mountaineering, it can easily be seen that humans have always perceived that there was a risk associated with the mountains. From the earliest of times, the sound of avalanches, roaring winds, echoing thunder, and lightening all built up images of possible devils, demons, and deities living in the high mountains, and those theories were backed up by traders who tried crossing high European alpine passes. (26)

Wall argues that despite these fears and risks, humans continue to traverse high passes and ascend mountains. Climbers are capable of surmounting fears and risks through their masterful techniques. In *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*, Joseph Murphy advises, "Place your attention on the thing immediately desired. Get absorbed and engrossed in your desire. Know that the subjective always overturns the objective. This attitude will give you confidence and lift your spirits" (249). Murphy's insights emphasize a psychological transformation that emerges in self-assurance and emotional fortitude. In the context of mountaineering, Murphy's concept encourages climbers to immerse themselves wholeheartedly in the experience. This mindset is not limited to mountaineering alone; but applies to individuals who engage in thrilling activities like deep sea-diving for sheer excitement, or a personal quest, a search for answers, and a deeper understanding of life and its purpose. For instance, Mount Everest attracts climbers from all over the world due to its serenity and heavenly quality. Ang Tshering Sherpa, in "Prospects of Mountaineering Tourism and

Challenges of Climate Change, Global Warming, and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods,” emphasizes Nepal’s allure for mountaineers, particularly due to its impressive peaks.

Sherpa articulates:

Every mountaineer dreams of scaling the greatest peaks in the world. Nepal is the Mecca for mountaineers, boasting eight of the fourteen peaks above 8,000 meters, including the 'third pole' of the world, Mt. Everest (*Sagarmatha* and *Chhomolongma*). First and foremost, it is home to the greatest mountain range on earth, the 'Himalayas'. The Himalayas are unparalleled in its magnitude and stretch over 800 km separating the Indian and the Chinese subcontinents. Few places on earth proffer such a remarkable amalgamation of pristine alpine beauty and abundant opportunities to scale these giants. Thus mountaineers and adventure-seekers cannot help but find themselves heading to Nepal. (49)

Sherpa asserts that every mountaineer has an aspiration of conquering the world's highest peaks, and Nepal fulfills this desire through its eight out of fourteen peaks towering above 8,000 meters including Mount Everest and Annapurna. Climbers who achieve this feat describe a profound sense of stillness and tranquility representing awe-inspiring experiences and sublimity that can only be attained after an arduous and challenging journey.

Thus, within the domain of mountaineering literature, the narratives of notable figures such as Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner reveal their tackling of multifaceted challenges inherent in high-altitude expeditions, thereby encountering the profound experiences of the sublime. Through their audacious ascents of Everest and Annapurna, these mountaineers have engaged with the formidable natural elements like navigating treacherous terrains, enduring harsh weather conditions, and confronting the psychological demands of such endeavors. Their collective

experiences, characterized by a blend of adventure, inspiration, and fulfillment, underscore a deep engagement with the mountain environment, where the physical pursuit of summiting intertwines with moments of personal and spiritual awakening. Despite the daunting challenges, these mountaineers approach Mount Everest and Annapurna with both enthusiasm and reverence, ultimately, attaining the sublime. Their journeys reveal that the unique topographical features of these mountainous landscapes provide opportunities for self-discovery, a deeper understanding of the natural world, and personal transformation.

Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner each employ different climbing styles on Mount Everest and Annapurna. Some follow the expedition style, while others use the alpine style, and a few tackle solo climbs at high altitudes. Hillary, Norgay, and Herzog relied on the expedition style for their ascents of Everest and Annapurna, while Messner prefers the alpine style and Viesturs even undertakes solo climbs. Whether they choose the expedition style, alpine style, or solo climbing, they all view mountaineering as a journey of discovery and transformation.

### Conclusion

This chapter has examined the narratives of renowned mountaineers such as Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner, focusing on their expeditions to Mount Everest and Annapurna. These accounts reveal that the climbers set out not only to confront physical challenges but also to grapple with complex emotions such as terror, fear vastness, and awe. Through these experiences, they encounter the immense power of nature, which lead to personal transformation, becoming humbler, compassionate, and resilient, and ultimately reaching a state of sublime. An analysis of these primary texts demonstrates that mountaineering is not merely ascending and descending the peaks of Mount Everest and Annapurna. Rather, it is a journey of self-

discovery, transformation, and pursuit of the sublime. The climbers' experiences are closely tied to the philosophical concepts of the sublime, as theorized by thinkers like Burke and Kant. Moreover, these mountaineers employ both alpine and expedition styles of climbing. The alpine style, noted for its elegance and efficiency, contrasts with the expedition style which is generally safer but prolonged effort. Both styles reflect the climbers' strategies as they sought to conquer the formidable heights of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna.

## Chapter V: Women in Himalayan Mountaineering

This chapter examines the narratives of women mountaineers as depicted in Stephens's *On Top of the World* (1994), Gammelgaard's *Climbing High: A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy* (1999), Lhakpa Phuti's *Forty Years in the Mountains* (2016) and Blum's *Annapurna: A Woman's Place* (2015). It delves into physical and emotional experiences of women mountaineers on Himalayan peaks such as Mount Everest and Annapurna, highlighting not only the intense challenges they face but also moment of joy and triumph. The analysis explores emotions like terror, fear, awe, and a sense of vastness, connecting to the philosophy of the sublime. Additionally, this chapter addresses gendered perspectives in mountaineering literature, comparing and contrasting the experiences depicted in men's and women's narratives. Ultimately, it asserts that Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna possess a mysterious allure that elevates the climbers to a sublime state.

### Scaling Heights: A Global History of Women's Achievements in Mountaineering

The history of women's mountaineering may not span as extensively as that of their male counterparts, primarily due to the prevailing belief that mountaineering is associated with men, and that its nature is physically demanding. Activities such as rock climbing, ice climbing, hill walking, and high-altitude mountain climbing require traits like physical fitness and strength, which are traditionally associated with men. As a result, men have historically dominated the mountaineering community, while women have been less represented. Despite the prevailing norms, there were pioneering women who persisted and actively participated in Alpine expeditions, challenging the established gender roles within this risk-taking activity. In *Leading Out: Mountaineering Stories of Adventurous Women*, Rachel da Silva, highlights the pioneering ascent, "The recorded accounts be in 1808 with the ascent of Mont Blanc,

the highest peak in the European Alps, by Maria Paradis" (viii). Silva asserts that the heroic feat of Maria, who was the first woman to climb Mont Blanc, earned her place among the rank of mountain climbers. Her aspirations, diligence, and determination inspired her to be further bold and assertive. Echoing this sentiment, Ahluwalia in *Faces of Everest* states, "Around 1808 the first woman stood on the summit of Mont Blanc and almost a century ago Lucy Walker climbed the Matterhorn. There are lots of other women who have stood on the summit of various mountains" (163).

Ahluwalia acknowledges the historical presence of women in mountaineering dating back to the 1800s, particularly within the Alpine regions of Switzerland, Italy, and France. He claims that not only did Maria Paradis make history on Mont Blanc, but nearly a century later, Lucy Walker conquered the Matterhorn. These women, among others, demonstrated their capability for high-risk and adventurous undertakings, which was comparable to their male counterparts.

The historical involvement of women in mountaineering reflects a gradual shift towards gender inclusivity within the sport, where women climbers continue to redefine the boundaries of their possibility and exploration. Mountaineering, especially at elevations exceeding 8000 meter presents significant challenges due to the harsh conditions of the death-zone which includes extreme cold, severe weather, and thin air that humans cannot survive for long periods. Despite these harrowing conditions, women mountaineers undertook these perilous ascents and have gained incredible experiences. These courageous women have not only successfully navigated the complexities and adversities of high-altitude climbing, but have also immersed themselves in the sublime aspects of these experiences, reaching a state of transcendence and profound connection with the natural environment.

Women from different countries have endeavored to ascend above 8000 meters. Among the notable milestones in women's mountaineering, the ascent of Mount Everest holds a special place. After obtaining permission, a pioneering group of Japanese women, led by Junko Tabei successfully ascended Mount Everest in 1975 and became the first woman to climb to the highest peak. Her achievement, marked by extraordinary confidence and determination, sets not only a new benchmark but also paves the way for future generations of women climbers, inspiring them to pursue their mountaineering aspirations and conquer the world's most daunting peaks. In *Faces of Everest*, Ahluwalia recounts Tabei's description of the climb as:

We checked our equipment and resumed the climb at 8:30 a.m. It took us about four hours to reach the top. The route was too steep and too long for a woman. Ang Tshering was climbing faster and often urged me to move on by pulling my hand. I was tired and we progressed slowly toward the summit, sometimes on our elbows. It was a very hard climb . . . When we got very close to the peak there was deep, soft fresh snow. I had to crawl very slowly . . . There was snow all around. I planted the Japanese and Nepalese flags there, . . . (169)

According to Tabei venturing into mountaineering above 8000m. is a formidable challenge due to the steep rugged terrain and harsh wintry weather. The same opinion is reflected in *Nepal Parbat*, a publication by the Nepal Mountaineering Association in 2013, which mentions the extraordinary achievements of Junko Tabei who not only became the first woman to conquer Everest but also the first to summit the seven tallest mountains of all seven continents. It mentions, "Not only that she has climbed the highest peaks of 61 countries—her goal is to climb the tallest mountains (even if they are just hills) of all countries of the world! (32). Tabei is a strenuous lady who

struggles resolutely up the icy slopes of the mighty Himalayas and makes all assume that it is not the size that matters, but rather it is how much courage and determination that a person has, that truly a barometer of success to climbing mountains. Following Tabei, numerous women from Nepal, Poland, China, and India have continued to make significant contributions to the annals of women's mountaineering, scaling some of the world's most daunting peaks and creating history in the field of women's mountaineering.

In addition to the Japanese team, the Chinese expedition team comprising both men and women, successfully summited *Qomolangma* in 1975. Among the climbers was Phanthog, a woman whose elation upon reaching the summit was noticeable. She shares her excitement, “I was very excited when we stepped onto the summit of *Qomolangma*, I stood beside Hou Sheng-fu as he reported our success to the base camp over the walkie-talkie and when we heard the cheers of our comrades at the base camp I joined them in shouting 'Long Live Mao! Long Live Chinese Communist Party’ (179). Phanthog's account of her successful ascent of Mount Everest is indicative of her exhilaration and motivation. At the summit, she engages in multiple activities, including photography, filmography, and scientific research highlighting multiple activities of her mission. Her achievement as the first Chinese woman to summit Mount Everest is evidence of her courage. Subsequently, the notable achievements of women from other countries such as Britain and America serve as the global significance of women's contribution to mountaineering.

In the past, societal norms and constraints significantly limited women's participation in adventurous pursuits, including mountaineering. However, the contemporary era marks a significant departure from the past, with women increasingly leading and participating in adventurous activities such as bungee

jumping, sailing, rock climbing, and mountaineering. Mountaineering, in particular, has transcended gender boundaries to become a universally cherished pursuit, appealing to both men and women alike. The growing number of women successfully summiting formidable peaks like Mount Everest, Annapurna, and others reflects a paradigm shift. It is driven by their strong determination, courage, endurance and most importantly, a collective belief among these intrepid women that they possess the requisite skills and physical fitness to tackle and overcome the formidable challenges of these towering summits.

#### Summits and Struggles: Women's Stories of Transformation and Awareness

This section delves into the captivating stories of women who have dared to conquer the summits of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. Drawn from the majestic allure of the snow-capped peaks and the breathtaking landscapes of gorges, glaciers, waterfalls, and high passes, these courageous women are motivated to push beyond their limits and surmount the seemingly insurmountable. The narratives of women mountaineers from diverse backgrounds and cultures illustrate their resilience, and determination, illustrating the transformative power of mountaineering. Through these accounts, climbers gain profound insights into life and nature which ultimately, lead them to a state of the sublime.

Lene Gammelgaard, the first Scandinavian woman to summit Mount Everest in 1996 presents an evocative account in *Climbing High, A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy*. As the first Danish woman to undertake the ascent of the world's highest mountain as a part of Scott Fischer's Mountain Madness expedition, Gammelgaard offers a unique perspective on the events of the 1996 Everest disaster. Her account sheds a fresh perspective on the events, highlighting the profound passion and commitment required to navigate the extreme challenges of

high-altitude climbing. Gammelgaard's motivation stems from a deep desire for personal growth and self-realization. She reflects, ". . . I must grow, I must strive to reach my full potential despite my desire to escape the responsibility that follows. Maybe now I am ready to bear the responsibility of living a significant life with a wider horizon" (11). Gammelgaard reveals her internal struggle between her desire for personal freedom and realization. Her journey to Everest symbolizes her meaningful life that is shaped by her experiences in the mountains.

