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DOCTOR OF COMMUNICATION

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**A HIMALAYAN TREKKER'S JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY, SELF-
KNOWLEDGE AND CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH DIALOGUE TOWARDS
EMBODIED COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL
FRAMEWORK**

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11 August 2023

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A Himalayan Trekker's Journey of Self-Discovery, Self-Knowledge and Consciousness through Dialogue towards Embodied Communication within the Phenomenological Framework

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Acceptance Page:

This paper prepared by **RIZALYN B. VALE** with the title: **“A Himalayan Trekker’s Journey of Self-Discovery, Self-Knowledge and Consciousness through Dialogue towards Embodied Communication within the Phenomenological Framework** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Course.

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Biographical Sketch

The researcher is involved in the Development Sector, working as a Consultant with more than five years of work experience. She has worked with the United Nations, Asian Institute of Management, International, Local NGOs and other Private Sector organizations. A citizen of the Philippines, but lived and worked in Nigeria and the Republic of South Africa for many years.

Her points of interests include volunteering, trekking, conservation and photography.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the memory of my beloved Soledad and Ruben.

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Abstract

Self-discovery, self-knowledge and awareness, alertness and consciousness (in a state of Mindfulness) are keys to experiencing the fullness and exuberance of daily living, the very essence of human life and existence. It is through the quality (or non-quality) of human experiences of everyday living are derived or defined, or refined, our respective meanings and purposes in life. The Question of – what brings quality to daily life or our entire lives depends on the answers one provides which concerns fundamentally – how one experiences life on a day-to-day basis, which becomes weeks to months, then into years. The writer is curious as to how this may be explored, that is, to attaining that “quality of life” and “integrating that quality to everyday”, hence the importance of the topic of interest. Fortunately, the discovery of trekking the Himalayas presented itself, as though an answered prayer to pressing questions of the human heart and mind.

To problematize such a dilemma, the study sought answers to the following research questions.

- I. What are the trekking experiences that evolved my perspectives and interpretations of my lived worlds?
- II. How do such interpretations communicate its expressions that influence my narratives of self-knowledge and consciousness?
- III. Why is it important to me to recognize the dialogues of such expressions of the self to the self in relation to the interpretations of my lived experiences of trekking?

To cast order into such an ambitious inquiry, the research framework consisted of grounding theories such as Phenomenology as a tradition of communication etc. and thematic dimensions which specifically addresses the integration of the five human senses to the lived experiences of the researcher during trekking – which awakened the “intelligence for communication” within the being, thereby improving attention, focus and consciousness (in a state of mindfulness) resulting to meaningful experiences of the self-being and the realities of the outside perceived worlds.

The tradition of Qualitative Research was used in the study, particularly the Phenomenological research approach. It provided the techniques to derive or construct a shared meaning of the experiences in trekking, a richer and fuller understanding of the phenomenon of “communication” where it manifested “the whole” (i.e. understanding the meanings of the experiences as it happens through communication within and with others, including the commune with Nature etc). while consisting of consistent assumptions of human nature and society (Evelyn Jacob).

The results of the study provided answers to the research questions, as summarized below

1. The trekking experiences was the game changer - it challenged the body, mind and psychological tenacity – the rough terrain, extreme weather conditions and temperature, high altitudes and eminent dangers of landslides, avalanches and unstable edges of the trail hanging over a cliff etc. It awakened the five human senses and the being within (ie. that which who speaks and truly communicates). It makes the mind to re-examine life and death scenarios, what is truly important in life and the changes that are needed to make life meaningful, and even worthwhile, given that it is indeed short, and for that, it can be taken in any point in time (ie. anywhere, not necessarily in the mountains etc.)
2. The seeking for answers to the dilemma of “what is the quality of life?” impresses the need to understand, which existed in the possibility of communication. In other words, essences of the meaning of life and as to how to improve everyday experiencing in general, were communicated through thoughts, feelings and emotions of the being within – thus the perceptions. Little or no recognition is given to such a happening, a happening of communication, rather to misconstrued illusions by the unconscious mind that over romanticizes the influx of external misgivings of unnecessary information and entertainment of a dulled mind and muted being.
3. It cannot be overemphasized here in the study, the importance of self-knowledge, self-awareness and consciousness (a state of mindfulness) – as it is the key to self-resiliency in many aspects of human everyday life.

As a collective, the study is also relevant to Organizational Management level, where it improves the quality of leadership, comradery and communities of practice etc., hence raising the quality of organizational performance, profitability and human resources development. Applicable to the Public & Private Sector organizations, the Development Sector, the Academe etc.

The contribution of the above answers to the Communication field is that - attaining self-knowledge, enlightenment (ie. in the context of logical reasoning) and resiliency of human beings - where life could possibly be fully expressed and experienced into existence.

Into existence of the experience, manifest the materiality of the lived worlds which can only be experienced in the constituted world of communication. Hence, the study argues that existence can only be experienced through existing in communication – in one's experience. Thus, the study supports and dares to contribute to the affirmation of other existing literature that - Communication theory as a field, is that of coherence as it exists in all multidisciplinary fields, for without the dialogical-dialectical constitutive nature of communication, no one can know the existence of anything that exists.

Chapter I

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is widely known the Nepal is the home of eight of the top ten highest summits in the world. Nepal has also many various most beautiful landscapes that can only be accessed on foot, thus trekking in Nepal is known for its unique and adventurous experiences of Asia. Tourism is one of the biggest and fastest growing industry in the country, where more than one million of people are employed with a GDP contribution of 7.9%. The total population of Nepal is around 30 million people in the year 2021.

The study presents the culmination of stories gathered over years of trekking in Nepal. It is laid out amidst the struggle of the writer to understand the meaning of life, worthy of happiness and seek out the true orientation of human beings, particularly that of the writer. The search for answers has led to documenting and journaling the events that unfolded – where particular observation focused on the capabilities and abilities, including limitations of the physical body, mind and emotions of the writer, during trekking journeys in Nepal. The following insights, herewith, broadly provides the context of the study.

The Phenomenological Case of Intentionality

The research study directly focuses on the nuances of “Intentionality” borne within the narratives of the trekker that provides description and interpretation of the phenomenon of Communication through the study of the trekking experiences - that constitutes thru dialogue of the knowing of the Self. Within the confines of the phenomenological approach, the structured experiences of the trekker emerged into themes of adventures, communion with Nature and consciousness of presence. It is

in this subjective context, that the study seeks to explain my affinity for trekking the Himalayas. Thus, the purpose of the study signifies the necessity and significance of understanding truths about the self and of consciousness (in a state of wakefulness) as evident in the realities of existence.

