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In sum, this volume of *Lungta* gathers together five excellent studies by accomplished historians of Tibet into an attractively-produced collection supported by excellent photographic reproductions. Translated from Tibetan, *Lungta* (*rlung rta*) means 'wind horse', which describes the prayer flags seen fluttering outside many Tibetan Buddhist homes and buildings. Perhaps future volumes will capitalise on the name and learn to travel, somewhat like prayers, a little faster around the world into bookshops in the West.

Mark Turin
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Touching My Father's Soul: A Sherpa's Journey to the Top of Everest.

By Jamling Tenzing Norgay with Broughton Coburn. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001. 336 pages.

Yes, this is a climbing book but it is much more than that.

Let us, however, start with the climbing, Jamling Tenzing Norgay is the son of Tenzing Norgay, who in 1953 with Sir Edmund Hillary was one of the first two people to set foot on the summit of Mt. Everest, the world's highest mountain. When Jamling, who had not previously climbed a high mountain, reached the same summit in 1996, he was very much aware that he was climbing in his father's footsteps. Tenzing was on his mind throughout, and the book, with its constant flashbacks, is as much an account of the first ascent as it is of his own.

But these two are not the only climbing stories that Jamling has to tell. His expedition, which was organized by David Breashears with the goal of hauling a huge IMAX camera to the summit in order to make an Everest film that could be shown on a giant screen, happened to be on the mountain at the time of one of Everest's most publicized disasters. Most people will remember the harrowing story of members of two large commercial expeditions fighting their way down from the summit late in the day in a vicious storm, and how eight (counting three on the other side of the mountain) never made it back to camp. Jamling offers some first-hand impressions of these climbers and their leaders and provides a dramatic account of the unfolding disaster as participants called in on the radio to the Breashears group at Advanced Base Camp. The Breashears climbers were too far down the mountain to provide immediate aid, but they did what rescue work they could, including helping in the evacuation and helicopter rescue of Makalu Gau and Beck Weathers, a climber who had been given up for dead but miraculously rose from this snowy grave to fight his way to camp.

But, as promised, there is more to this book than climbing stories. There is Sherpa history, family history, and climbing history. Jamling teaches us something about the Buddhism of his people and throws light on a personal story in which an overpowering desire to climb had to be balanced against loyalty to wife and family.

We have already mentioned the importance to Jamling of his father. As might be supposed from the title *Touching My Father's Soul*, this is central to the book. Jamling was born after Tenzing climbed Mt. Everest. He grew up with a father who was a world celebrity and who spent more time travelling than at home. He describes him as "old-fashioned—he was strict and disciplined" and somewhat distant. Jamling had been eager to climb Everest from an early age but Tenzing discouraged him. "I climbed Everest so you wouldn't have to," he told him sternly when he sought permission to join an Everest group. But ten years after his father's death in 1986, Jamling was given an opportunity to prove himself worthy of his father's memory. Even then, he realized that, as promised, "he didn't have to climb Mt. Everest." When he reached the summit, he seemed to hear Tenzing's voice: "you didn't have to climb this mountain in order to speak with me and be with me." At that point, he thought he understood. "Perhaps I didn't really need to come so far to be near him and to understand him. But I had to make the trip in order to learn that his blessing was there all along."

As well as a personal story of a son's relationship with his father this book is remarkable in giving an almost unique Sherpa view of an activity that we have come to look at primarily from the point of view of Western sportsmen. As Jamling points out, only two out of the many books on Everest have been written by Sherpas: his own and his father's (*Tiger of the Snows*). Since many more Sherpas have been involved on Everest climbs than people from other nations and ethnic groups, theirs is a view that warrants attention.

Whatever reason others may have for tackling the world's highest mountain, Sherpas, for the most part, are there for the money. In today's world most Sherpas depend on trekkers and climbers for the means to feed their families. They do not mind if foreigners get the glory and credit for successful ascents. "Their principal desire is to provide for their families and bring improvements to their villages," says Jamling. That does not stop them from the kind of hard work and selfless loyalty to their climbing teams that have impressed foreign climbers through the many decades they have climbed with them.