Lene Gammelgaard offers a reflective perspective in her narrative asserting that her narrative goes beyond merely describing the tragedy of 1996. *Climbing High: A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy* is not just an elaboration of pain and terror. She states, "What I want to share is not the death and tragedy of climbing, but the majestic beauty of the high mountains and the incredible experience of pursuing the challenge of Everest" (xiv). Gammelgaard emphasizes that the true value of mountaineering extends beyond mere admiration of nature's splendor; it involves an immersive engagement with the mountains that affords unique experiences and fosters a profound sense of sublimity. The notion, as discussed by Brady in *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, elucidates this experience. Brady suggests, "Vast objects occasion vast sensations and vast sensations give the mind a higher idea of her own powers" (44). Brady contends that Gammelgaard's encounter not only enhances her appreciation of nature's magnificence but also fosters a holistic understanding of nature, highlighting human existence, and our place in the cosmos, promoting a deeper connection with nature and awareness of its value.

Throughout her journey, Gammelgaard encounters formidable trials and tribulations, each of which she portrays with a compelling blend of intrigue and

vitality. Her narrative is enriched with expressive phrases such as hazardous beauty, the pure joy of wilderness, go to hell, out of order, mountain madness, and among others. These phrases are pivotal in evoking a sense of the sublime among mountaineers. Gammelgaard's portrayal of the challenges and dangers aligns with Brady's concept. Brady asserts, "In contrast to easy beauty, difficult aesthetic experiences involve a more diverse range of feelings and emotions, from anxiety and awe to fascination and aversion, as we are drawn out of more comfortable forms of appreciation" (166). Brady argues that the sublime arises from feelings of unease, discomfort, or a sense of unresolved tension. Gammelgaard's narrative captures the complex emotions and experiences that transcend mere beauty, resonating with nature's sublime aspects.

In her narrative, Gammelgaard vividly captures the magnificent and awe-inspiring beauty of the Khumbu Icefall revealing her profound excitement and awe. She describes, "The Icefall is magnificent. The first time I saw it, back in 1991, I thought of Niagara Falls instantly frozen. Our route takes us directly through this abundance of blue ice, greenish ice, and snowy ice. I trail the others, and we begin our ascent. It's strenuous. Altitude and the gradient make themselves felt!" (92). Gammelgaard conveys her initial impression of the Icefall as something extraordinary and surreal, comparing it to the iconic Niagara Falls but in a state of frozen grandeur. Her expressions of varying colors of ice add to the vividness of her depiction, painting a picture of a natural wonder that is both beautiful and daunting.

As Gammelgaard ascends towards Camp III and Camp IV, she confronts the increasing difficulties posed by steep gradients and hazardous weather conditions. She states, "At high altitudes, even the most well-trained and acclimatized climbers have difficulty performing, both physically and mentally. The higher you climb, the more

difficult it becomes to function" (122). Gammelgaard asserts that mountaineering above 8,000m. is challenging for all due to the complexities and inherent dangers. Despite these challenges, she finds the view incredible. Her narrative deepens upon reaching the Western Cwm, where she is mesmerized by the tranquility yet treacherous allure of the snow-covered landscape. She describes:

Whiteout in the Western Cwm now. The Cwm, a gorge carved out of the mountains by the Khumbu Glacier is a giant, glacial snowfield, so when the snow and fog come in around noon, everything thickens into one white mass. I'm following the already-trodden trail painstakingly so that I won't fall into one of the innumerable crevasses. To minimize the risk of getting lost and disappearing forever down one of the subterranean ice cave systems, the 'road' is marked with bamboo sticks-two sticks marking the visible crevasses, and ladders placed across those too wide to jump. I have to be constantly alert not being able to see a crevasse does not mean it is not there. (113)

In Gammelgaard's experience, the peaceful engagement with the majestic landscape is suddenly disrupted by the whiteout, complicating her passage through the glacial snowfield. The terrain only distinguishable by bamboo sticks indicate crevasses and she is constantly alert as a misstep could lead to a fatal fall. This contrast between the serene beauty against the imminent dangers encapsulates the essence of the sublime in mountain literature, as articulated by Brady.

Throughout her narrative, Gammelgaard discusses her trepidation towards heights, yet she is resolute in confronting and surmounting these challenges. She mentions, "As I got acquainted with vertical rock walls, winter climbing, and the hazardous beauty of glaciers, I found out that, yes, it is that exacting. It is that difficult. It is that dangerous. And I was scared and happy" (163). Gammelgaard

recognizes the dangers of mountaineering but finds delight and contentment in her achievement. The awe-inspiring beauty of the glaciers, coupled with the exhilaration of the climb coalesce into a sublime experience where fear transforms into a catalyst for thrill and deep-seated happiness. This concept resonates with Burke's analysis of the sublime as closely linked to the sensations of fear and awe.

Burke mentions, "The delight which arises from the modifications of pain, confesses the stock from whence it sprung, in its solid, strong, and severe nature" (38). Burke argues that the sublime experience involves a complex interplay of emotions, where initial discomfort or pain is transformed into a source of delight and empowerment. Gammelgaard's encounters with the sublime are characterized as solid, strong, and intense, which indicates the personal growth and endurance stemming from these encounters. Through her ascent, Gammelgaard not only overcomes the physical challenges but also confronts and transcends her internal barriers, leading to a heightened sense of self-awareness and competence.

As Gammelgaard approaches to Everest summit, she is struck by the overwhelming size and awe-inspiring vista of Everest's surroundings. Describing the scene, she mentions, "The first sunbeams peek out from the top of the ridge, and I can see a group of brilliantly colored spots sitting on a rock island in the middle of the snow masses. Are they birds? People? Or hallucinations? The sun is stronger now, no clouds, divinely beautiful" (164). Gammelgaard's elation intensifies as she observes the first ray of the sun when it touches the ridge. The snow creates a dynamic and divine picture. Gammelgaard reflects her deep love for the stunning beauty of nature. Her expressions reveal her tremendous respect and admiration for the Mother Goddess of the Earth. She is grateful to the Mother Goddess of the world for safe and easy ascend. She adds, "Mother Goddess of the world, *Chomolungma, Sagarmatha,*

truly you are the grandest mountain, and I tread upon you with the most profound respect and awe. Your summit is all I desire!" (156). Gammelgaard is extremely content with her achievement, yet also aware of the danger involved in the climb. She encapsulates her journey to Everest's peak by stating:

Something in which you get to know your own 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. The same rules apply whether you are American, Russian, or Danish. Your survival and your success depend on you, yourself. (164)

In this passage, Gammelgaard articulates the profound realization that despite rigorous preparation and training, the mountain presents challenges that may never be fully mastered. The climbers need to understand and accept their limitations, recognizing that the forces of nature can exceed human capacity. Nevertheless, within this recognition lies the potential to achieve a sublime state. As Kant explains in his theory of the sublime, nature's overwhelming power evokes both fear and a sense of insignificance, yet, it elevates mind to a state of sublimity. Brady, interpreting Kant describes, "In the dynamically sublime, then, we experience nature's power, and although we react by feeling physically powerless and small, we ultimately judge the mind as sublime" (70). Kant asserts that nature can induce feeling of fear and small but stimulates the mind, allowing individuals to transcend their physical limitations.

Moreover, Gammelgaard is always confident in her physical strength, psychological stamina, and genetic makeup, which emboldens her to reach the summit. She is proud of her accomplishment and proclaims it with enthusiasm. She articulates:

I'm excited. Finally, I'm soaring toward heights I've never before attempted, putting my foot on terrain I've studied meticulously in books and photographs to glean its secret paths. Finally, I'll be facing it, be in it, be in it, and become part of it. I'm proud of myself, proud to have conquered my fear of heights, proud to have a network that makes it possible for me to be here today, proud of having raised the necessary sponsor money, and proud to have broken through my inertia and introversion. I have transformed myself enough to be here today. I am proud of being Lene Gammelgaard, the first Danish woman attempting to scale the highest mountain in the world. (152)

Gammelgaard's positive attitude, high determination, patience, and endurance culminate in her fulfilling goal of being the first Danish woman to summit Everest. Her journey to the summit of Everest transcends mere physical conquest but a voyage that leads her to attain sublimity. The formidable mountain, with its awe-inspiring and sublime grandeur, becomes a catalyst for personal growth, discovery, transformation, and consciousness. The summit, in this context, represents not just a geographic peak but a point of communion with the sublime essence of nature, where she realizes her own insignificance in the vast expanse of the universe while simultaneously experiencing a profound sense of achievement and self-discovery.

Rebecca Stephens, a distinguished mountaineer, became the first British woman to ascend the formidable heights of Mount Everest in 1993. The chronicle of her remarkable journey is encapsulated in the publication entitled *On Top of The World*, a work published by Macmillan. Stephen's growing passion for the mountains was ignited in 1989, when she accompanied, as a journalist, an Anglo-American expedition on Everest's North East Ridge. Her journey began with the ascent of Mont Blanc in 1990, followed by climbs of Mount Kenya, Kilimanjaro, and ultimately,

Mount Everest. Despite, encountering challenges, Stephens can achieve her dream of scaling Mount Everest through her strong determination, physical strength, and courage. Within her narrative, Stephens reflects multifaceted facets of Everest's allure and the elation upon reaching the summit.

Stephens has had an enduring fascination with Mount Everest since her childhood. Her connection to Everest transcends mere geographical or political considerations, stemming from a profound emotional bond. Reflecting on her sentiment, Stephens elucidates:

That autumn of 1989, among all the others, Roger, Paul, and I were the only Britons. And Everest is a British mountain. I qualify my statement, for clearly in the most important senses- geographically and politically- it is nothing of the sort. Everest lies in Nepal and Tibet. It straddles these two countries and belongs if a mountain can belong to anyone, to the Nepalese and Tibetan people. However, in the historical sense, Everest is British. (32)

Stephens affirms that the first successful climb of Everest was achieved by a British expedition led by a British colonel thus Everest holds a special place in British history. Further, she posits that Everest's historical association with Britain is similar to that of Annapurna with France and K2 with Italian. The image of Everest persistently captivates her, manifesting her profound love for the mountain and its unparalleled allure in her heart. Stephens begins her Everest expedition with a profound appreciation for the Himalayas' breathtaking expanse. Stephens articulates, "The journey led us through an extraordinary landscape of vastness, emptiness, and wonder. Barren, undulating hills, washed in soft shades of brown, yellow, and gold, stood against a distant snowy ribbon of high Himalayan peaks, and an intense, blue sky. And there was detail in this vastness, all the more precious for its rarity . . . (22).

The majestic vastness of these landscapes cast a profound impact, evoking awe-inspiring experience in the mind of Stephens. Burke's discourse on the sublime resonates here emphasizing that, "Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime. This is too evident, and the observation too common, to need any illustration; it is not so common, to consider in what ways greatness of dimension, the vastness of extent, or quality, has the most striking effect" (72). Burke explores the concept of the sublime, particularly focusing on the vastness of nature, evoking a feeling of awe and reverence. In this context, Stephens's experience with Everest is symbolic of Burke's theory.

Stephens asserts that Everest appears in a proud, white, and statuesque position above the clouds, exuding undeniable beauty in its austerity. For her, the mountain is not just climbing, it is a source of instruction and education about life. In *On Top of the World*, Stephens articulates:

For me, those two months were an eye-opening time of discovery and learning. . . . At Base Camp, as I wandered from tent to tent, dropping in for a cup of coffee here, and a bite to eat there, I learned that this passion for the mountains was not just the prerogative of the few Englishmen and Americans I happened to be traveling with but one shared by an elite band of mountaineers from every corner of the world. How wonderful, I thought, to feel so passionate about anything. (24)

Stephens claims that mountaineering is not only limited to ascending and descending, it embodies a journey of exploration, discovery, and transformation. Her reflection on the time spent at Base Camp, reveals a period of significant personal growth and learning. During these two months, amidst the daunting shadows of Everest, Stephens engages in a deep and introspective journey. This phase of stillness and observation

allows her to absorb the nuances of mountaineering, understanding its essence beyond the physical ascent and descent. Stephen vividly describes her journey from Everest Base Camp, emphasizing the profound pleasure derived from the stunning mountain scenery. She portrays:

The glacier was a strange, lovely place. Crunching through the snow--still crisp, at this early hour- we left all hints of human habitation behind us. There were no tents, no clutter, no crowds, only the vast expanse of the glacier that surrounded us like a large white sheet, a nothingness, but for long, oblong crevasses that lay, dark and sinister, in the snow. (29)

As Stephens continues her ascent to higher-altitudes, her narrative intertwines the joy of witnessing bewildering vistas with the physical and mental challenges of mountaineering. This juxtaposition reflects the essence of the sublime where beauty and terror coexist, eliciting awe and a deep emotional response. Stephens's reflections resonate with Brady asserts, ". . . the pleasant feeling of tranquility associated with beauty with disturbing, forbidding silence of the sublime" (110). Stephens's journey encapsulates this duality, portraying the mountain's ability to inspire both profound tranquility and an unsettling sense of awe and wonder.