In this research study, the literature review focuses on an integrated evaluation of the existing relevant literature on key theories, concepts, ideas and narratives are considered in this study. The evaluation as such seeks to engage with the possibilities to attain a certain fundamental level of understanding, meaning and interpretation within a subjective context of my trekking experiences is explored.

The study navigates through a complex web of intellectual debates, often agreeing yet almost always disputing the slightest hint of concurrence. It is one of the gaps that the study wishes to address, to put the puzzle pieces together, where inevitably seem to communicate many things, but actually point to the same “things”. The thread of thought of inquiry into the literature review is guided by the research questions of the study, such that the theories herewith discussed provide glimpses of the plausibility of the results of the study in itself.

The culmination of content as information and knowledge for this study, from the literature review can barely uncover the mysteries and secrets embedded in every theory, concept, pre dispositions or constructs of Philosophers, authors or writers of the past centuries or not even that of the recent past. Nevertheless, the study embarked on this journey with the intent to explore, engage, understand and satisfy my curious mind of the very basic principles of that which constitute a thought of or reason of “what it means to be human”.

The writer argues from a phenomenological standpoint that “being human” constitute physical and metaphysical dimensions that are in continuous dialogue within

oneself to attain self-actualization. This dialogue occurs according to the fundamental tenets of human nature, where it seeks to survive, thrive, satisfy and sustain its well-being. Thus, this study pursues this argument with the integration of the ontology of the being and the epistemology of the human being.

The affinity of human nature for self-actualization possess a certain rigor depending on its attention to existing knowledge of self and intensity to “knowing more” of itself. This intensity coupled with knowledge, bear a certain degree of “Intentionality” in every human being. The writer argues that without attention towards a basic ‘knowledge of self’, there can be no authentic intentionality. Such an intentionality which is void of basic self-knowledge cannot possess any reason or rationality to seek more of what is unknown to itself, hence the challenges of human beings to attain its self-actualization.

The purposeful seeking to know that which is unknown, resides within the core space of oneself where “feelings” emerge evolve and find expressions through thoughts, emotions, semantics, and subsequent actions for example, towards arts & music, culture, travel, career, family etc. It is the subjective feelings grounded in a basic self-knowledge which permits that happening of “communication to oneself”, thereby granting a deeper perception and interpretation of the physical and metaphysical experiences of oneself, hence self-knowledge.

The recognition of the interplay feelings-thoughts-attention within oneself increases the possibilities to understand better the existing implicit knowledge of self, hence a refinement of expressions and re-direction of its relative intentionality can begin to happen. Such expressions manifest into actions, but can also remain to exist passively or passionately within the confines of the human mind. The ability to retain such “knowledge”, to imagine possibilities, or reflect on such expressions thereby the

synthesize and communicate the interpretations to self and others is unique to human beings (Vasudev, Jaggi. Harvard Medical & Neuroscience Conference 2016).

Consciousness in a state of Mindfulness, Alertness and Heightened Attention

The communication occurs in the mind in a state of “mindfulness” and or with a higher - order of attention of the self or that “consciousness”, through a series of complex exchanges of embodied expressions, memories, possibilities of future outcomes, amidst the crossroads of existing norms and pre-conditioning of society and that of natural environment seeking that which is of utmost benefit, towards its survival and self-actualization. If such an ability to communicate, is observable among human beings, and that such happenings can be “experienced” priori, depending on the “thoughts” or reasons of nestled within the “mind” of the being, the writer recognizes the need to consider a further study under the nuances of phenomenology as a communication tradition, which that integrates such “structured experiences” of the thought or reason to higher-orders of consciousness. It is in doing so, that the possibility of self-knowledge and its consciousness can further be explored.

Further to that, the study of structured non-physical experiences can explore areas of self-healing and deeper sense of self-realization. A key point is that the re-conditioning out of society's norms where one can assess of existing biases, prejudices, stereotypes, ideas, concepts etc. that can affect and influences one's judgements towards self and others. It is important to emphasize here that a re-conditioning of the present-self is to mean that, one's conditioning should be within its grasps, one is free to enact its envisioned meaning or purpose, and not driven wholly by society's dictates, where human beings become that of “standing in reserve”. The liberty to entrust one's fate to itself as envisioned by itself, is the utmost freedom that

leads to self-actualization, which is a state of reaching and sustaining its fullest potential of being human.

In this study, the focus is fundamentally on the phenomenology of my trekking experiences in Nepal, which has led the writer to question ontology of the self, where the self bears full ownership of the entire making of such experiences. Over time, the rising of existential presence of that which communicates the rationally, logically, emerges and begins to reflect on questions of reasons for the meanings and interpretations to self, to experiencing such physically challenging activities of trekking. These challenges, most of which can be subjectively categorized as life changing experiences (for example, from frost bites, to hypothermia, to acute edema, or falling over a cliff a few meters deep covered in snow etc.) brought about a deeper connection between my physiological body thru my senses of hearing, smelling, touch, taste to my psychological states of mind that raised my level awareness of possibilities of excitement, accomplishment, joy, bliss or danger, even an awareness of death. It is apparent to the writer that the more we “act” based on the enhanced self- knowledge, one experiences a higher quality of “feelings”, one becomes more connected to the self. It is the aspiration of the writer to raise higher the attention to knowing the self, eventually actualization the experience of the pure consciousness.

Undoubtedly, this study cannot deny of that possibility, falling prey to disorientation of interpretations of related literature of phenomenology. With this observation and experience that the synthesis of insights tread with caution to distinctly appreciate phenomenology philosophy separate to it as being a methodology. The study suspects that existing related literature had been influenced of several factors such as the era or period when it was written, as well as the prevailing attitude to the interpretation of Phenomenology or authors seeking to create

a niche out of that which was originally postulated, for example by Edmond Husserl, considered as the father of Phenomenology.

One additional observation by the study as to the confusion is that many among the crowd of authors or thought leaders in the field of Phenomenology are yet to recognize or accept the fundamental thrust of Phenomenology is based on the “state of consciousness” that permits that knowing into a meaning of the phenomena of humans as “with beings” and those phenomena occurring in relation to the appearing of that phenomena of human beings. Several literatures revealed that “consciousness” continue to be referred and explored in the areas of human physiology and neurosciences. Indeed, there has been bouts of technological advancements in these areas of research into understanding the nature and properties of consciousness, however, surfaces more and more questions that leads to more mysteries and confusion.