The Sherpa view of their mountains is also different from most. Other climbers talk of conquering the mountain or, if they are of a less military-minded bent, of meeting its challenges. To the Buddhist Sherpas, the mountain is a living thing that rewards or denies a climber's ambition according to what is in the climber's heart. Myolangsangma, the protective goddess of Mt. Everest, plays as important a role in this book as any other figure. Jamling's own Sherpa belief is that disaster or success on the mountain depends on her favor and that her appearance in dreams, or in such a human form as Tenzing's first wife, is what gives the necessary encouragement for achievement. Before undertaking the 1996 climb, he sought favorable divinations from three holy men and seems to have been ready, although reluctant, to drop out of the enterprise if these had been unfavorable. In fact, they were not unequivocally favorable, but, as Jamling presents them to us, they were remarkably accurate. He was able to use the last one (which was unmistakably favorable) to persuade his Sherpa team to return to the mountain after the disaster.

Jamling's Buddhism is not simply a matter of ritual. His respect for the mountain as an almost living being is in contrast to the usual Western boasting celebration of the self's achievement in overcoming impersonal hostile forces. He is obviously proud of his achievement but makes it clear that climbing Mt. Everest for him was more pilgrimage than conquest. Standing on the summit, he admits that the mountain had "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, Myolangsangma," and that, as he stood there, he felt her embracing both his father and himself.

Jamling describes the climbing problems in some detail. In fact, I know of no other Everest book that presents as clear a picture of the mountains' challenges, at least from the South Col to the summit. It might have helped if the publisher had included a diagram of this part of the route that could identify such features as the Ice Bulge, the Triangular Face, and the Balcony.

Beyond his own climb and that of his father, Jamling has one more story to tell, namely that of the world's tumultuous reception of the 1953 climbers after their successful first ascent. Although there had been political considerations in planning this climb (the British worried that this was to be their last chance to be first on the summit, and they hoped that they could announce their triumph at the same time as the coronation of Queen Elizabeth), no one had anticipated the political storm that greeted its success. Even before they had returned to Kathmandu, the climbers, who had assumed that their achievement was of limited interest, were confronted and overwhelmed by hosts of representatives of a world frenzied in its eagerness to welcome and congratulate them but also to make use of them in promoting their own varied interests. There was first of the question of who stepped onto the summit first, the Sherpa or the New Zealander—a meaningless issue to climbers but to Asians struggling for recognition in a Western-dominated world, one of prime symbolic importance. There was also the question of Tenzing's nationality. He had been born in Tibet of a family whose home was in Nepal but had moved to Darjeeling, India, at the age of 18. Was he Indian or Nepalese? (No one at that time seemed to claim him for Tibet, although that question has been raised recently.) Also, bitterness surfaced among Sherpas in Nepal that Tenzing had abandoned them and his ethnic roots in choosing to make his home in India. And finally, the press was eager to find dissension in the climbing party with evidence that the British had not treated Tenzing and the Sherpas with respect. The climbers were unprepared for all this but handled it as best they could. It is an important part of the story and Jamling tells it with restraint, yet it is in dramatic contrast to heroism and sacrifice of the struggles on the mountain.

Needless to say, Tenzing's life was dramatically changed. To many Hindus, he represented divinity and to the rest of the world, he was a celebrity in constant demand. This left very little room for a personal relationship with his family. Yet that relationship existed even if deep below the surface. After describing his father's funeral, which attracted thousands, and the following five-year period during which survivors are expected to dissolve their connection with the deceased, Jamling admits that he must have missed something. "My own personal attachment to my father lingered for another nine years—until I climbed Everest," he says. "I feel that I released him on the summit."

Jamling was fortunate in having the help of Broughton Coburn in writing this book. Coburn is not only an excellent writer but has spent many years in Nepal, knows its culture, and is deeply sympathetic to its people, as he has shown in his earlier books, *Nepali Aama*, *Aama in America*, and *Everest: Mountain Without Mercy* (which features the Breashears expedition and the 1996 tragedy). His writing skills undoubtedly helped Jamling in weaving together the various strands of this story so gracefully and presenting it so compellingly that readers like Galen Rowell have admitted they could not put the book down.

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