Stephens's ascent becomes not only a physical challenge but also a philosophical exploration of human capacity to confront and comprehend the sublime forces of nature. In her account, Stephens characterizes the Western Cwm as a place of unparalleled joy, whose splendor is indescribable. She asserts, "The scene was one of such a perfect, gloriously white heaven's gate that even for a second's glance it would have made all those preparatory months of anguish worthwhile. No money could buy this. It was a secret valley revealed only to the few prepared to clamber

through the Icefall" (88). Stephens argues that this is a hidden paradise, seemingly a 'heaven's gate' that can only be reached by confronting the dangers of the climb, thus elevating the experience to something far beyond material value. This idea resonates with Kant's notion of the sublime, where nature's power evokes terror and elevates the human mind. According to Brady's interpretation of Kant, "Thus nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to the point of presenting those cases in which the mind can make palpable to itself the sublimity of its own vocation even over nature" (70). Like Kant, Stephens's descriptions of the western Cwm, with its perfect heavenly appearance trigger the imaginations and uplift individuals through the grandeur of the natural world.

The enchanting scene presents a challenging and demanding climb. She articulates, "Western Cwm a torturous white-hot furnace. We could not escape, and could hardly move. I counted thirty steps and stopped. No one argued. Everyone dropped their sacks and sat in a silent, disheveled heap in the snow" (123). Despite the terrible danger, Stephens remains resolute, recognizing the challenges of life. Indeed, she finds excitement and happiness in the terror and difficulties she encounters. This perspective aligns with Burke's thought on the sublime, as he suggests that terror whether stemming from the greatness or danger signifies the sublime. He articulates, "Whatever therefore is terrible, about sight, is sublime too, whether this cause of terror, be induced with the greatness of dimensions or not; for it is impossible to look anything as trifling, or contemptible, that may be dangerous" (74). Burke asserts that the terrible when associated with sight is inherently sublime, regardless of its size. Stephen's journey thus becomes an embodiment of the sublime, where the terror and grandeur of the mountainous landscape elicit a deeper emotional response.

When Stephens finally reaches the summit, she experiences an overwhelming sense of wonder and amazement, which surpasses her extreme physical discomfort. She describes the feelings elevated and moving towards the transcendence. The merging of human emotion with the mountain's spirit not only elevates their sense of self but also deepens their connection to the natural world. Stephens attain the sublime through this process. She writes, "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. I landed in a heap, gasping for every breath as if it was my last, thinking my ribcage would implode" (178). Stephens describes her reaction upon seeing a platform of snow which she perceives as her salvation, from the perilous environment. Her hurried and frantic action highlight her struggle against the mountain's brutal force. This moment aligns with Kant's notion that nature's overwhelming power arises both fear and admiration, leading to an elevation of the mind. Here, Stephens's panic and physical agony are juxtaposed with awe, allowing her to transcend her physical suffering and experience a deeper connection to the natural world.

Stephens regards high mountains as lifeless and wild due to their physicality. To her, the mountain's environment is both beautiful and sterile, lacking the richness and diversity of life. Reflecting on the experience, she observes, "The high mountains are a lifeless place: beautiful, but sterile. They are a place to visit, to wonder at to admire and respect, and to seek adventure-but not a place to live. My eyes had grown weary of the stark shades of blue and gray and white; they had been starved of the colours of life . . ." (189). This statement reflects the duality of her emotions towards the mountainous landscapes, acknowledging its breathtaking beauty and the sense of adventure it offers, recognizing its inhospitable nature. For Stephens, mountaineering becomes a journey of self- realization, discovery and a deep connection with the natural world.

The courage and adventurous spirit of Nepali women mountaineers have captured widespread attention and admiration. *Mountaineering in Nepal: Facts and Figures, 2020* reveals that Pasang Lhamu Sherpa climbed Mount Everest in 1993 through East Ridge. Tragically, she lost her life while descending from the summit in 1993. Lhakpa Sherpa follows her footsteps, successfully reaching the summit of *Sagarmatha* in 2000, from the South East Ridge. Subsequently, Pemba Doma Thaktopa Sherpa climbed in 2002, and in 2005 Moni Mulepati was added to the list of successful Nepali women mountaineers. As a result, over forty Nepali women have accomplished the feat of summiting Mount Everest and have earned a distinguished place in the history of women's mountaineering.

Lhakpa Phuti Sherpa, a Nepali mountaineer, is renowned as a precious gem of Solukhumbu, according to *www.soluonline.com*, as stated on the cover page of the autobiographical narrative entitled *Forty Years in the Mountains*. It is a tale of her success flecked by untellable struggle. She regards her as a progeny to a Himalayan hamlet highlighting her ancestor's roots and strong connection to the Himalayas. She has accomplished numerous feats, including successful expeditions to Mount Everest, Dhaulagiri, Makalu, Lhotse, and many others.

From an early age, Lhakpa would accompany her father on his expeditions to Thyangboche, mingling with groups of tourists. She plays diverse roles including a porter, helper in the kitchen, and making beds for the tourists. Recalling her experience, she mentions, "We often bumped our toes against stones and stumps. This too was because we did not have proper shoes and stockings" (69). For Phuti, the absence of suitable mountaineering gear is a minor inconvenience. Her bold and assertive character empowers her not only to endure the adversities and trials

encountered in her journey but also to assemble valuable insights from them. Despite encountering numerous duties and obstacles, Phuti remained always cheerful, realizing that challenges and obstacles are part of human life.

On her journey to the Everest summit, Phuti faces extreme challenges, notably from the deceptive crevasses that make the ascent particularly perilous. However, the breathing vista, she encounters along the way is captivating. She reflects on her experience, stating:

When we reached Camp I, most of the peaks appeared quite stunned. From there, I saw many Himalayan slopes, crevasses, and Khumbu Valley. From Camp III, I had to look down to have a glance at a few high peaks that looked dwarfish now. My heart leaped up on seeing the Himalayan peaks so stunned.

I congratulated myself: I have reached a great height. (251)

Lhakpa's account highlights the dichotomy of high-altitude mountaineering where the beauty and grandeur of the landscape coexist with the inherent dangers and difficulties of the terrain. Her description of the peaks as 'stunned' and the high peaks appearing as 'dwarfish' highlights the transformative perspective gained from such heights. The change in perspective not only alters her physical view of the landscape but also her internal response to it, as evidenced by her heart leaping in awe.

Moreover, women mountaineers have multiple constraints and personal obstacles in mountaineering in comparison to their male counterparts. Khadga Narayan Shrestha in his article, published in *Voice of Himalaya*, entitled "Gender in Mountaineering: Facts and Figures of Women Summiters on Mt. Everest" mentions:

Other than physical capability, women should fight against several constraints in mountaineering. Hall and Doran (2020) present some emotional, biological, social, cultural, and economic constraints for women mountaineers. Even in

the United Kingdom fear of expression, shame, crying, anxiety and competence, physical needs such as toilet and menopause, family and social constraints, and the high cost of mountaineering are taken as constraints for mountaineering for women (Hall and Doran) which are somehow comparable with Nepal. (98)

Shrestha argues that mountaineering is a particularly challenging adventure for women who face unique obstacles as highlighted by Phuti in *Forty Years in the Mountains*. Her narrative reveals that beyond physical endurance, mountaineering for women involves overcoming both societal and personal barriers.

Lhakpa Phuti recounts her experience at Camp II, where she menstruated which added additional tension and challenges. Her narration conveys the physical and emotional pain of menstruation in extreme and isolated conditions. She mentions, "I menstruated. The acute headache rendered me extremely weak. The pain soon spread to my entire body, and I felt like sleeping all through the day. I was alone in the tent. Several thoughts popped in and out of my mind. The Himalayan Mountains are the holy spots" (254). Phuti's account of menstruation at high altitude highlights the unique struggle women face as they transform their pain into strength. Her internal conflict, "How could I leave there a thing that could thwart the piousness of the Himalayas? She feels a deep sense of regret. Anyway, she buried under a stone and prayed, "God absolved me of my sin" (255), which triggers her mind. Lhakpa acknowledges that she is committing a great crime because, for Nepali, the Himalayan mountains are revered as holy spots. This act also highlights the additional mental burden women climbers can face. Similarly, Stephens's assertion in *On Top of the World* asserts, "Clothes are a problem" (56), further highlights the myriad of practical challenges women face in mountaineering, from managing menstruation to dealing

with clothing that may not be optimized for women climbers. These narratives collectively emphasize the resilience, determination, and adaptability of women in mountaineering, as they navigate both the physical rigor of climbing and the nuanced personal and cultural challenges that arise during their expeditions. Despite the hardships and different obstacles whether bodily, physical, or emotional, the women mountaineers are determined to confront and overcome adversity in pursuit of satisfaction and fulfillment. Moreover, they celebrate their success in broader way focusing as a role model and mentorship in mountaineering.

Arlene Blum, a notable mountaineer, renowned for leading the first successful all-women teams to summit Mount McKinley and Annapurna, makes history by becoming the first American woman to attempt Mount Annapurna. In 1978, she led the 1978 American Women's Himalayan Expedition comprising twelve women, who aimed to summit Annapurna I. Before embarking on their perilous journey, the team members conducted a ceremony to seek blessings from the mountain spirits for a safe and successful climb. Blum recounts the ceremony in *Annapurna: A Woman's Place*, "Before heading into the danger zone, we held a ceremony asking the mountain spirits for a safe, successful ascent. Chanting and burning pungent juniper, the Sherpa raised brilliantly colored Tibetan Buddhist prayer flags high above Base Camp" (223). Blum's narrative highlights the team's recognition of the external forces and their reliance on spiritual support to overcome the physical and psychological challenges. Blum and her team encounter a perilous predicament as they are caught in a massive avalanche that covers the glacier. The recollection of this harrowing ordeal is chronicled in the diary of one of Blum's team members Christy, who articulates, "With a great crack, a giant chin breaks off on the top of the chute across the valley.

At first, we were delighted. Dyanna starts filming the avalanche as it rushes down, growing menacingly. Suddenly I realize we're going to get it. We're miles away, but that thing is moving like fun. My God! I look for depression.” (228). Christy's account highlights the inherent risks entailed in mountaineering and the potential for sudden and deadly natural disasters. Initially, the sound of massive avalanches sparks excitement, a testament to the raw power and majesty of the natural world. However, this thrill turns to horror as the realization dawns that the avalanche is heading directly towards them.

This intense experience aligns with the concept of the sublime as described in Brady's book, "[W]e walk'ed upon the very brink, in a literal sense, of Destruction; one Stumble and both Life and Carcass had been at once destroy'd. The sense of all this produc'd different emotions in me, viz., a delightful Horror, a terrible Joy, and at the same time, that I was infinitely pleas'd, I trembled" (14). Brady claims that this passage encapsulates the dual nature of the sublime, characterized by a mix of delight and dread, where the awe-inspiring aspects of nature elicit a complex emotional response. As Brady, Blum, with her friends, is caught in a paradox, where the very elements that make the landscape awe-inspiring also make it formidable, creating profound and multifaceted emotional responses.

Blum's narrative vividly captures the tension and reconciliation within the team, alongside the harrowing experience of avalanches that loomed as a constant threat to their safety. Despite these adversities, the expedition unfurls as a tapestry of the sublime moments. In this context, Blum aligns with Brady's insights, "We react to elements of unpleasant works of art painfully: they can be frightening, harrowing, horrific, yet we may feel an overall sense of fascination or even excitement" (152). Brady claims that such experiences despite their inherent distress, can evoke a

profound sense of enjoyment. Blum's encounter with the terrifying challenges of mountaineering exemplifies this concept, as the moments of fear and horror are paradoxically intertwined with joy and fulfillment.

As Blum and her team approach the summit pyramid, the team's progress is monitored by their friends through binoculars, waiting anxiously for news of their success. Finally, in 1978, at 3.30 p.m., Blum and her team reached the summit at 26,540 feet, the top of the planet's tenth-highest mountain, marking a significant achievement. Despite the loss of two team members, Vera and Alison, the team summits Annapurna safely. Blum expresses a mixture of emotions at the summit with a sense of relief and triumph. She describes her profound mix of emotions upon completing the climb, "I felt a mixture of triumph for the summit, relief at having made it down the Dutch Rib and across the avalanche slope for the last time, and, most of all, joy in knowing that after all the years of dreaming, planning and preparing, we had climbed Annapurna" (234). Blum's reflections encapsulate the quintessence of the sublime in mountaineering, the blend of overwhelming achievement and the joy derived from fulfilling a long-cherished dream. After their return to Everest Base Camp, the team shares experiences, memories, warmth and laughter, energy and enthusiasm, and integrity and idealism with each other.

At Base Camp, Arlene Blum and her team celebrate their collective achievement and the emotions of freedom, relief, and satisfaction that accompany it. In a moment of shared jubilation, they come together, arms linked, to sing an old Shaker song that resonates deeply with their current sentiments. The lyrics, "'Tis a gift to be simple, 'tis a gift to be free 'tis a gift to come down where we ought to be . . .'" (236). The song symbolizes the climbers' journey, celebrating the team's resilience

and ultimate victory after overcoming the immense physical and mental challenges posed by high-altitude mountaineering and elevating them into a realm of the sublime.