The study argues that such gaps can seemingly be narrowed with further in-depth considerations of Husserl’s work that spanned for decades exploring explanations as to what consists “consciousness”. This study claims that consciousness is unit of intensity of cognitive awareness and attention during a state of wakefulness. Furthermore, consciousness is the unit of intensity of intuitiveness in awareness and attention of that human being towards what keeps it alive through its breathing. The exchange of merits or demerits in each of these levels of intensity permits the human being to that knowing of what constitutes existence to itself, to the otherness, and to what is constituted as relatedness of its lived world(s). For example, at wakefulness, the study argues that through the human five senses, the human body can understand hunger, fatigue, trauma of injury or encounters with danger of wild animals etc. The cognitive discriminating mind translates such encounters that

determines the human being responses, thereby constituting memories of knowledge essential to its survival. Similarly, children develop survival instincts depending on their environment, race, culture etc. A child who grew up in the desert or forests or cities or villages, will bear various and different capabilities and adaptability instincts to ensure its survival. Essentially, the exchanges of merits or demerits at the level of wakefulness determine human survival, this is a phenomenon of Communication in Wakefulness.

Furthermore, the study argues that human being(s) intrinsically possess “a superior sensing”, not that of the physical body, but that which thrives beyond survival instincts, seeking explorations beyond itself and that of the otherness within the meaning making exchanges of the merits and demerits of its subjective lived worlds. A superior sensing occurs in a state of higher intensity of attention towards such and such existence of human body and that of the human being, neither requiring a distinction from the other rather a mere recognition of that this is “there” and “this” is here. In the absence of this struggle to disconnect, can that exploration of superior sensing can begin to emerge in freedom, to an appearing of existence of realities that expands beyond a “pre-conditioned subjectivity” of lived worlds of human beings. The study claims that the exploration of superior sensing is the phenomenon of Communication at higher levels of attention, hence a higher level of consciousness which the possibilities to attain the ultimate experience of self- actualization.

The phenomena of a “human being” as it appears to that human being appears in “wakefulness and higher levels of attention and awareness, thus higher intensity of consciousness, the observer see the observed. The “Observed” appears to the observer as a phenomena that constitutes a subsequent phenomenon of “dialogue” where the observed and observer becomes aware and evokes attention to the exchanges of experiencing the other to the other, appearing and occurring, occurring

and appearing in subtle to intense to subtle responses of descriptions, interpretations and understanding or confusions of itself to the other, extending to an awareness of boundaries and limitlessness of its existing subjective worlds. Thus, human beings as a phenomenon of appearing can authentically occur to itself in the presence of the phenomena of communication.

The arguments presented by the study thus far are fragments of a total whole, encumbered in the burden of making sense out of what appears to be truths in the work of Edmund Husserl, who during his time of, had been stalled in one way or another, situated as falling prey of circumstances and persecutions against his quest to describe the phenomenon of the human being and its capabilities to communicate to itself and the otherness. In this his thoughts expressed in his writings were vivid to suggestions of that human being, as and when assuming a state of higher consciousness of itself is capable of experiencing an “intentionality” towards self-realization, thus self-actualization. The “acts of intentionality” are deemed possible as such when the human being engages in a discourse of descriptions and interpretations of thoughts, ideas, logic or reasoning that permits experiences which satiates certain curiosities of that embodied consciousness. Given such arguments, the study foresees opportunities for further research for understand the extent such “acts of intentionality” of human beings had been supported or prevented to attaining self-actualization, and the relatedness of what “self-actualization” means for the various socio-economic sectors of society. In others words, who determines “self-actualization”? Is it the human being or the collective otherness?

This study is void of moralistic nor ideologies that lean to an appearing of a “good” or “bad”, mostly accounted by the dictates of a society into familiarity, or certain cultural traditions or religions, the study situates itself fundamentally towards

questioning of “what is life?” to mean, to the human being phenomenon. Its interests lie in describing that which appear as discoveries and findings of this study from the literature reviews. It is the intent of the study to provide plausible meanings, primarily to engage mindsets to question “what is intentionality?” meaning to oneself? Why is that structure existing and to what ends? That methodology, of phenomenology, the suspensions of seemingly agreeable connotations as to 1) why is intentionality to phenomenology? And 2) what “structures” bear dominance in human beings perpetual thinking in subjectivity, requiring that “great inquiry”, creating the “great doubt” to points of high skepticism or stark clarity, is undeniably an argument this study purports.

The classical approaches to phenomenology form the basis of the characterization these arguments but as for the latter, is beyond the scope of the research questions of this study. Therefore, a compliance to that methodology of Epoche, the bracketing or delaying of conclusions or suspending judgements over meanings of subjective experiences until utmost clarity is achieved. The clarity sought is that of an understanding liberated from one’s own biases or from a pre-conditioned collective bias generated over time of society or civilizations. Here the study considers modernism and post-modernism as a realm of context and influx of relationships or the intersubjectivities constituted among those experiencing the experiences. It is naïve to continuously erode the thoughts of opportunities in this direction that can improve self-knowledge, thus self-actualization. Attaining a certain clarity of intervening issues, influences and factors including that of time or era, sets an ambiance to the authenticity of interpretations of lived experiences that determine perceptions and hence the quality of being human. This brings attention to the capabilities of human beings to accumulate memories and constitute through imaginations, the nature of their future. The phenomenon of human activities

perpetuates on the basis such memories and imaginations which determine the ever-evolving spectrum of possibilities of subjective and intersubjective perceptions – largely depending on communication.

The study claims that the world of lived experiences exists in a vacuum that unless a movement is perceived or a vibration in forms of thoughts, emotions or words, music etc. are detected in perception of human beings, all else ceases to exist or evolve in itself. Thus, communication is that which embodies the movements etc. of which are experienced, where descriptions of that emerge that perpetuate the perceptions – in turn determines characteristics and relationships of discourses in the phenomenon of human activities. In other words, such discourses as a “dynamic movement” or interactions, determine the characteristics of those choosing to interact, and or those impacted of no identities or powerless in the schemes of human activities.

Embodied Communication as Expressions of the Being, Lived Experiences

It is important to point out that feelings are associated with the physical senses, that is directly linked to ensuring the survival of the physiological aspect the human being. Feelings does not necessary carry any emotion, but can serve as a stimulus to signal deeper sensing to higher levels of experiences that engages the higher levels of attention, energy and life breathe. Consider that with emotion, for example, one experience a memory of trauma that happened 10 years ago in the moment of that thought – including all the emotions of the past. This is power of emotion, one can transverse across time – past, present and future (privy only to human being, not animals – but in the near future accessible to AI). Whereas, a feeling of hunger in the past, may only be experienced in association only through memory and associating that to the similar feeling of hunger in the present – no emotion is experienced here

except one engages in a memory can stimulates such and such an emotion, for example, an emotion of abandonment, hence one was hungry.

