

## Mountains as teachers

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Today is the day of safeguarding of the Capricorn full moon. This full moon is one of potency and strength, facilitating the ability to penetrate into the highest center of the spiritual will thereby as a consequence, stimulating the release of goodwill in the world.. Capricorn is associated with the ascension to the mountain top and the strength and determination necessary to achieve that goal.

It's interesting to note how the spiritual Hierarchy of the planet was said to have taken a keen interest in humanity's attempts to scale the highest peak, Mt. Everest which was finally achieved in 1953 by Edmund Hillary from New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay from Nepal at the time of the Gemini full moon. This outer event was said to be a symbol of humanity's ability to ascend into the light and relative glory of the new civilisation.

Now, at a higher turn of the spiral, a Netflix documentary entitled 14 Peaks is gaining much attention. The film highlights the strength and determination of Nepalese mountaineer [Nirmal Purja](#) and his team as they climbed not only one peak but rather all 14 of the over 8000 meter peaks in the world and they did so within a record time of under 7 months. The previous record for scaling the 14 peaks was 7 years and accomplished by Reinhold Messner.

A significant portion of the footage in the film was taken by the expedition team itself and the majesty and awe inspiring Himalayan mountain ranges are wondrous to behold, particularly as they are accompanied by incredibly powerful music brings their awesomeness to life. At each of these great peaks, as the summits are approached, the climber reaches what is called "the death zone." And all along the way the climbers face cold, wind, storms and the constant threat of avalanches.

I thought the film presented a powerful symbol of the qualities needed by those on the spiritual path. The film detailed the challenges that had to be overcome all along the way. There was the long preparatory work—the sacrifice and long hours of grueling training and discipline that was undertaken for years. The challenges were not only physical but also emotional and mental as well for everyone told him that the goal he set to climb the 14 peaks was impossible. He had a different view and instead called the journey "Mission Possible." He said the lesson he wanted to share with the world, particularly with the Nepalese mountaineers, was to not be afraid to dream big and that when you have such dreams, it doesn't matter where you come from. For decades the Nepalese sherpas accompanied western climbers whereas Nirma said, "I want to represent the Nepalese climbing community."

He faced many challenges in his life. As the third son in a family with little means, he was traditionally supposed to support his mother. He had a good job in special services in the UK and his family was against his following what they thought was a selfish dream and he had to make this decision at a time when his mother was very ill. But his wife knew how much this dream meant to him and she saw his determination and was fully supportive of his decisions all along the way, even when they couldn't get funding for the project and had to take out another mortgage on their modest home.

But even having taken that step he still needed additional funding. He tried everything through the normal channels and nothing worked, little money was forthcoming and discouragement did arise. That was when he decided to reach out to the global mountaineering community via social media and word spread quickly and the funds were made available. The global community was tremendously supportive as well when he was later being denied a visa by China that he needed to

climb the final peak in Tibet. Again, the global community came to the rescue by sending thousands of communications to the Chinese government and the pressure was so great they finally relented and let Nimja and his team into the country.

The challenges of the climbs were highlighted in the documentary but so was the relentless optimism, good humor and camaraderie among the team. At one point Nimja slipped and started falling down a huge icy slope at great speed. Seemingly out of nowhere he was able to grab a rope that saved his life. He said this was a horrible experience and shook his confidence massively and we struggled within himself but no one saw the weakness.

One of the peaks, Annapurna, is so treacherous that out of every 3 climbers that make it to the summit, one dies trying. When they approached that climb they met other climbers along the way who were about to turn back because of bad weather conditions. After dancing and partying at night they were able to convince the group to keep going and they all reached the summit. As they descended the peak the next day it was realized that one of the climbers from the other group had been left behind. Nimja and a couple others from his group went up to find him, with no extra oxygen of their own to spare and tremendous fatigue, they were able to rescue him. The team rescued other lost and sick climbers along the way of their journey—always willing to sacrifice their own ambitions and indeed their own lives in order to save others. One such climber was not so lucky. When the team found him he was severely ill, having run out of oxygen. They shared their oxygen with him and called for more from other climbers settled below. No one offered any of their oxygen and the climber died in Nimja's arms.

Of climbing Nimja said, "Your soul becomes part of the mountain. It makes you feel alive." He always said to himself, "I'm not going to die today. Maybe tomorrow, but not today." "The mountain doesn't care if you are white, black, weak or strong. It is one rule for everybody. If you give up, you die."

Perhaps the biggest challenge was the approach to K2, the most treacherous of the peaks. He began to doubt because everyone else, all the other climbers had given up. He said of himself, "My biggest strength is that I have no fear." He said to him climbing is like meditation. He said, "You have to ask yourself, do you really want this from your heart? Is it for self-glory or is it for something bigger? It may seem impossible to the rest of the world but that doesn't mean it's impossible to you. You can inspire the world." When he reached the final summit, he called his mom. The entire journey took 6 months and 6 days.

On this Capricorn full moon day I thought this brief synopsis of this incredible feat provides an apt symbol the path and the qualities needed to seek the way.