#### Peaks and Paths: A Personal Expedition to Everest and Annapurna Base Camps

Women mountaineers such as Gammelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa Phuti as well as Blum acknowledge that high-altitude mountaineering with its ever-present risks, constantly places them on the verge of life and death. They face continuous obstacles due to treacherous terrain, extreme altitudes, unpredictable weather crevasses, avalanches, and rock falling. Despite these dangers, they regard mountaineering as a profound transformative journey. Confronting the mountain's challenges enables them to discover their true potential, undergo a personal transformation, and ultimately attain a sublime state of heightened consciousness. Like these inspiring women mountaineers, I am also attracted by the grandeur of high mountains and have planned to experience the awe-inspiring beauty of Everest and Annapurna Base Camps.

Though I am not from a mountainous region, I have a deep appreciation for the majesty of these landscapes, their pristine air, and their tranquil solitude. This deep affinity with nature has given me an ardent passion for mountaineering, trekking, and hiking, filling my thoughts every day and night. My decision to undertake expeditions to both the Everest and Annapurna Base Camps was made with careful thought and consultation, marking a significant and cherished milestone in my life's journey. Through these trekking adventures, I come to realize that they serve as a testament to resilience, filled with gratitude, and offer an intimate communion with nature's indescribable beauty.

The expeditions to Everest and Annapurna Base Camps have significantly broadened my horizons, propelling me beyond my familiar comfort zone into the realms where the absence of internet and phone connectivity, strips away everyday

distractions. The opportunity to encounter and befriend individuals from diverse backgrounds, encompassing different ages, nationalities, genders, and beliefs has enriched my personal growth. Throughout the trek to Everest and Annapurna Base Camps, I have found immense joy in the simple acts of walking, observing, smelling, hearing, dancing, and singing amidst the captivating beauty of nature. The presence of fresh snow and water, unfamiliar faces, diverse flora and fauna, the bitter wind, and the awe-inspiring vista of snow-capped peaks have invigorated spirits with a profound sense of happiness, providing energy and knowledge to continue the expedition. Through this experience, I find myself transformed, feeling bold, more assertive, stronger, and rejuvenated, much like my fellow trekkers.

As I stand at the Base Camps, I am encircled by the most awe-inspiring vistas on earth. A panoramic view unfolds before my eyes, revealing silvery peaks through the clouds, glistening under the radiant sun and resembling jeweled necklaces encircling the mountains. This experience elevates my spirit and instills a sense of nobility within me. In this vast expanse, I am acutely aware of my miniature presence, confronted starkly with the reality of my existence.

The beauty and grandeur of the surrounding mountains enthrall and astonish me, stirring emotions similar to those expressed by Indira Gandhi in her Foreword to Ahluwalia's *Higher Than Everest*. She eloquently speaks of the majestic snow-covered peaks, glistening gold, and silver in the sunshine or coyly veiled with wisps of cloud atop Everest. Like Gandhi, I am endlessly fascinated and delighted by the sight of the high mountains, their vibrant blooms emerging from the most unexpected nooks. My eyes linger on the lofty summit, reveling in their majestic presence. The view before me was truly breathtaking and the entire mountain range emanated magnificence. Despite the physical and mental exhaustion, I feel a deep connection

with the whiteness of the mountains and the blueness of the skies above me, I imagine I have found my path back home, to the divine dwellings of *Chomolungma* Devi and Annapurna Devi.

Echoing the insights offered in Sadhguru's *Inner Engineering*, mountains emerge as bastions of profound energy, repositories of ancient wisdom. When Sadhguru beholds the majesty of Mount Kailash, he perceives not just a natural wonder but one of the planet's most significant mystical libraries on the earth, he recognizes the vast reserve of wisdom. He describes an interaction with the mountain where by aligning a sliver of its energy with his own, he experiences a resurgence of vitality, rejuvenating his energy. Reflecting upon Sadhguru's profound experience, I, too encounter a transformative vibrational energy upon reaching the Base Camps, feeling noticeably different than before. As I ascend higher and higher, I discover a physical transformation, growing stronger and more confident with each step. I recognize the vastness of nature which elevates the mind and guides it to the path of the sublime. My feelings resonate with Kant's assertion that, "Nature is called sublime merely because it elevates the imagination to a presentation of those cases in which the mind can make felt the proper sublimity of its destination in comparison with nature" (120). I feel an indelible bond with the mountains, the rocks, and the pristine snow. This connection deepens with each encounter, reflecting the shared energy and wisdom these peaks so generously offer.

Thus, mountaineering has two purposes: the outer purpose revolves around summiting Mount Everest and Annapurna, and the inner purpose is self-discovery and transformation through encountering formidable challenges. Eckhart Tolle, a renowned spiritual teacher, and author of *The Power of Now* (1999) elaborates on the outer and inner purposes of existence. He mentions:

The outer purpose is to arrive at your goal or destination, to accomplish what you set out to do, to achieve this or that, which, of course, implies future . . .

Your outer journey may contain a million steps; your inner journey only has one: the step you are taking right now. As you become more deeply aware of this step, you realize that it already contains within itself all the other steps as well as the destination. This one step then becomes transformed into an expression of perfection, an act of great beauty and quality. It will have taken you into Being, and the light of Being will shine through it. This is both the purpose and the fulfillment of your inner journey, the journey into yourself.

(73)

Tolle argues that the former is just a game that simply gives enjoyment whereas the latter makes a person successful, and gives lasting fulfillment and happiness. Tolle claims that the inner journey involves becoming deeply aware of the present moment and recognizing inner knowledge for discovery and transformation. The act of mountaineering embodies both outer and inner purposes, where reaching the summit is the outer purpose, and self-discovery and transformation through the sublime is the inner purpose. Climbing mountains offers individuals the opportunity to gain new insights about themselves and the natural world, ultimately leading to a greater sense of achievement in life.

Indeed, mountains have always captivated humanity with their magnificent and awe-inspiring vista. However, beyond their visual grandeur, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa, and Blum realize that the journey through high mountains possess a deeper symbolic significance, representing both the ladder of life and the ladder of the soul. Like climbing a ladder, the mountains of life have many trails, challenges, and triumphs. The arduous trek through these majestic terrains becomes a metaphor

for life's struggle, urging individuals to overcome obstacles in pursuit of personal growth and transformation. Moreover, these peaks hold a mysterious and mystical allure that has drawn the attention of climbers worldwide. The following section will explore how these high mountains serve as places of mystery and mystique, further enriching their symbolic and spiritual significance.

### Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna: A Symbol of Mystery and Mystique

The natural world, shrouded in its cloak of mystery, stands as an expansive realm of fascination for both nature lovers and adventure seekers. From the majestic summits of towering peaks to the depths of the ocean's abyss, nature's mysterious and mystical charm beckons the curious soul to unravel its secret.

Throughout history, the remote and untouched parts of the natural world, have been shrouded in mystery, giving rise to tales of mystic encounters and inexplicable phenomena. The lofty peaks of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna veiled in perpetual snow, have been imbued with mysterious and divine connotations, often depicted as bridges between the earthly and celestial realms. Moreover, the occurrence of unexpected noises, mysterious lights, and apparitions has perpetuated their enigmatic reputation, fostering a sense of wonder and reverence among those who dare to venture into their midst. In his work, *Peaks and Pinnacles* Nepali geographer and author, Harka Gurung, delves into the profound mystical surroundings of Mount Everest, highlighting its overwhelming presence in the skies that instill both awe and wonder. He describes:

Its sheer size dominating the firmament evokes awe and wonder. As the last frontier of human occupancy, it is the home of myth and mystery: the haunt of elemental Mahadeva, Hindu Shiva, and Tantrik Padma Sambhava. Individual peaks are objects of reverence while glacier tarns, sacred caves, and the

thermal springs are destinations of pilgrimage. The sanctity of peaks is related more to shape and its associated imagery rather than to their absolute height.

For example, the modest Khumbu Yul-Lha (5761) has more immediacy in the Sherpa lore than the supreme Everest. (133)

Gurung portrays the Himalayas, Everest at their heart, as a landscape imbued with mysterious and spiritual allure, captivating a thrilling and intoxicating picture with its blend of natural grandeur and spiritual significance. The mystical landscape is further enhanced by the presence of monasteries with their vibrant art, devoted monks, and colorful surroundings, casting an indelible enchantment on all who visit.

The Himalayan region beckons adventurers and seekers to immerse in its majesty, offering unparalleled encounters with nature in its most sublime form. This magnetic allure draws many well-known and celebrated mountaineers from the world to scale Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna every year. Throughout history, the Puranas, sacred texts of the Hindus, have portrayed high-altitude mountains as mysteries and holy places, believed to be the abode of gods and goddesses. Ed Douglas in *Himalaya: A Human History* reinforces this idea as:

These mountains are the region of Swarga, or paradise, the home of the righteous. 'Here there is no sorrow, nor weariness, nor anxiety, nor hunger, nor apprehension; the inhabitants are exempt from all infirmity and pain, and live in uninterrupted enjoyment for ten or twelve thousand years.' At the center of this cosmic landscape, we are told, is the mountain Meru, in the shape of a lotus seed, like an inverted, rounded cone, on its summit is the city of Brahma, among its petals the abode of the gods, . . . Meru is often taken to be Mount Kailas. (14)

Douglas claims that the high mountains are considered to be the region of paradise, where only righteous individuals may reside. The summit of Mount Meru, often considered Mount Kailas, is viewed as the center of the cosmic landscape.

The high-altitude landscape has adventurous tales and cultural beliefs, which encompass a wide collection of myths and legends across different religions and cultures. These stories often revolve around creatures such as dragons, snowmen, and fire-breathing beasts that dwell in the high mountains. Despite the lack of scientific evidence, people continue to uphold the existence of such dreadful creatures and spirits. For instance, the inhabitant of the Everest region holds a strong belief in the existence of the Yeti, a half-human, half-animal creature, as well as terrifying beings such as bears. Chester in *The Himalayan Experience* discusses the existence of the Yeti. He asserts:

The Yeti, also known as the abominable snowman, is probably the most infamous creature associated with the Himalayas, yet there is no scientific proof to date that such a beast exists. This fabled creature is said to live between 2,000 m (65600 ft.) and 3500 m (11,480 ft.) in the thick forests of the eastern Himalayas. Wall paintings in temples and monasteries show two types, one that looks similar to a large monkey and the other resembling a bear. The smaller Yeti is said to feed on humans while the larger ones eat yaks. (99)

Chester acknowledges that due to the absence of scientific proof to support the existence of this fabled creature, which is said to reside within the dense forests of the eastern Himalayas, between 2000m. and 35000m. The allure of the unknown and the allure of discovery drives mountaineers to embark on expeditions in pursuit of Yeti. Despite skepticism from the foreign mountaineers, the Yeti's story holds significant

intrigue and entertainment for the Nepali people. In an article entitled, "Yeti died in Dhampus Pass, Near Dhaulagiri Mountain," Dr. Ganesh Gurung and Ujwal Gurung elaborate further:

The story has always stuck with us, especially the name Yeti, which made us wonder about this mysterious and elusive mythical creature supposedly native to my country, in the Dhaulagiri range. We thought to ourselves; what if we could find the Yeti? While trekking in the Himalayas, we were constantly on the lookout for footprints or stories of Yeti by the locals. (10)

Gurungs share a compelling narrative highlighting their fascination with the Yeti, a mythical creature reputed to inhabit the Dhaulagiri range in Nepal. Their account reflects a blend of intrigue and skepticism, rooted in the lore of their homeland.

Moreover, the high-altitude landscape of the Himalayas is considered sacred and revered by both Hindus and Buddhists as the abode of various deities and spirits. In *The Himalayas: An Aesthetic Adventure*, Pratapaditya Pal mentions, "All over the globe there are mountains, but none larger or more majestic than the lofty peaks of the Himalayas. All over the earth mountains are held sacred, but none with more passionate fervor than the Himalayas" (15). Pal argues that the Himalayan peaks are held in the highest esteem worldwide, and their spiritual significance is unparalleled. Pal further elucidates, "Numerous are the spirits and semi-divine beings, peaceful and wrathful celestials, and deities who populate the mountains. They vary from region to region, from passes to valleys; hence, the diversity of their material representations is enormous, as will be clear from even a cursory glance at the image included here" (16). Pal insists that both Hindus and Buddhists believe in the countless deities who dwell on the high mountain peaks and the image of Miyolangsangma, as a protector goddess who resides on Everest, is revered by both Buddhists and Hindus. Ang

Chring Sherpa, a journalist and a mountaineer expresses the same sentiments in *Deadline Chomolungma*, “शिखरमा पाइला राख्नु अघि देवीदेवताको बास भएको त्यस चुचुरोलाई हौं, अनि सगरमाथालाई दुई हात जोडेर प्रणाम गरें। त्यतिखेर आफ्ना प्रार्थना पूरा भएको अनुभव गरें” (१५१) । (Before placing my feet on the summit, I worshipped with reverence. I paid homage to *Sagarmatha* by joining my hands with the deities and experiencing the fulfillment of his prayers, (my trans.; 151). Sherpa claims that mountaineers have deep respect and love for the Goddess and he approaches the mountain with great care and attention. Both Hindus and Buddhists perceive the Himalayas, as not only a magnificent mountain range but also the sacred abode of the gods. In their various texts, the range is considered the manifestation of the divine and is often referred to as *devatma* or god-souled.