In other words, feeling and emotion key language entities of the human being to itself – not necessary verbal or grammatical in language, that by this combination of thought and emotion, it regulates the human body and human psychological states of well-being. It is the aspiration this study to bring more attention to this topic, hence the self-knowledge and self-knowing discourse.

Emphasis on Individual and Organizational Agency on Trekking Expeditions

During trekking journey or expeditions, at an individual level developing resiliency is key to survival, exuberantly experiencing and achieving goals of completing the journeys. Given the scope and scale of trekking, it is important to identify and work with credible trekking service providers that ensures safety, credible routes and trails, and professional guidance into trekking. From observation and experiences with working with such groups, they in themselves have embodied resiliency to the core.

There is little or no literature written on the above topic(s) on individual agency in trekking and mountaineering expeditions. Studies that are not done on the topic (which warrants undertaking a study like this).

The application of the literature review to the study created platforms based on which the arguments of the study can be analyzed and be grounded within the boundaries of foundational philosophies that bear fundamental truths in contributing to constituting knowledge, particularly in the field of Communication.

The theoretical framework of the study explored the possibilities of describing, explaining and interpretation of the phenomenological lived experiences of the researcher through logical reasoning. It presented that opportunities of meanings to

exist within a human being, a thinking human being thereby expressing such meanings in new crated thoughts, feelings, emotions, thus behavior and temperament. In such expressions, the being within and observing the outward happening understands its existence, thus engages in dynamic cycle of knowing- the self and others.

Communication studies is a complex and complicated field; thus, the study recognizes the need and importance in grounding the findings in the above theories and concepts to ensure plausibility and authenticity of findings and outcomes. Thus, manifesting interpretation and understanding of the results of the research problem and questions.

Given the above review of literature on the research topic, this study explores to expand further, the understanding of self-knowledge, self-awareness and consciousness (as a state of wakefulness) based on the writer's subjective experiences based on the grounding theories as stated above and that of the writer's subjective experiences in the mountains. There is indeed few or limited studies on the research topic at hand. Hence, warranting this study, important and relevant to the contemporary and modernized society.

The arguments of the study emerge out of deep angst in struggling to understand the meaning of life, the order of that which makes existence occur and the insistence of human beings to relate to it. In search of answers, thus far, the responses have been varied from obscurity to benign claims of truths leading to “merry go rounds”, a chase into the rabbit hole, trapped in time, without any recourse of freedom. It is the reason for this study, it is a quest for understanding that which is called – Life.

The phenomenological approach of the study is the beginning to grasping the loose ends of the garment of truths of which the study seeks. It has paved the way of knowing the “Whole” by its parts, the parts – embedded in the experiences of the

researcher. The interpretation of the meanings of the experiences were described through the use of hermeneutics phenomenology, which in turn rendered that study a discovery of the “self”, as the “one who speaks”. The research questions were keys to unlocking the understanding of the self, where the meaning of life resides. Over the years, the in-depth inquiry of the self – became an intentional dialogue between the self and the other, and mirroring of the self through the other - where feelings, thoughts and emotions were means of communication, thereby discovering the basic tenets of self-knowing, self-actualization, hence its enlightenment. In the context of this study, enlightenment is defined as the means by which one logically reasons and rationally thinks for oneself based on the natural and universal laws of life and existence.

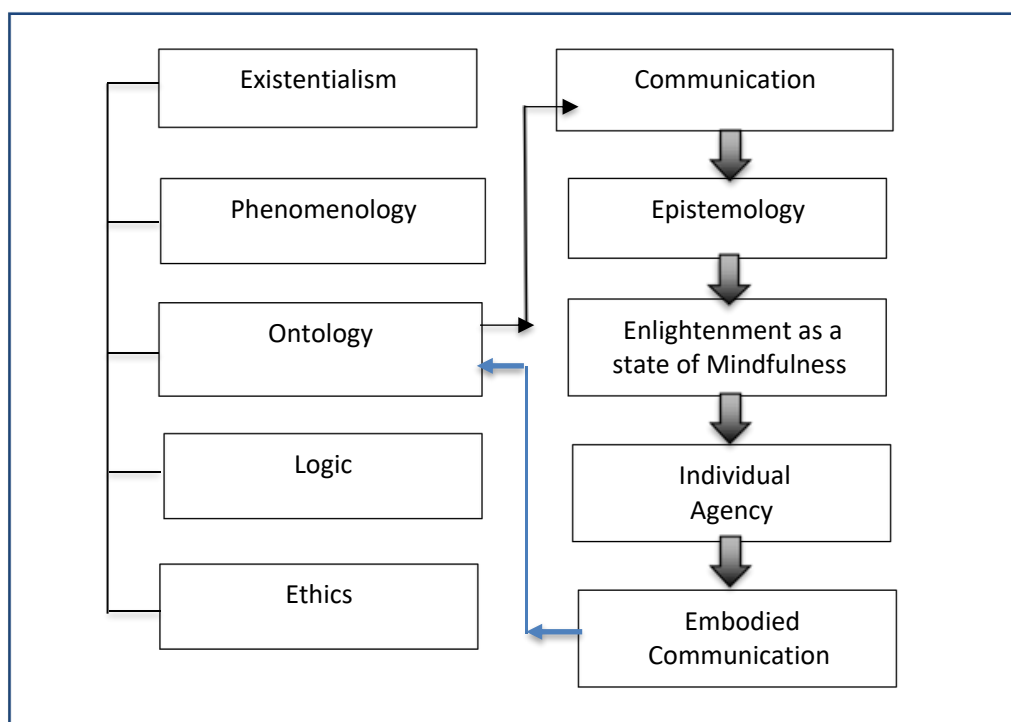
In review of literature argues that communication is indeed the key to self-discovery, hence the possibility enlightenment. The importance of this claim is appropriate and logically placed to attaining self-actualization, enlightenment and resiliency of human beings - where life could possibly be fully expressed and experienced into existence.

Into existence of the experience, manifest the materiality of the lived worlds which can only be experienced in the constituted world of communication. Hence, the in ~~study argues that existence can only be experienced through existing~~ communication that exists in the world. Thus, Communication theory as a field is that of the coherence as it exists in all multidisciplinary fields, for without the dialogical-dialectical constitutive nature of communication, no one can know the existence of anything that exists.

The Research Framework

The research framework forms the basis for authenticity, credibility and plausibility of the research study. It demonstrates the study's approach as that which establishes fundamental cornerstones that theoretically anchors the arguments of the study. Discussions are based on the following – Figure 1 below. with an emphasis on the resiliency of the individual agency.

