

Where my Help Comes from



It was breakfast. I was just cutting into my second pancake when Shirley and Helen pushed the dining room door open, their faces red and their hair damp with sweat. “They don’t exist!” said Helen as she slumped in the nearest chair and began tugging off her hiking boots. “I tell you, they do not exist!”

“What are you two talking about?” I asked, confused. “Where have you been? You almost missed breakfast.”

“Oh, we better not have!” said Shirley. “If there are no mountains, and no pancakes either, what on earth are we doing here!?”

“No mountains? This is Nepal, of course there are mountains,” I said.

“Not today,” said Helen. “Today they do not exist.”

“Or at least, if they do, they didn’t want to be seen by us.” Shirley dumped her bag on one of the lounge chairs and walked across to the table.

Shirley and Helen had just walked back from Sarangkot hill, the best look-out site in Pokhara. They had woken up while it was still dark, climbed the hill and waited for the sun to paint the mountains as it rose for the day.

“There was nothing up there,” Shirley explained as she helped herself to the syrup. “It was such a shame. We got there nice and early, before the buses of tourists had arrived and crowded everything, but even from the look-out tower we could see nothing. It was all cloudy, even then, we couldn’t see a thing!” She poured herself a cup of tea and sat back with a sigh.

I looked out the window to where I knew the mountains were, but there was just whiteness. These

days the clouds race to cover the mountain peaks, and if it isn't cloudy it is smoggy and the mountains bare ghosts somewhere in the distance. There are days, however, when the sky is clear and the Himalayas loom over us as if they grew out of Pokhara's backyard.

“Oh, well,” I said trying to be encouraging, “you can go again another time... .”

Helen and Shirley exchanged looks and laughed. “Yeah, but not for a while!” They were exhausted.

The Nepalis say that “Nepal's riches are found in nature” and every year the Himalayas draw visitors to Nepal from all over the world. Germans, Israelis, people from the UK, Korea, India, America, they all come to see the mountains and most of them do. They take off on treks, some guided, some independent and then they leave taking memories and photos of this amazing place with them. But there are some people who come to Nepal who don't leave so quickly. They have the chance, even if they don't feel like it immediately, to climb Sarangkot again, and again and again. They are people like Helen and Shirley, and us, who have come to Nepal to work for a while.

Himalayan Adventures

Working and living in a country other than your own can be an adventure. An adventure in which you take God's hand and follow where he leads you. But it can also be hard work. You have to say goodbye to the places and people you love and come somewhere totally foreign. There is the language to learn, and that takes months and years. There are weird customs to get used to, some that you like (drinking lots of tea) some that you don't (religious rituals that wake you in the middle of the night). It can be difficult to make friends, to know how to stay healthy and not continually get sick with diarrhoea (we've had our share of that!). Sometimes, as life gets hard, it is easy to forget who it is you are serving and why you ever started on the adventure anyway.

I remember one time, when we were in language school and everything seemed impossible. We were struggling over verbs and vocabulary and adjusting to the oppressive monsoon climate when one of our friends reminded us to look up.

“We keep looking down,” he said one morning.

“We jump over puddles and cow poo and open drains. We have to dodge the taxis and the kids racing

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in and out of school. You can get so busy looking at the ground and looking where you are going, that you forget to look up and see the mountains. Look up! See Machhapuchhare.... it is just standing there, even if we can't see it everyday because of the rain or weather, but it is there, pointing upwards and reminding us of God.”

The Nepalis say that Machhapuchhare is a sacred mountain. They say that no one has ever or will ever climb it because it is so sacred anyone who tries will die. Before the climbing of this mountain became prohibited there was one team, in 1957, that attempted to reach the top.



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This expedition got to 50 meters of the summit before the Nepali climbers refused to go up any higher. They were afraid of the anger of the gods if they were to climb the holy mountain. But we know that this mountain, sacred or not, is part of God's creation. It is part of creation, made by the Holy One. To us it can be a reminder that God is in control and that even if we can't see him - if we are looking all the time at our problems, or life just seems foggy, he is still there. He is loving us always. Watching us always. Caring always. We just need to lift our eyes up and focus on Him.

I lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from?

My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1 and 2