This sentiment is echoed in the work of a devout Buddhist mountaineer, Norgay who advocates that the Himalayan peaks are inhabited by various deities and spirits, including *Miyolangsangma*. In *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest*, Norgay recounts the tale from Buddhist mythology of *Miyolangsangma* being one of the five Long Life sisters, providing protection and spiritual nourishment to Khumbu and nearby valleys. Norgay describes:

The Buddhist texts say that *Miyolangsangma* is one of the 'Five Long Life Sisters' who provide protection and spiritual nourishment to Khumbu and nearby valleys. Originally, *Miyolangsangma* and her sisters, who reside on nearby peaks, were pre-Buddhist demonesses, but they were subdued and converted to a Buddhist path of beneficence by *Padmasambhava*, the great 'lotus-born' saint known as Guru Rimpoche. (61)

Norgay worships *Miyolangsangma*, thinking that the Goddess bestows safeguard and guides him towards the spiritual path. His devotion and inner discovery from the

journey find resonance with Rajiv R. Gupta's explanation in his book, *Spirituality Unplugged*. Gupta asserts, "By pursuing the spiritual path, one goes through a process of evolution and internal cleansing. Any process of change involves pain; hence one may face certain difficulties. However, one should stick on with determination and go through the process in its entirety" (44). Gupta insists that a spiritual path entails a process characterized by personal development and inner purification. Moreover, it needs to confront difficulties and endure hardships as the mountaineers while ascending the summit.

Similarly, Mount Annapurna, which often symbolizes goddesses in Hinduism, is closely associated with Devi Annapurna, the Hindu goddess of harvest who holds significant importance in Nepal. It is believed that the goddess plays a crucial role in agriculture by influencing the flow of streams and rivers from the mountain glaciers, which in turn irrigates the crops. This belief is encapsulated in the publication *Mountain: An Adamant Landscapes*, by the Nepal Mountain Academy which explains:

The name Annapurna is derived from the Sanskrit language where 'Anna' means food and 'Purna' means filled. Annapurna means 'full of grains' in the Sanskrit language, though it is most often translated as 'Goddess of Harvest.' Annapurna is another name for the Hindu Goddess of fertility. The mountain is named after Annapurna, the Hindu goddess of food and nourishment, who is said to reside there. (74)

This extract highlights the deep spiritual and cultural significance of the mountain Annapurna. More than just a towering peak, the mountain is revered as the dwelling place of the Hindu Goddess Annapurna, symbolizing fertility, nourishment, and sustenance of life. The Annapurna massif, with its abundant water sources, is seen as a provider of food and sustenance for the surrounding regions.

Moreover, the Himalayas are a destination that attract trekkers and climbers due to their mysterious natural beauty. The towering mountains, vast glaciers, thick layers of snow, and unspoiled landscape provide a fascinating and intoxicating sublime experience for those who venture into the region. Herzog in *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak* portrays the aesthetic and magnificent of Mount Annapurna as, "The snow, sprinkled over every rock and gleaming in the sun, was or a radiant beauty that touched me to the heart. I had never seen such complete transparency, and I was living in a world of crystal. Sounds were indistinct, the atmosphere like cotton wool" (143). Herzog's description highlights the aesthetic of nature, which is indescribable and unimaginable. Similarly, when a Nepali mountaineer and author, Pratik Dhakal reached the Thorong–La Pass of the Annapurna Circuit, situated at an elevation of 5416 meters, a new realization dawned upon him. In his words, “कहिल्यै नदेखेको दृश्य देख्न पाएर आँखाहरू तृप्त छन् । कहिल्यै नगरेको अलौकिक अनुभूति गर्न पाएर मन त्यसै त्यसै दङ्ग छ । फुरुङ्ग छ । कष्ट छ शरीरलाई अलिकति . . . उमङ्ग छ मनलाई भरिभरि . . .” (१३६) । (Observing, the magnifying view, the eyes are satisfied. Experiencing the mystical sensation, the mind is captivated, and enchanted. The body felt a bit tired but there was a sense of excitement in the heart, (my trans.; 136). Dhakal achieves an eternal feeling that he has never achieved before. His unprecedented experience can be connected to the philosophical discourse of Burke and Kant on the sublime. Dhakal's profound encounter with the mountain marked by an unparalleled visual feast and an otherworldly sensation, catapults him into a realm of sublimity.

Upon reaching the summit, after enduring tremendous physical and mental challenges, climbers assert their sublime experience as an epiphany, a true liberation

of the mind and soul. Khimlal Gautam's reflection upon reaching the summit of Mount Everest, as articulated in *Pandrau Chuli* vividly captures the profound emotional and psychological impact of mountaineering. His expression of joy and contentment, despite the inherent risks, highlights a moment of self-transcendence. He mentions, “शिखरमा पुगदा त्यति अफठ्यारोमा पनि यति धेरै आनन्द आयो कि आफैलाई बिसिएला जस्तो भयो । . . . चुलीमा पुगदाको खुसी र आनन्द व्याख्या गर्ने शब्दहरू मसँग थिएन” (१६४-१६५)। Despite the risks, there was so much joy and contentment at the summit. I nearly forgot myself as I ascended. At the summit, I felt, I had no words to describe the happiness and contentment, (my trans.; 164–165). Gautam finds himself at a loss for words to convey the depth of happiness and fulfillment that he experiences at the summit. He experiences a state of sublime, marked by a transformative revelation.

Regarding this notion, Swami Paranand Tirth in his article "The Himalayas: A Mystic's Viewpoint" posits that the Himalayas are not just a geographical marvel but a sacred expanse, where the natural environment fosters a deep spiritual connection. He articulates:

The Himalayan has three unparalleled qualities, which is amazing. Firstly, there is solitude; the environment is pristine and spiritually vibrant. Secondly, there is eternal silence, eternal concentration, and the light of energy (Shakti) flowing here. That is why mountain peaks, snow-covered areas, and such places are considered holy. (360)

Tirth argues that the spiritual and transformative power of the Himalayas, emphasizing how their untouched beauty and profound silence offer a path to spiritual awakening. He suggests that the Himalayas serve as a nexus where physical and spiritual dimensions intertwine, marked by deep silence, solitude, and dynamic energy about these landscapes. This sacred environment, according to Tirth has historically

drawn a diverse group of seekers-from sages and yogis to artists, philosophers, and adventurers, each attracted by the Himalayas' unique capacity to inspire and elevate the human spirit.

The mountaineering experience offers an unparalleled opportunity to behold breathtaking views of the landscape, relish fresh air, and cherish solitude. Additionally, the sheer height and sublime environment can offer a new sense, of direction, and purpose, providing a reprieve from the distractions of daily life. Nepali author Pratik Dhakal captures this sentiment while he is on the way to Annapurna Base Camp and states in *Parikrama Annapurna*:

“हामी सबै जिल्ल परेका छौं । यो ठाउँबाट देखिने हिमाली दृश्यहरू देखेर । हामी सबै मख्व परेका छौं । प्रत्येक घरधुरीमा फहरिरहेका धार्मिक भन्डा (छोटारहरू) देखेर । वास्तवमा यो ठाउँ त अन्नपूर्ण हिमाल हेर्ने व्यू-प्वाइण्ट नै पो हो कि जस्तो पनि लाग्न थालेको छ । अन्नपूर्ण र गङ्गापूर्णको उन्मत्त बैसाखी जुनेलीमा देखिन्छन्, तब हाम्रा बोल्ने शब्द नै सकिन्छन् । जब हिमाल स्वयं नै नाङ्गो भएर आउँछ । तब तपाईं के बोल्नुहुन्छ ? जब हिमाल स्वयं नै तपाईंको आँखाभित्र आउँछ । तब तपाईं सम्मोहित बाहेक अरु के हुन सक्नुहुन्छ” । (९५) We all are in confusion seeing the majestic Himalayan views from here. We are happy and satisfied witnessing religious flags fluttering in every household. In reality, this is a view point for observing Annapurna Himal. Annapurna and Gangapurna 's enchanting presence can be seen even at night. Our words fall short when Himal stands naked in front of us. What will you say when the Himalayas reside in your eyes? What can you be other than mesmerized? (my trans.; 95)

Dhakal observes the mountainous landscape and asserts that the sublime experience has the potential to transform people at different stages of their lives and give them a new direction.

Through the perspectives of prominent mountaineers such as Hillary, Herzog, Norgay, Lhapka, Stephens, and others, the rugged and frightening landscapes

surrounding Everest and Annapurna, offer more than just physical challenges, they evoke a sense of mystique and spirituality. The allure of these sacred peaks extends beyond the tangible, inviting a deeper exploration of the secrets and spiritual significance they hold. Both men and women who have ascended Mount Everest and Annapurna describe encounters with mysterious elements, including legends like the Yeti, and convey the profound mystical atmosphere surrounding the mountains. While both genders experience physical and spiritual fulfillment from the ascents, their narratives reveal different ways of expressing these encounters. These accounts reflect diverse perspectives shaped by gender, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. The following section compares and contrasts the mountaineering experiences of men and women on Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna, exploring the similarities and differences in their narratives.

#### Climbing High: Comparing and Contrasting Men's and Women's Voices in Mountaineering Narratives

Mountaineering is an adventurous and demanding sport that requires immense stamina, determination, endurance, and patience. Mountaineers face extreme physical and mental challenges to reach the summit. While both men and women encounter similar physical and technical obstacles and share the triumphs and achievements, women's accounts differ in their perceptions of risk, the social dynamics they create, and the themes they emphasize differences that are often shaped by gender.

Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and Messner, are more inclined to take risks in hazardous situations. They want to face new challenges and risks in their lives. There are various evidences in their narratives. For example, Messner's ascent of Annapurna's Northwest Face illustrates his bold approach. In *Annapurna: 50 Years*

of *Expeditions in the Death Zone*, Messner writes, "New routes on the big mountains had always been a priority with me. As long as I was still strong enough, I always went for the first ascents" (108). Messner's willingness to take risks in pursuit of the first ascent shows his boldness often attributed to male mountaineers. Similarly, Viesturs in his *The Mountain: My Time on Everest* reflects on his eighth expedition to 8,000m. peak. He asserts, "My solo attempt on the Great Couloir represented my eighth attempt on an 8,000er. I think it surprised even me that among those eight expeditions, five had been to Everest" (149). Viesturs recounts multiple climbs of formidable peaks and highlights his approach to risk management. Similarly, Hillary writes, ". . . the darkness and the blanket of snow made everything the same. It was hard work making the trail . . ." (153).

The male mountaineers' accounts focus on overcoming the physical and mental obstacles inherent in mountaineering, highlighting the theme of dominance and triumph.

The narratives of Gammelgaard, Stephens, Blume, and Lhakpa Phuti reveal a different set of dynamics during their mountaineering journeys, focusing on collaboration, friendliness, and open communication. Through their interactions with climbers from diverse backgrounds, they gain valuable insights into various lifestyles and cultures. An example of this can be seen in Stephens's account of her journey to Mount Everest. Where she reflects:

At Base camp, as I wandered from tent to tent, dropping in for a cup of coffee here, and a bite to eat there, I learned that this passion for the mountains was not just the prerogative of the few Englishmen and Americans I happened to be travelling with, but one shared by an elite band of mountaineers from every corner of the world. (24)

Stephens illuminates her encounters with different groups of people of different nationalities not only Americans and English but also Mogolians and Nepali, which reflect her openness and friendly attitude toward fellow climbers.

Women's narratives give priority to the emotional and psychological experiences, highlighting the celebration and exhilaration of climbing Mount Everest and Annapurna. Rebecca Stephens in *On Top of the World*, expresses her excitement, "Such delights, such cute appreciation of the small pleasures that make up our everyday lives, sadly fade. But other joys of my Himalayan adventure I will never lose. I never forget climbing for the first time into the heaven's gate . . ." (190). Stephen's portrayal captures the indescribable excitement, joy, and bliss that she experiences at the summit.

There are so many gender-related issues prevalent in women's mountaineering narratives. Gammelgaard in *Climbing High: A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy* reflects on the societal resistance she faced due to her gender, "As I grew to adulthood, I suffered a lot of resistance because of my way of being, doubtless compounded by the fact that I was a woman. There were many times when I was told I couldn't or shouldn't gender-related, do something because I was a woman, I did it anyway, I've never felt I had a choice, it is just who I am" (xii). Gammelgaard's account highlights the gender biasedness that she has faced throughout her life.