Figure 1. *Theoretical Research Framework of the Study*



Source: Vale, Rizalyn

The theoretical research framework revisits the grounding theories on Ontology, the center of the discussions which occurs in the presence of the Existentialism, expressed in the Phenomenological frame of perspectives through the experiencing. The patterns of reasoning and behavior under the topics of logic, reason and ethics are discussed. The flow is directional to Individual agency where its effectiveness and efficiency and efficacy could be attained through Communication, Epistemology of the

self and Others in the lens of its intentionality and logical reasoning. As the cycle of human being evolving towards its fullest authenticity, Embodied Communication becomes the “thread” that links Individual agency to sustainability. Thus, the research study points towards understanding embodied communication of the human being. Further research is needed in this direction.

The Research Questions

- I. What are the trekking experiences that evolved my perspectives and interpretations of my lived worlds? (Phenomenology as a Philosophy & Methodology, Intentionality)
- II. How do such interpretations communicate its expressions that influence my narratives of self-knowledge and consciousness? (Ontology, Existentialism & Epistemology)
- III. Why is it important to me to recognize the dialogues of such expressions of the self to the self in relation to the interpretations of my lived experiences of trekking?

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this section of the literature review, the writer navigates through a series of key theories, concepts and insights of various related literature to confirm, support or pose arguments to their claims and thereby provide a synthesis of my insights that explicitly demonstrates the plausibility of this study.

Understanding Ontology as source of Communication

Ontology describes concepts on existence, the being, becoming and reality – and the means in which the appearing occurs and perceived. The word ontology (Greek word) translates to “being” or “that which is”. Of interest in this study is of Ontological dependence – which argues that an entity ontologically depends on another for example, broadly speaking that of the body and mind, hence the being.

Modality in ontology discourse concerns ideas of possibility, actuality and necessity – negating contemporary thinking towards “possible worlds”. There are complex possibilities existing in dynamic occurring within the being – of continuous thought and reasoning. It goes to say that it is not restricted or bounded to appear in physicality, hence the experiencing, rather a possibility of it prior to its physical manifesting. Such a modality of constituting an existence is resident in the being communicating – the existence of the priori of intended experiences. The restrictions of such possibilities meet at the point of dependence on the physical medium to appear. The countless possibilities of experiences, hence meanings of lifeworld run waste in a spectrum of oblivious cauldron of possibilities.

Understanding the Five Senses of the Human body is Self-knowledge of the Mind & Body, and Being

Sense(s) is a complex network which connects several biological sensory organs that enables human beings to interpret stimuli either internally or externally, thereby responding through actions and expressions.

Every sensory organ holds a certain threshold, that organs require a minimum magnitude of stimulation to detect a stimulus – this is referred to as absolute threshold. This is necessary to detect at least 50% of the stimuli in any given time.

Signal detection theory measures the experience of the individual depending on the strength of stimuli amidst noise. Noise comes either from the internal (ie. from the static of the nervous system) or external (ie. from the outside or environment). If the magnitude of the noise is higher, then it can interfere with the signal detection, which can distort the “message” that is relayed or received.

The sensory modality is the means by which information is interpreted or encoded which is referred to as - transduction. By this, an individual can differentiate the sensations (e.g., stimuli of touch) – in terms of characteristics, intensity and duration etc. Once encoded, experience can be interpreted, understood and represented, hence the necessary response or action or inaction, this happens through multimodality. It puts together the understanding into a unified perception. Perception as an experience happens through multimodal encoding - within the body, mind and emotional intellect, thus the being. There is empirical evidence that neural capacities affirm multimodal perceptions. Invariably, as a human being – with a little more attention to the above, one could observe the exchange of “information” happening within the body, mind and emotions, this influencing the very perception of one’s life worlds. Such exchange demonstrates – communication.

The philosophy of perception contributes to the characteristics of perceptual experience and perceptual data – particularly that of interpretation of such meanings in relations to existing belief systems or foundational knowledge and contemporary trends.

A Reflection on Communication Theory & Phenomenology

Communication Theory as a Field (CTF) & Constitutive Model of Communication. According to several scholarly definitions, Communication theory is a phenomenon (which require inquiry into), a study of relationships arising from such inquiries, creating of storylines that could explain the connections of such and such outcomes, and formulating logical arguments based on them that can evolved the theory. It has been noted in time past that communication theories undergo series of symbolic and social process – seen through a transmission and integration perspectives. Such process(es) has often been metamorphosized by those using them – given their respective interest and logic behind the intensions to communicate.

As we know it, communication theories developed from multiple historical and contextual backgrounds which include classical traditions such as the oratory and rhetoric, inspired by the Enlightenment era, an effort to connect the mind concepts to society, including to understand the existing propagandas of the time, between media and society (which till today persists). It is important to mention at this point that the linear and transactional models of communication continue to dominate on a broader sense, the definitions of communication concepts and processes. In that, there is a significant attempt and effort to re-define communication boundaries – such the interpretative empirical epistemology of communication, where its researcher is of a consequence to it, from a subjective insight approach. It is of interest to this study, so is the intensive scholarly work on “Communication theory as a Field” (CTF) of Robert

T. Craig. However, there has been little uptake or critical response (see Martinez, 2008; Russill, 2005; Myers, 2001) rendering the communication discourse to remain in a state of “productive fragmentation” (Craig, 2010), which limits its potential for a rich and substantial development that is “dialogical-dialectical coherent” to contributing to the pedagogical merits of CTF. The fundamental tenets of CTF are of two principles – the constitutive model of communication as a metamodel and theory as a meta- discursive practice.

According to Robert T. Craig to his paper - Reflection on “Communication theory as a Field”, 2010 require further considerations to advance discourse on CTF, that is to pave ways for a progressive debate and dialogue. Such considerations are 1) Cultivate theoretical cosmopolitanism, 2) Write a comparative application, 3) Write about a tradition of communication theory and 4) Write about the field from a different metatheoretical or cultural perspective.

In address of the above, the study has adopted a theoretical framework of foundational theories, which amplifies the multidisciplinary roots of CTF but with a skeptical willingness to know the connections and interrelatedness of each other. It holds no limits to the exposure to the differences of the socio-cultural and historical backgrounds of such a diverse and complex ideologies – which could abstractly, empirically and pragmatically interpret the plausible connections that seemingly are bridged with existing gaps and non-recognition of the presence in all fields of CTF.