Similarly, women mountaineers often deal with unique biological challenges. Lhakpa Phuti in *Forty Years in the Mountains* recounts a deeply personal moment related to menstruation during a climb, "How could I leave there a thing that could thwart the pioussness of the Himalayas? I was caught in a terrible fix. With a deep sense of regret. I felt a sting for being born as a woman. . . . I could neither carry the

pad with me nor throw it anywhere around there" (255). Phuti's narrative highlights the complex intersection of cultural beliefs, environmental respect, and the physical reality of being a woman climber, illustrating the additional burden women face on such expeditions.

Men and women mountaineers have distinct narrative styles when recounting triumphs and adversities. Men's accounts are direct and objective, highlighting obstacles, conquests, and achievements. Whereas women's narratives are more expressive, personal, and engaging, often focusing on storytelling and comradeship. Lhakpa Phuti reflects the communal spirit in her journey, "On the way, we entertained ourselves with songs, chit-chats and jokes. At night, we listened to stories about ghosts and **yetis** and kept ourselves thrilled" (69). Similarly, Stephen shares passion among mountaineers, "I learned that this passion for mountains was not just the prerogative of the few Englishmen and Americans I happened to be travelling with but one shared by an elite band of mountaineers from every corner of the world. How wonderful, I thought, to feel so passionate about anything" (24). Gammelgaard's openness and lucid writing differentiates them than her male counterparts. She writes, "I need to pee, so I pee in my down suit. There is nothing I can do about it. I am exhausted" (183). These personal accounts highlight the unique narrative approaches of women, making their stories engaging and lively.

Similarly, women's accounts often emphasize personal growth, empowerment, great excitement, overcoming stereotypes, and breaking barriers. These experiences have profound and lasting impacts on their lives influencing their personal growth, career, and advocacy efforts. Lhakpa Phuti and Gammelgaard are internationally recognized figures, contributing to the field as instructors and role

models. Lhakpa Phuti recalls her experience at international events, “During the occasion, I overheard someone say, “Look at the strong lady from Nepal!” (418). Phuti further asserts, "A world congress had been organized at Bolzano of Italy, and the issue was 'High Altitude and Psychology, and Mountain Emergency Medicine.' I had been invited to be a guest representing Nepal Government in the Congress" (411). Phuti's significance as a woman high-altitude climber has been acknowledged globally. Similarly, Gammelgaard writes, “I have been told that I am a role model for young girls (xv). In this way, women’s expeditions emphasize a broader vision of success and achievements that extend beyond the personal to inspire and empower others.

Not only have women mountaineers achieved legendary status, but Hillary as the first person to reach the top of Mount Everest, also became an iconic figure in mountaineering history. Reflecting on his achievement in *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest*, he writes, "Ever since I reached the summit of Mount Everest fifty years ago, the media have classified me as a hero. . ." (1). Hillary becomes a legendary figure in mountaineering, being the first to ascend the world's highest mountain. In the same way, Herzog who led the first successful ascent of Mount Annapurna in 1950 is celebrated as a role model in mountaineering.

Despite the different cultural and geographical backgrounds, there are notable similarities between the narratives of Nepali and foreign mountaineers. Both express a deep love and reverence for Mount Everest and Annapurna and both face common challenges for mountaineers including high altitude, extreme weather, and risks like avalanches, and crevasses. Overcoming these obstacles is essential to their success. Despite these similarities, there are significant differences exist between these narratives. For example, the stories of Nepali mountaineers such as Norgay and Phuti

weave spiritual, social, and cultural elements. In *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest* asserts, "Sherpa won't climb on the mountain until the puja is held, and Western climbers defer to the Sherpa on this bit of expedition protocol. The ritual can be loosely described as a petitioning of the gods for permission to climb, and for good weather and safe passage" (87). Norgay illustrates that for many Nepali mountaineers, climbing is a sacred pilgrimage whereas for foreigners, like Hillary, Viesturs, and Messner, it is a journey for adventure, conquest, and the thrill of overcoming physical and mental challenges. Similarly, Nepali mountaineers often frame their experiences within the broader context of community. The Sherpa community frequently highlights the collective effort over individual heroism, as seen in Phuti's narrative. Additionally, Nepali climbers focus on the financial aspects of mountaineering, seeing it as a means of livelihood rather than a heroic endeavor.

Mountaineering narratives often reveal that both men and women experience profound moments of awe, beauty, and a sense of accomplishment that leads to self-discovery and transformation. The sense of the sublime, an overwhelming feeling of awe and majesty in the presence of nature's grandeur, can be experienced by anyone regardless of gender. This feeling often stems from overcoming the physical and mental challenges of the climb, the solidarity formed with fellow climbers, and the confrontation with the immense and untamed beauty of the mountains.

Although gender perceptions may vary, mountaineers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Phuti and Blum, share a common goal that transcends the mere act of reaching the summit. Their endeavors in the face of formidable mountains are driven by the pursuit of the sublime. Through

their experiences, they seek not only the thrill of conquest but also a deeper understanding of themselves. The physical challenges and unfamiliar hazardous terrain, develop a deeper sense of self-awareness and confidence. Ultimately, these climbers reveal that the emotional complexity of mountaineering such as the feelings of terror, awe, and vastness act as a catalyst for transformation. It offers a new perspective on life that brings inner satisfaction, gratification, awareness, and a profound sense of the sublime.

This higher understanding is often described as a realm for attaining the sublime, a concept emphasized in the narratives of Hillary, Norgay, Herzog, as well as Gammelgaard, emphasize in their narratives. For them, the summit is not just a physical achievement but a higher state of consciousness, a theme that will be explored in the following discussion.

#### Quest for the Sublime in Everest and Annapurna Expeditions

Mountaineering transcends the mere act of ascending peaks; it is a journey into the sublime, offering a gateway to profound strength and a deeper connection to a higher power. To reach and attain this higher state of awakening, mountaineers must engage in meditation, and cultivate not only the ambition but also strong devotion, dedication, patience, and bravery to overcome both physical and psychological challenges. After successfully summiting high mountains like Mount Everest and Annapurna, mountaineers undergo an internal transformation, discovering a newfound sense of self. This awakening and awareness epitomize the ultimate attainment of knowledge, realization, and self-discovery.

Throughout history, the quest for enlightenment has inspired individuals to embark on journeys to various, with many towards the serene and lofty sanctuaries provided by the mountainous terrain. The notion that mountains are imbued with

divinity and grandeur is a recurrent theme in various literary works. Historically, elevated terrains have spiritual significance. In *Mystery, Beauty, and Danger* Robert H. Bates explores this concept, illustrating Biblical events:

It was on Mount Moriah that the Lord tested Abraham, on Sinai that he gave the tablets to Moses, and on Carmel that Elijah threw into confusion the prophet of Baal. The sanctity of high places is impressed on the reader of both the Old and the New Testament, as shown for instance by the 121st Psalm, I will lift my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made Heaven and earth. (2)

Bates extends the spiritual reverence for mountains and mountaineering, suggesting that the act of summiting the peak not only transcends the physical accomplishment but fulfills the life's objective that yields knowledge, and mental satisfaction. This perspective positions mountains not only as physical entities, but as symbols of dreams, desire, and human quest for sublime.

An in-depth analysis of mountaineering narratives reveals that mountain summits are deeply imbued with spiritual and religious significance for many, including the followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. One such example is provided by Hillary, who recounts his experience in *The Ascent of Everest*:

Tenzing had made a little hole in the snow and in it, he placed various small articles of food—a bar of chocolate, a packet of biscuits, and a handful of lollies. Small offerings, indeed, but at least a token of gift to the Gods that all devout Buddhists believe have their home on this lofty summit. While we were together on the South Col two days before, Hunt had given me a small crucifix which he had asked me to take to the top. I, too, made a hole in the snow and placed the crucifix beside Tenzing's gifts. (187)

Hillary's account highlights how mountaineers often intertwine their awe-inspiring achievements with the expression of spiritual homage. Hillary's and Tenzing's acts of offerings are not merely symbolic but serve as a tribute to the divine entities.

The resonance of these ideas extends to the experiences of other mountaineers, including Norgay who vividly portrays his ascent of Everest in *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest*. In his narrative, he articulates how the mountain itself transformed him just like his father. He mentions:

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- a rock that had with indifference taken the lives of so many—into a warm, friendly, and life-sustaining being. Miyolangsangma. I felt her embracing both of us. (256)

Norgay's account emphasizes the personal growth and transformation that occurs during a mountain climb. He feels a significant change in himself at the summit compared to his earlier self at the base camp, with his potential heightened at every step. Furthermore, Norgay reflects an elevated aspect of mountaineering, observing the mountain, stating, "In the mountains, worldly attachments are left behind, and in the absence of material distractions, we are opened up to spiritual thought" (218).

Norgay argues that the mountains provide an environment free from worldly distractions allowing climbers to reach a sublime realm.

Norgay's spiritual revelation on Mount Everest is also experienced by other climbers, such as Gammelgaard who articulates a moment of awakening in *Climbing High: A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy*. She exclaims, "Christ! I am here! At the top" (172), conveying a profound sense of excitement and elevation

upon reaching the summit. Gammelgaard's narrative suggests a recognition of the divine, portraying the high places as sacred abodes of gods and goddesses. This sentiment is paralleled in Rebecca Stephens's recounting of her Everest expedition in *On Top of the World* where she reflects on her higher level of consciousness while entering the Western Cwm. She vividly recalls:

Such delights, such acute appreciation of the small pleasures that make up our everyday lives, sadly fade. But other joys of my Himalayan adventure I will never lose, I will never forget climbing for the first time into the heaven's gate that is the Western Cwm, or sitting, alone, on the South Summit, looking down on the world stretched beneath me. (190)

Stephens argues the purity and perfection of the mountains as conduits for attaining consciousness and divine blessings. The theme of spiritual consciousness through mountaineering is reinforced by Captain Mohan Singh Kohli, an internationally renowned Indian mountaineer in *Faces of Everest*. He posits:

Anyone who challenges Everest undergoes a great spiritual transformation. In the struggle to reach the highest peak in the world, one conquers oneself. During the process of reaching greater heights, one gradually sheds petty involvements and a materialistic outlook, and when one reaches the highest point on the earth a metamorphosis takes place in the climber, changing him for life. (xix)

Kohli argues that the journey is to strip away from materialistic concerns and petty involvement, which leads to a significant conversion upon reaching the pinnacle of the Earth.

These narratives collectively reveal a common thread among climbers: the ascent of Everest and other similar peaks is not merely a physical challenge but a

profound journey for awakening. Moreover, this quest reflects a deeply personal journey towards self-transcendence, often described as a call to higher spiritual consciousness. Bates eloquently captures this sentiment, when he suggests, "This spiritual uplift, a sort of pantheism perhaps that great mountains make men feel, occasionally leads to the idea that there is religion in the mountains. Biblical writers and the ancient Greeks, of course, thought the places holy, and even today we find General Smuts declaring in a speech on Table Mountain in South Africa" (194). Bates argues that mountains have a profound effect on human consciousness, instilling a sense of joy and contentment. He observes how Biblical writers and the ancient Greeks revered high altitude as sacred, a sentiment that continues in modern times, as evidenced by General Smuts's remarks. Bates, further articulates that mountains are, ". . . great cathedrals of the earth, with their gates of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of stream and stone, altars of snow" (193). Bates asserts that mountains are considered profound sanctuaries that offer happiness, fulfillment, and a profound connection to the higher power.

Presently, the once pristine and untouched beauty of the mountains is under significant threat. The Himalayas' delicate ecosystems are being compromised by a surge of climbers, many lacking the necessary experience and preparations, especially those aiming for peaks like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. Durkan in *Penguins of Everest* points out that, "The peak has also attracted several low-budget climbers, often not very experienced, not very fit, and not particularly intelligent." (172). Durkan criticizes the commercialization of mountaineering by underprepared and inexperienced expeditions, asserting that it undermines the true spirit of the sport.

The environmental impact of mass participation on Everest is evident in the accumulation of waste including discarded oxygen cylinders, food cans, damaged

tents, ropes, human waste, and even the dead bodies of the climbers. As a result, base camps and higher camps, such as those on Mount Everest and Annapurna have increasingly become crowded tent cities and dump sites. The image below illustrates the current conditions of these high-altitude camps:

Pristine Everest Camp IV Transforming into a Dump Site (Gammelgaard, 139)



This represents a significant threat to the mountains, with enduring impacts on both the environment and the splendor of the Himalayas. The very essence of climbing is intertwined with the natural beauty of these landscapes; without it, climbing loses its allure. Thus, the conservation and safeguarding of this natural beauty are crucial.

#### Conclusion

The history of women's mountaineering traces back to 1808 in the European Alps. Women's passion and strong determination have enabled them to conquer even the formidable mountains like Mount Everest and Annapurna. The narratives of

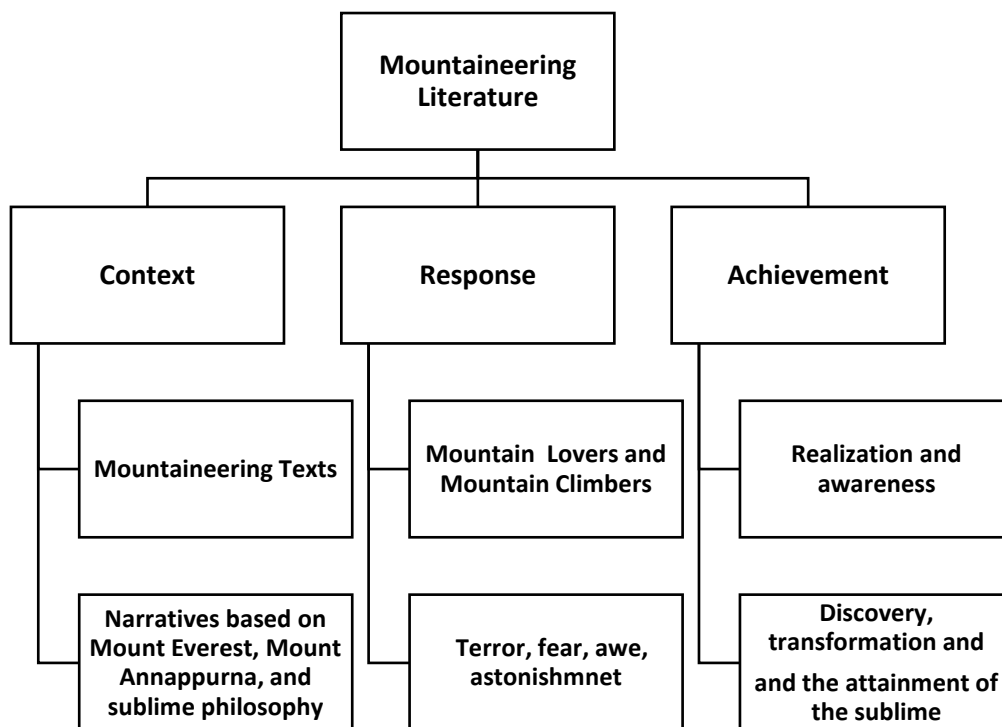
climbers like Gammelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa Phuti, and Blum, illustrate women's significant contribution to mountaineering, recounting their stories of physical and mental challenges, resilience, and achievements of these hazardous journeys. Moreover, this chapter presents a comparative study of men's and women's climbing narratives revealing the challenges, along with personal growth, and transformation. Ultimately, both men and women mountaineers are transformed by the snow-peaked mountains, gaining profound rewards from the natural world. Beyond the towering summits, Mount Everest and Annapurna are perceived as mysterious and mystical spaces. These journeys, framed as pilgrimages to the sacred abodes foster both sublime experiences as well as spiritual enlightenment.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

### Transcendence at the Summit: Experiencing the Sublime through Mountaineering

This research has critically examined the mountaineering narratives of Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gmmelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa Phuti, and Blum, focusing on their inner motivations and transformative experiences while climbing Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. By employing the concept of the sublime as a theoretical tool, the study emphasizes how the harsh, snow-covered environments evoke feelings of terror, fear, awe, and astonishment, underscoring humanity's insignificance in the face of nature's immense power. This profound understanding fosters personal transformation, humility, compassion, and resilience, ultimately to a state of the sublime.

In the preceding chapters, different narratives and experiences of these mountaineers have been thoroughly examined, reviewed, and analyzed through the lens of the sublime. After a thorough examination of the selected narratives, the study has come up with the following findings that are presented in the diagram:



This diagram illustrates that mountaineering literature encompasses the climbing narratives. It focuses on the ascents of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna and the profound experiences of the mountaineers. The majestic allure of these mountains with their breathtaking views, casts a profound influence on climbers who confront emotions of terror, fear, awe, and astonishment. These emotions not only lead to self- discovery but also deepen the climbers' connection with nature. Although the intensity of these experiences may vary, they consistently inspire personal discovery and transformation, guiding climbers toward the sublime state.

After analyzing the primary texts, this study reveals the inner motivations of renowned mountaineers such as Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Rebecca, Gammelgaard, Lhakpa Phuti, and Blum, to venture into the vast and dangerous terrains of Mount Everest and Annapurna. Their motivations arise from a blend of personal challenge, the thrill of adventure, and the exploration of unknown, unclimbed landscapes. More importantly, they seek to discover their true selves and gain a deeper understanding of nature's immense power. Through these encounters, they experience personal transformation and heightened consciousness.

The narratives reveal a deep affinity of the mountaineers to the natural world. Driven by an adventurous spirit, they seek to push their boundaries to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and nature. This intrinsic drive for adventure and the quest for the sublime is central to their pursuit of towering peaks like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. Despite lacking tangible rewards, mountaineers' engagement with the mountains is marked by a profound sense of charm and devotion. Hillary, Norgay, Herzog, and others exemplify this who are not solely motivated by the physical challenge of conquest but by a deeper immersion into the primal and eternal essence of the natural world.

In the narratives, Hillary's historical ascent with Tenzing transcends mere physical accomplishment, embodying the strong human spirit and a deeper respect for the drive to explore, understand risk, and conquer. Similarly, Viesturs, renowned for climbing all fourteen peaks of the world, without supplemental oxygen, emphasizes selflessness, aiding others, and the pursuit of climbing as a means of discovery and personal transformation. Messner asserts that true understanding of life and the world comes only upon reaching the summit. Stephens reflects on overcoming immense challenges, framing her mountainous journey as a transformative process of conquering formidable heights. Likewise, the narratives of Herzog, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Lhakpa Phuti, and Blum illustrate not only the physical challenges of mountaineering but also the deep psychological and emotional attachment to the natural world.

A thorough examination of the narratives of Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephen, Lhakpa Phuti, and Blum reveals that trepidation and terror gradually evolve into discovery and transformation as climbers confront nature's immense power and realize human limitation. Initially, human ambition, the desire to dominate and conquer nature, drives these 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 the high-altitude climbing provoke feelings of terror, fear, awe, and astonishment, forcing them to confront their own mortality.

Hilary, Jamling, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Stephens, and others understand their insignificance in the face of nature's uncontrollable force. This transition from hubris to humility occurs as climbers confront the terrifying realities of avalanches, crevasses, extreme weather, altitude, and ever-present risks of death. These experiences remind them of their fragility and smallness within the vast universe. Such feelings are vividly depicted in *High Adventure: The True Story of The First Ascent of Everest*, *The Mountain: My Time on*

*Everest, Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak*, and other narratives. The juxtaposition of the high-altitude's pristine beauty with the danger of climbing evokes emotions like terror, fear, awe, and astonishment creating intense experiences that lead climbers to discover the profound truths about life. Ultimately, these encounters foster personal transformation, helping them develop patience, endurance, and inner calm.

By overcoming, adversities, embracing solitude, and facing nature's overwhelming forces, Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and others experienced an elevation of mind that brought them to a heightened consciousness, fostering a profound sense of union between humans and nature. Through these processes, these climbers attained a state of the sublime, a philosophical notion articulated by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant.

Mountaineering is not merely about conquering physical summits but also the profound internal journey undertaken by mountaineers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, and others. Their ascents are deeply intertwined with experiences of awe, fear, and wonder, all evoked by the mountains' majesty, yet terrifying presence. The narratives reveal moments where beauty and terror heighten their awareness of solitude and vulnerability. The awe-inspiring terrain, juxtaposed with the inherent danger of climbing, creates an intense emotional experience that fosters self-understanding, and realization of the immensity of nature. The extreme conditions of high-altitude mountaineering demand not only physical endurance but also mental and emotional resilience. Climbers are forced to confront their mortality, thereby evoking deep reverence for life and the natural world. By overcoming, adversities, embracing solitude, and facing the powerful forces of nature, climbers achieve a state of sublime.

The trepidation, discovery, transformation, and the sublime are central to the mountaineering experience, particularly on peaks like Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. The fear and anxiety that arise from the unknown due to treacherous terrain, crevasses, avalanches, or extreme conditions are natural responses to the immense challenges these

mountains present. Yet it is through confronting and overcoming these obstacles with determination, skill, and resilience that the human spirit is exemplified. Mountaineers like Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, and others who have summited Mount Everest and Annapurna embody this triumph, illustrating how the journey transforms not only their perspective on the world but also their understanding of themselves.

Similarly, this research has found that mountains, particularly Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna, are revered as sacred places. Mountaineering to these peaks is often regarded as a pilgrimage, a journey to connect with the divine. This notion of spirituality is echoed in the narratives of climbers like Hillary, Gammelgaard, Stephen, Norgay, and others whose narratives convey a profound sense of communion with divine entities like the Mother Goddess of the Earth and the Goddess of Harvest. Their descriptions portray the summit, as a profoundly sublime, serene, and celestial experience.

A thorough analysis of the narratives of both men and women mountaineers reveal 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 Gammelgaard, Phuti as well as 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 Phuti and Gammelgaard who are recognized as the model in the field of mountaineering.

Mountaineers from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds have different perspectives on mountaineering. Nepali mountaineers like Norgay and Phuti emphasize cultural and spiritual dimensions, community, the role of the Sherpa, and mountaineering as a means of livelihood rather than a heroic endeavor. In contrast, foreign climbers like Hillary, Messner, and Gammelgaard focus on conquest, achievement, challenges, personal triumph, and heroism. Despite these differences, both groups share many characteristics like deep respect and reverence for Everest and Annapurna, the physical and mental challenges of mountaineering and a strong desire for achievement.

This study illustrates that mountaineering has long been perceived as an adventurous pursuit for courageous climbers who ventured to conquer the formidable peaks of the Alps and the Himalayas. Hillary, Jamling, Viesturs, Herzog, and others, have documented their experiences, emotions, and motivations including passion, nationalism, and recognition which are merely superficial. The true driving force for most climbers is or self-discovery, personal transformation and a pursuit of the sublime. The research highlights that beyond physical achievements, mountaineering promotes profound personal growth, providing climbers with a transcendental experience that reshapes their perspectives on life and existence.

According to this study, mountaineering emerges as a form of meditation that endows individuals with sublime experiences and heightened consciousness. The narratives of Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Stephens, Gammelgaard, and others are filled with invaluable insights that contribute to personal development, resilience, and adaptability in the face of life's uncertainties. Moreover, the everlasting joy and contentment derived from mountaineering experiences foster a deep connection to something immeasurable and indestructible, transcending their limited sense of self, and providing power that goes beyond

name and fame. This realization propels climbers towards a state of sublime, imbuing them with the courage and confidence to make a positive impact in the world.

While summarizing the dissertation, the researcher discovers that mountaineering literature has emerged as a distinct genre that encompasses narratives of adventure, risk, and awe-inspiring beauty encountered by mountaineers as they ascend majestic peaks of Mount Everest and Mount Annapurna. This genre acts as a mirror to the marvels of mountains and the exhilaration experienced by climbers upon reaching the summit. It documents the experiences and encounters of intrepid climbers expressing the sense of awe and wonder at the mountains' sublime and beautiful aspects, leading them towards self-discovery, transformation, and then eventually at a state of sublime.

For centuries, mountains have been revered and are still revered as a spiritual sanctuary. Emperors have sought the counsel of sages residing in these lofty realms, recognizing that mountains transcend the earthly domain. This acknowledges the unique essence of mountains and suggest that their inhabitants possess a wisdom unattainable in the mundane world. Mountains emanate positive energies, awakening the human mind to peace and enlightenment. They are viewed as jewels, pearls, paradise as well as places of mystery. As climbers ascend higher, they experience a heightened awareness of nature and themselves, attaining a state of sublimity through the profound union of thought, mind, and heart.

The history of mountaineering, which dates back to 1808 in the European Alps, has witnessed remarkable achievements of numerous climbers who have successfully climbed various mountains, including the formidable peaks of Mount Everest and Annapurna, driven by their ambition, determination, and passion. These climbers are captivated by the allure of these majestic mountains with their awe-inspiring beauty, enigmatic mysteries, and majestic

grandeur. They establish deep emotional and spiritual connections with these natural wonders, considering them sources of peace, happiness, awareness, and enlightenment.

After a thorough examination of mountaineering narratives by notable climbers such as Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Herzog, Messner, Gammelgaard, Stephen, Lhakpa and Blum, the researcher discovers that the pursuit of scaling Mount Everest, Mount Annapurna, and Alpine Peaks extends beyond mere endurance of extreme weather conditions, traversing through treacherous terrain, and overcoming obstacles such as crevasses and avalanches. Rather, it encompasses a journey for sublime experiences, through which climbers undergo a metamorphosis of their perspective on life, cognition, and professional careers. The transformative power of the summit experiences enables climbers a fresh outlook on both themselves and the world. As Ahluwalia, in *Faces of Everest*, argues mountain climbing brings complete transformation within individuals. Indeed, the mountaineer who ventures into these mountains attains acute awareness of his insignificance and loneliness in the immeasurable universe.