A comparative application has been considered in this study where varying ideas and arguments on CTF persists, hence the use of phenomenology as methodology, where the study of lived experiences was used to cuts across the varying layers of interpretation of logic and reason, ethics, ontology, existentialism and epistemology within the occurring presence of the CTF. The core question lies in the

asking of “who is speaking or who is communicating?”. In such a trajectory, the comparative application become an integrating approach of all considered theories above, where a plausible tradition of communication could emerge – as a re-interpretation or evolution of hermeneutics phenomenology, to an inward viewing of the “one who speaks”. The study proposes consideration for an evolved tradition of CTF, coined as “Inner hermeneutics phenomenology”. Based on this, the study argues that on recognition of this possibility, of the “one who speaks” – a possibility which supports the understanding of the two principles of communication theory (Craig, 1999), which could explain the integrating and constitutive nature of communication in all multidisciplinary fields, thus the coherence of Communication as field embedded within all fields. This claim posits that when the one who speaks or communicating is recognized, then can one experience that which is communicated, that enables experiencing the existence of lived worlds. In other words, one’s existences can only be experienced in communication and the world existence as whole, is only experienced when one experiences what is communicated to the level of bodily consciousness, mindful alertness and emotional intelligence.

To put it simply, for example, when two people are in a discussion, they see and hear each other, hence, understand the messages relayed. This is only made possible because both of them can perceive themselves physiologically, mindfully and emotionally, thus their existence relative to each other. But when one closes their eyes and cover their ears, communication ceases (such as in arguments), so does the presence of the other. Another example to this, is when a person sleeps, the world disappears for this person, because all senses to perception is shut down, communication ceases, thus the world ceases to exist.

This brings the claim of the study that Communication theory is a Field, a coherent one as it stands in an appearance of which embraces all multidisciplinary fields, for none of which can exist without the presence of their constitutive and meta discursive nuances of communication.

Phenomenology as a tradition of Communication

Albeit, there is significant volume of literature that form the basis for arguments and debates on the approach to communication studies and the characterization of phenomenology as a tradition of communication. The works Dennis Mumby, Linda Putnam, James A. Anderson and Geoffrey Bayn et al, highlight contemporary state of affairs in the field of communication, where society predominantly had been curated under decades of influence of a collective intersubjectivities, that bears no known origin – thus the “subjectless” view to communication. In other words, that knowledge of which is communicated no longer bear uniqueness to an individual’s subjectivity, rather it encompasses into a collective oration of voices that represent numerous meanings directed to overlapping order of events constituting norms and cultures over eras of time. Thus, in meaning to mean that knowledge accumulated is that which is widely accepted, not necessarily with authenticity of experiences in subjectivity, rather such knowledge represents an understanding that permits possibilities of experiencing in objectivity of such and such objects.

According to phenomenologists including Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Carl Rogers, communication is theorized as dialogue or experiencing of the otherness, thus phenomenology as a tradition of communication. In other words, establishing dialogue offer the experiences of experiencing the otherness of the other.

On this basis, those in dialogue can experience the otherness in such ways where

understanding of meanings of certain commonalities or differences termed as “goals” are permitted in the context of authenticity and utmost tolerance. It goes further to assert that dialogical discourses occur where knowledge is hinged on that which was earlier established, thereby expounding or building upon that to influence “change” or effect improvement, hence the dialogue. Needless to say, dialogues or “authentic communication” to themselves are encouraged to the limits of their agreeing until such and such goals are attained.

However, human beings are complex in itself, that identities that interplay in dialogues often fail to retain the simplicity of agreeing to that merely attaining such goals. In practice, inherent to human beings is the goal seeking characteristic that maximizes benefits to itself, where knowledge empowers and navigates the direction of such seeking. Thus, dialogue as an experience of experiencing the otherness of the other depends on that “goal”, that determines that relationship or connectedness. But the quality and sustainability of that relationship, fundamentally depends on the authenticity of the inherent characteristic of the human being(s) in dialogue. Precisely, in this study, it argues that dialogue is deeply seated within the self, and that with self-knowledge there are better possibilities of authentic communication that is dialogical and dialectical in nature with the self and others.

Existing literature on phenomenology tradition of communication broadly retains the view that -experiencing the experiences through experiencing that of the other through dialogue is the focus of the tradition, rather than positioning a priority on dialogue with the self, in pursuit of improving and understanding the meaning of the state of the human being towards self-actualization. In failing to guarantee the exploration of the self through the dialogue with self, the interplay of recognizing or the application of the other traditions of communication poses a challenge of knowing the

integration to an authentic subjectivity that forms the overall intersubjectivities of the lived world in which we participate in, on an everyday basis and so on. Broadly, human beings anticipate that which are intimate yet, ruled by instinct to detect needing a larger scope of influence to and on others, which goes to prove that fundamental trait of the human being as belonging to family and polis (Craig, 1996).

Nevertheless, this study remains curious to the current attitude of phenomenologists in the 21st century as to shifts in paradigm if any, regarding the evolving characterizations of phenomenology as a communication tradition and that of its plausibility and justifications. Furthermore, given the existing literature on phenomenology as a tradition of communication, this study continues to seek to understand some of the insights and thoughts of phenomenologists in recent decades, contextualizing scenarios in which they had to contend for relevance, or at the very least, for the plausibility of their claims. Thus, the study claims that to understand the structures of experiences, and the experiences in themselves is to demand that subjectivity and intersubjectivities within which communication or dialogue occurs is approached contextually. It secures an improved description of the experiences which evolves into other experiences until it is widely known and accepted or rejected, constituting culture of various characterizations and relationships towards each other.

Emotions & Feelings and Thoughts as Communication Mechanisms of the Self

According to David Hume, a Scottish thinker, explains human action and behavior is largely motivated by emotions such as – fears, pleasures and passions. In some situations, emotional states were thought of to influence experiencing of the divine and seem to facilitate conditions for – enlightenment of the human mind and body. In this study, the claim is that enlightenment as state of knowing the self and the other through a deep sensing of the communication that happen within the boundaries

of the human body, mind and its life. The level of awareness of this phenomenon within oneself and the attention given by the self to the constituting intelligence of the being, enhances its capacity for consciousness. Thus, consciousness is but the attention given to the being occurring in dialogue with the self, thereby recognizing in a dynamic way its existence and its relation to the existence of the outside to itself life worlds.

The unique combination of the thought and reason to emotions and that of the life, which is experienced through the breath (the center point) – in a dynamic and continuous motions of attention to the center point is the realization of self-actualization. The study claims that communication is key to self-actualization, thus enlightenment. It is by and through communication that one knows – existence. Therefore, communication encompasses all that exist and exist in all, for how can one know except in engaging in dialogue with the self – experienced in thought, with emotion and the breath. It is communication that make exist that which is in existence. Thus, Communication as a field does not lack coherence, rather it is the lack of recognitions that it is in fact – in every field of every discipline of science etc.

The human being resides in the emotion – this is what moves one into motion, it is where the primal instincts, intense attention and energy of the being - resides.