In *High Adventure: The True Story of the First Ascent of Everest*, Hillary describes the satisfaction and relief that he felt upon reaching the summit, a symbol of his great achievement. More importantly, it is through the journey that he discovers his true self and undergoes a profound transformation, ultimately, reaching the state of the sublime. Similarly, in *Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to Top of Everest* Norgay and Coburn reflect the spiritual evolution through the challenges and exhilaration of the climb. Norgay views the journey as a pilgrimage, a path to deeper understanding and insights into the world. Viesturs and Roberts in *The Mountain: My Time on Everest* present the realization of both the world and themselves. Viesturs acknowledges that mountaineering requires immense effort and it imparts valuable life lessons. In *Annapurna: The First Conquest of an 8,000-Meter Peak*, Herzog reflects on how mountaineering teaches individuals their place in the world. He

urges individuals to face challenges with strong determination, empathy, and confidence. In *Annapurna: 50 Years of Expeditions in the Death Zone*, Messner views his expedition to Annapurna as a lesson for accepting failure in life.

Similar themes are presented in the narratives of the women mountaineers. In *Climbing High: A Woman's Account of Surviving the Everest Tragedy*, Gammelgaard presents herself as bold, courageous, and determined woman. For her, Everest symbolizes transformation and transcendence. Through climbing, she discovers her true potentiality and she finds herself at a state of sublime. Likewise, in *On Top of the World*, Stephens depicts herself as a determined and brave woman who, at the summit, experiences complete isolation and a sense of emptiness in both mind and body, symbolizing her oneness with nature. This moment of realization brings a profound transformation in her life. Phuti in *Forty Years in the Mountains* recounts her Himalayan journey for knowledge, and peace, a pathway through which individuals gain deep experience and achieve personal growth. A similar sense of transformation is reflected in Blum's *Annapurna: A Woman's Place*. Her determination and courage enabled her to reach the summit, which symbolizes life, learning, and transcendence.

Hence, climbing formidable mountains such as Mount Everest and Annapurna, often result in a profound transformation or convergence in the climbers' lives. Through their experience, Hillary, Norgay, Viesturs, Gammelgaard, and others attain a heightened awareness of their place and nonentity within the vast expanse of the universe, enriched by sublime experiences. They perceive the mountains' natural features such as glaciers, ridges, and valleys as emanating from a central point, akin to the spokes of a wheel, with themselves at the nexus, where everything converges with the natural world. This perspective fosters a deep connection with the environment, enabling climbers to achieve a state of sublimity in life. This notion aligns with the philosophers like Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant and their concept the sublime that focuses on the elevation and transcendence.

Furthermore, mountains hold spiritual significance as a ladder of soul symbolizing a higher place of existence, allowing mountaineers to connect with the divine or divinity. Through the accounts of Hillary, Norgay, Herzog, Gammelgaard, Stephens, Phuti, and others, the summit experience is often described as encountering with the divinity. The towering peaks seemingly touching the heavens, inspire spiritual elevation. Renowned scholars like Bates has highlighted the deeper symbolic significance of mountains as ladders of life, and a source of religious inspiration. He posits that the highest religion can be found in the worship of mountains. This perception resonates with both literary scholars and mountaineers who perceive the mountain as a domicile for inner exploration, leading to profound self-discovery and transformation of consciousness.

Despite the enthralling Himalayan landscapes that offer new insights and sublime experiences, these regions are currently grappling with challenges due to overcrowding. This congestion significantly affects the mountains, with long-lasting impacts on both the environment and awe-inspiring beauty of the Himalayas from which climbers derive transformative and sublime experiences. Climbing is intricately connected to preserving nature's beauty, yet this is jeopardized without concrete conservative efforts. Recognizing this predicament, contemporary mountaineers like Krakauer, Purja, Messner, Viesturs, and many others have emphasized the need for collective efforts to safeguard these Himalayan giants. Their accounts highlight a shared responsibility among governments, the mountaineering community, and others to preserve the majestic sanctity of these towering peaks. They advocate for a harmonious balance between the thrill of adventure and the critical need to preserve the natural environment, ensuring the enduring magnificence and sacredness of the mountains for future generations.

Moreover, this dissertation contributes to the field of mountaineering literature by illustrating that the genre encompasses more than just depictions of natural beauty and the

physical triumphs of mountaineers, it delves into how mountaineering literature serves as a vehicle for self-discovery, transformation, and achieving a state of sublime in their lives.

Additionally, this dissertation expands the study of mountaineering literature by emphasizing its portrayal not just of mountaineers' physical feats but also as a conduit for sublime experiences. It opens the paths for scholars to explore how mountaineering literature addresses environmental conservation, climate change, and the sustainable practice of mountaineering. Furthermore, it unlocks the discussions on how modern technology such as digital media and virtual reality are influencing the narrative style and thematic concerns of contemporary mountaineering literature. In the same way, another research could delve into the ethical and environmental ramifications of mountain overcrowding and the impact of the waste left by climbers, offering critical insights into the preservation of these majestic landscapes.

The dissertation emphasizes the significance of mountaineering literature not only as an academic field of study but also as a critical resource for educators and policymakers. It highlights the necessity to integrate the insights derived from this research into educational curricula and policy frameworks. This approach aims to cultivate a more profound and responsible appreciation and engagement with mountain environments, fostering a holistic understanding of their multifaceted dimensions.

## Appendix

### Common Mountaineering Equipment

In mountaineering, certain items and equipment are indispensable. These include:

- (1) Rope Knots: There are several types of ropes and different methods for tying the knots

Terms Used:

- (a) Running End—It is a free end which is in hand
  - (b) Standing End—Other end of the rope which is not being used by the climber
  - (c) Body or coil—The middle portion of the rope
  - (d) bight—Simple turn which does not cross itself
  - (e) Loop—The turn of the rope that crosses each other
  - (f) Hitch—A turn of the rope that crosses and turns back again
- (2) Boots
    - (a) High Altitude Boots: a special high altitude boot, strong enough for the attachment of crampons and for kicking steps in frozen snow, used constantly from Camp III to the Summit.
    - (b) General climbing Boots: Light boots, used mostly up to 20,000ft., help to prevent fatigue at any height.
  - (3) Tents: different varieties of tents:
    - (a) A Meade tent which is used for the higher camps to save weight.
    - (b) A Dome tent, a heavier twelve-man, used as a mess-cum sleeping tent,
    - (c) A Pyramid tent, generally used as a cookhouse and community center
  - (4) Windproof cloth: Clothes had to be as light as possible, snag-proof, and fairly waterproof

- (5) Wireless equipment: walkie-talkie sets for communication between camps on the mountain up to two miles apart and a short-wave receiver for special meteorological bulletins and general entertainment.
- (6) Cooker: The most effective and economical source of heat is a paraffin burner and the Primus stove with a high-altitude burner helps to cook at the highest camp.
- (7) Bridging Equipment: An aluminum alloy ladder for bridging wide crevasses, something light, portable, and strong was chosen.
- (8) The Oxygen Cylinders: Two different cylinders were used: One formed from a drawn dural tube, weighed when charged, and with a light-alloy reducing valve of 11 and a half lb. of 800 liters of oxygen and the other the wire-wound R.A.F., mark VD steel cylinder, containing 14,00 liters of oxygen.
- (9) The Carrying Frame: Two types of frame were used: one made of the welded aluminum tube carrying three dural cylinders and the other welded aluminum alloy, carrying one dural or one R.A. F. cylinder.
- (10) The Sleeping Set: 2 liters of oxygen per minute to T-T-piece.
- (11) Medicine: On the mountain, colds and sore throats were troublesome, and rapid breathing of cold dry air and the resulting breakdown of the defenses of the upper respiratory tract. Paludrine was issued to Sahibs, Sherpa, and Coolies, D.M. P. anti-mosquito cream was valuable against insects, Anti-insect power for lice, fleas, and bed- bugs, antibiotics for diarrhea and sore throats,
- (12) Jumar Clamp: A metal device that can be clipped onto a climbing rope, where it can be picked up but will not be its own. The climber is attached to the Jumar by tape or cord. Frequently used as a safety device on fixed ropes.
- (13) Karabiner: An oval metal ring, one side of which opens as a spring clip. A very useful device for clipping onto ropes, into pitons, etc.

(14) Piton: Also called a peg or pin. A metal spike that can be hammered into a crack in the rock and used as an anchor or a runner.

### Mountain and Mountaineering Terminology

Mountaineering requires specialized knowledge of technical terms and equipment. The following are some essential terminologies used in mountaineering:

Abseil: A rapid method of descent down a steep rock or ice wall. A double rope is hung on the cliff from a rock or ice bollard or a peg, and the climbers make a controlled slide down it.

Acclimatization: The adaption of the human body to the rarefied air of high altitudes.

Alp: A mountain pasture land.

Anorak: A wind proof jacket with an attached hood.

Arete: A narrow ridge that is usually sharp and elevated.

Avalanche: A large mass of snow and ice sliding down a mountain slope.

Avalanche Cone: The ultimate shape which the mouth of an avalanche takes, is called an avalanche cone. Commonly it resembles a cone.

Belay: to secure the climber to a projection with the rope; the projection itself

Bergschrund: a large crevasse separating the upper slopes of a glacier from the steeper slopes of ice or rock above.

Bivouac: A temporary impromptu camp (any temporary arrangement for living outside).

Bridging: A method of climbing a wide chimney by straddling it- having one foot and hand on each wall

Buttress: A mass of rock bulging out of a mountainside.

Cagoule: A long anorak descending below the knees.

Chang: A beer brewed from ice

Col: Top of a mountain pass. It is the lowest point on a ridge.

Cornice: Overhanging mass of snow or ice along a ridge, shaped like the curling crest of a wave and generally formed by the prevailing wind

Crags: Several cliffs

Crete: A narrow crest or side

Crampon; metal frame with spikes, fitting the sole of the boot, for use on hard snow or ice

Crevasse: A fissure in a glacier, often of great depth

CWM: A very high valley. It is a bowl-shaped hollow in a mountain.

Gendarme: A rock tower or tooth on a ridge. It gives a false idea of any shape.

Glacier; "River" of ice formed by accumulation or consolidation of snow.

Glissade: It is a technique of sliding down on snow slopes either in a sitting position or standing position. In this technique, an ice axe is used to control speed and direction.

Haversack: A canvas bag with a shoulder strap to carry up to 20lbs or so.

Ice-axe: A mountaineers' axe mainly used for cutting steps on ice and as a stout walking stick for keeping balance on snow and ice.

Ice-fall: The steepest section of a glacier, usually taking the form of a widely jumbled mass of ice.

Icicle: Hanging Columns of Ice.

Igloo: A hemispherical-shaped ice hut, constructed by ice blocks.

Massif: A compact range of a group of mountain heights.

Mitten: A kind of glove with a thumb but no fingers. It is of three types, viz., eiderdown, woolen, and windproof.

Moraine: a wind in South Asia which blows from the S. W. in the summer...

Nylon rope: A soft rope made of nylon material about three-fourths of an inch thick which has a breaking strength of about 3,000 lbs.

Pinnacle: A sharp peak which is an isolated tower of peak.

Piton: A metal spike designed to give support in steep climbing to hand, foot, or rope. Pitons are made in varying sizes and shapes, some designed for use on ice, some for driving into cracks in rock.

Rappel: Roping down; the maneuver of letting oneself down a steep place using a supplementary rope.

Ridge: A jetting out slop of a sharp climb from a main feature.

Rope: links members of a party for safety; a party may be referred to as "a rope"

Rucksack: A bag slung by straps for both shoulders and resting on the back for carrying a climber's accessories.

Saddle: The low point of a ridge, a col.

Serac: A tower of ice, usually found in a glacier.

Sleeping bag: A type of quilt, very warm and light, filled with eiderdown or kapok material, fitted with a zip in the center, joining the sides of the quilt.

Sirdar: The head Sherpa of an expedition.

Snow- bridge: a layer of snow bridging a crevasse

Snowline: An imaginary line in the mountains above which perpetual stone is found. It is indicated in terms of height.

Spur: a rib of rock running down from a main ridge or arête

Tarn: A pond on a high mountainside (a mountain lake).

Traverse: to cross a mountain slope horizontally or diagonally; such a crossing.

Tsampa: flour of roasted and ground barley: staple food of Sherpa

Verglas: Thin film of ice found on the rock surface.

Vertigo: A sensation of fear or dizziness at height.

Wedge: Wooden chokes used as aids in cracks too large for pitons.

Yeti: an unidentified creature believed to dwell in the Himalayan mountains, which has been nicknamed the 'Abominable Snowman'.

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