From the book, Treatise of Human nature, Hume argued that reason is not the main motivator of action and will, but that of emotion. Reason is subjected by desires and lived experience of the self. Later thinkers added that actions and emotions are deeply engrained in social, political, historical and cultural aspects of reality – directly linked to sophisticated neurological and physiological advanced researches on the brain, body and mind.

Phenomenology and Embodied Communication

According to Ipke Wachsmuth et al, contributed towards advancing perspective to embodied communication – that communication needs to be understood beyond exchanges of series of messages or abstract signals, rather be recognized as ‘dynamic system of cross-modal attunement”, intrinsically dependent on embodiment, and evaluating the constraints such as cultural and political references of interlocutors, which in turn influence the way by which individuals interact and communicate with each other – be it verbally or non-verbally. The emphasis on non-verbal communication is crucial in unfolding the intimate connection to speech in social interaction.

The above presents the possibility of expressions emerging from the being intended for the self – in other words, communicating to oneself from embodied meanings and understanding of the being. For example, a person experiencing a chronic pain would have knowledge of the type, intensity and duration each time an attack happens – it becomes embodied, hence improve the ability to respond to it (ie. non-verbal communication has occurred). Similarly, when one loses a loved one, in grief, people often just cry or stay silent for long periods of time, embodying the sense of loss and pain. Some people may find expression by withdrawing from social interactions or become overly engaged in many activities to forget the loss.

Aspects of Existentialism as a Domain of Communication

From a philosophical view, existentialism is fundamentally a question of experiencing the thinking, feeling, emoting, hence behavior and actions of the being. In this, one can encounter the realization of one’s existence, in the actions, the experiences can a being be perceived until it begins to appear before itself and seeing the world from within.

In this appearing of the thought of the possibility of existing can something profound emerge – that “existence”

which exists with or without one’s recognizing it exist due to one’s inability to perceive its appearing – this is the absence of self, hence the self-knowing or perceiving.

Questions arise from a muddled thought of non-existence, for how can one know what exists when one cannot recognize its own existing? Hence, this study argues that the appearing of oneself to itself is crucial to one’s self-actualization, thus its enlightening of the being.

A key virtue of the existential discourse is that of authenticity. However, existing literatures remain outward looking – the meaning making paradigm is mentally outside of the being. The source of authenticity is the being, self-knowing origin of its existence and the states of its experiences in favor of the being and not the external world. The quest for meaning had been debated for decades without any definite clarity as it argues dialectically on the basis of what is outside the being. It is important to question the orientation of the existing discourse on the subject as it could very well be beyond the focus it had always been promoting.

Mind and Matter. The Philosophy of Mind.

The mind does not exist in terms of materiality – it is abstract and almost always a priori. The brain exist however the mind cannot be found beside it. Could it be one of the basis of Husserl’s debate on science failing itself to support the grounds (at the time) on which it is founded? From what is known today, the mind exists neurologically – electrical synapses within the brain and biological systems of the human body.

Descartes proposed that awareness or consciousness exists in the space of immateriality – in the thought realm. Many philosophers in the past had argued and claimed that experience is the very essence of consciousness, and that such and such

experiences can be understood from the “inside” – subjectively. Indeed, this claim resonates with the very tenets of this study.

Consciousness of the Mind and Emotions, Attention

It reiterates the definition of consciousness by Robert Fludd, an English Paracelsian physician where he claims that – Consciousness an awareness of the internal and external existence. For more than a millennium the topic on this has been debated, but remains to be a mystery due to the “immateriality” of its existence. It is frustrating in a sense, knowing that something exists but cannot truly be known due to the limited capabilities of sensing and in-depth “immaturity” of modern people.

Concerning “immaturity, where is its source? Is it from the being? Or is it a consequence of the thinking mind? Thus, what is the mind thinking? What is the source of thoughts that the thinker is thinking? If so, has the thinker become the thought, but should not the thinker order the thoughts? Hence, derive meanings from the thoughts which the thinker intentionally reasoned to think? Thus, one’s actions and experiencing profoundly the self, hence its knowing. Self-realization as a dynamic process of self-reflections through recognition, description and interpretation of lived experiences by and towards oneself.

In pursuit of knowing, connecting self-knowledge to wakefulness is self-awareness, but not appearing yet into “pure consciousness”. In different stages, clarity of understand manifest itself, to exist is to know existence. The key to knowing is - to communicate existence with the self – that is to self-realize that existence which is beyond just wakefulness and mindfulness.

Questions on Epistemology, Knowledge Constituted through Dialogue

According to John Locke in his “Essay Concerning Human Understanding” (1689), that epistemology is a study into and about knowledge – the origin, certainty and extent of human knowledge. In other words, who is constituting this “knowledge”? is there credibility in what is being said? and what is the meaning of that being said? Such questions suggest an orientation that someone communicates “something” to be interpreted under a certain context - to provide a meaning to be understood – where that something is “knowledge”.

Epistemology centers on knowledge, what is to be known, how does one know it, and does one know that one knows it? These are the fundamental questions on epistemology that ancient Greek philosophers dealt it in debates – that questions whether knowledge is constituted primarily from sensory experiences or largely as a result of reasoning. As argued by Immanuel Kant, “though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not necessary mean that all knowledge is from experience”.

The central concepts to epistemology are that of knowledge as – a familiarity, awareness or understanding of something, someone or some situation. Philosophers had made distinctions as to understand what knowledge is – “knowing that” (ie. facts or propositional knowledge, foundational truths), “knowing how” (procedural knowledge), and “knowing by acquaintance” (ie. by direct experience or perceiving). In this study, knowledge is constituted mainly by the latter, by direct experiences of trekking that resulted to – self knowing and deeper sense of understanding of the self in relation to other and the outside lived worlds.

The current debates on epistemology continues to shape the discourse on knowledge. However, the outlook leans towards “change” of fundamental question, (ie. what were debate from), to fit the contemporary trends (on the basis that the past

debates have become irrelevant to contemporary questions on epistemology), rather than questioning the methodology of what may have missed by earlier philosophers. This study argues that ancient questions on knowledge suffice till this day, it is the perception of those who asks that require finetuning.

Self-knowledge as an acknowledgement of the Innate Wisdom that can lead to Higher Levels of Consciousness. Edmund Gettier, in his book “Is Justified true belief knowledge? Where he argued that there are situations where a belief could be justified and true, yet fail to qualify as knowledge – essentially beliefs whose results are cannot be justified or without strong reason, not replicable or obtained by sheer luck.

The value problem of knowledge to a mere true belief on broader sense, lies in the property of what make knowledge – knowledge, and a belief – a belief. Knowledge is something recognizable, justifiable and that which can be acknowledge by the other.

It is somewhat having a “universal acceptance” as to the meanings it brings. In other words, knowledge is widely acceptable over long periods of time, until otherwise debunked. For example, it is knowledge that the earth was “flat” but later became widely accepted that the earth was “round” given technological advances. While belief is closely held by that who had interpreted and understood it from one’s own perspective, it originates from its being and held by its devotion. For example, religious beliefs can only so true to the perceptions and actual experiences of the believers themselves, within which becomes “knowledge” within the circles of those who hold such beliefs justifiable and true. In this study, it argues that the measures by which one judges what qualifies as knowledge or beliefs should be contextualize. For example, the scientific community define knowledge differently relative to the political or religious communities, what might be knowledge to one, may be just a true belief to

another. While on philosophical grounds, of which most debates largely are represented from the above communities, thus debates continue.

The sources of knowledge and justified belief commonly discussed are – perceptions, reason, memory or testimony. Epistemologists drew out a distinction between what is known (priori – independent of experience) and that which can only be known (posterior – through experience). Understanding “Consciousness” and its essences. Key to understanding and experiencing the “Knowledge of Reality”. The Revolution Now, of Self Understanding.

In order to clarify the distinction of consciousness, Philosophers have attempted to formulate these four main topics (1998) – knowledge in general, intentionality, introspection (including the knowledge it generates) and the phenomenal experiences. Such distinctions happen altogether within a human being at varying times and situations – that the very intelligence that integrates and make sense of it, hence the actions and behavior expressing the new knowledge gained.

The essences of consciousness are revealed depending on the levels of intentionality and the distinctions mentioned above that will be required of the being - to understand the necessary response or assimilation of the experiences that is experienced. At a deeper level of knowing (ie. beyond the mind), consciousness of perceptions, thoughts and feelings, emotions and attention – the being experience the knowledge of reality. There has been accounts throughout history that people have experienced such phenomenon. For example, on seeing a beautiful sunset, or listening to raindrops on a rooftop, or the aroma of freshly baked bread – they become suddenly aware of the reality of that moment, and as though it should not end – like eternity.

There are possibilities of revolution of the self, a dialogue between the heart and mind, – a full confession of what the being speaks. There have been testimonies of people suddenly realizing they need to make a change in their lives, for example – to pursue an education in college, to propose to their high school sweetheart, or to travel around the world. The human mind is complex and often complicated, but if only, that revolution happen within can the human mind find peace and turn completely silent. No thoughts anymore because - the being is revealed.

Communication as a Constitutive Intelligence, Making Knowledge

In this review, it has argued that enlightenment is a possibility, through communication – expressed simply by liberating oneself intentionally from the immaturity of not thinking or reasoning for one's own good. The knowledge created is the understanding of the self – bodily, mindfully, emotionally and the essences of its consciousness.

The interpretation of the experiences (closely observed without judgements) in itself, he gaining of understanding in itself, and resulting outcomes (either in expressions or in thoughts or emotions) in itself, occur in the phenomenon of communication. The understanding of what communication is – fragmented because its everywhere, its in every field of science, in every domain of social and political endeavors, it is elusive and mysterious because it is a dynamic constitutive intelligence that entirely resides in every human being. It cannot easily be known as it is only revealed in fragments – that comes together at beckoning of a human heart that seeks its own secrets.

Communication as constitutive intelligence making knowledge, communication as mechanism to relay “texts”, communication as methodology to discover “realities” and communication as the essence of existence (without which No-

Thing can be known, thus cannot be interpreted). Thus, Communication as a field becomes coherent, from whence all emerge and converge as the fundamental origin *Discourse of Representation (Positivist & Modernism)*

For more than a century ago, the initial thoughts on modernism began which is characterized in terms of the positivist idea based on the Cartesian dualism – where knowledge and truths in the social sciences are equated with the scientific method. Fundamentally, the discourse of representation is the radical (Cartesian) effort to distance the subject (researcher) and the object (of knowledge), and the development of research tools that permits and retains the bifurcation. In such a situation, communication expressed using language assumes a neutral mode, it becomes mechanical, merely to a representation of the subject or object and the observed relationships existing in that external lived worlds. It follows the rules of the three c's (Stewart, 1991): closure, certainty and control, clearly a direction in which modernism refers. Mumby posits that such an approach to communication in the context of positivist modernism avoids the possibilities of communication bearing any ontological substance at all. It reduces communication to a conduit or simply a mechanism to relay existing formed ideas, which utterly limits capabilities of individuals to perceive or interpret the world and the relationship to it. The characteristic assigned to communication here is at best an ancillary to and perhaps worst of, to the constituting of truth claims. Indeed, the discourse of representation is viewed in this light, but perhaps such an approach is applicable to necessary to dialogues entailing characteristics aforementioned. It can also mean that the misunderstanding or criticisms of such an approach is as a result of misuse or abuse of application in dialogues requiring a more in-depth dialectical approach.

In communication studies, the understanding of most organizations has shown that communication processes in this model had led to value neutrality or passiveness and that of a means to reinforce well established common knowledge. Similarly, Deetz's (1992) observation of the "politics of expression" historically in the communication field, has conducted dialogues that excludes problematizing of relationships among communication, identity and democratic processes, in that communication is used only as a conduit to relay messages. Considerations for a democratic process is reduced, where authentic subjectivities are silenced or criticized to contain non-substantial reasons to be heard, rather communication becomes a tool of persuasion of intersubjectivities and focused on communication effects allowing room for little or no adequate thought over communication ethics. As a result, communication is managed within the confines of the "three c's", where closure, certainty and control are manifested in the outcomes of communication such that information and knowledge is confined into that which is "sent" to be understood, thereby "closed" not permitting to be questioned, rather any progression is controlled to ensure the certainty of outcomes. In this context, the constitutive aspect of communication towards a mutual and democratic participation for a common outcome is void.

Furthermore, phenomenology as a communication tradition is rendered a characteristic where the experiencing of the experiences is experienced intersubjectively, thus the authenticity of communication belongs to no particular subject. Arguably, the discourse of representation can be looked at for its function and applicability towards certain social and political issues that gather reasons for dialogues. Such a model cannot be used randomly without considering the context for which it is applied. The effectiveness of this model of communication, grounded in the

representation discourse, depends largely on the relationship of communication itself to that organizational power which exercises control over the knowledge that is represented in dialogues.

Pfeffer (1981) argued that language and symbolism are necessary to the imposition of power. Most social actors in a certain level of power also rely on the use of political language and symbols that help to legitimize and earn support for actions and decisions that are reached through the use of power. However, it is also believed that such consideration marginally contributes to power, rather resource control and dependency are better instigators for certainty and ultimate closures to expectations of those in power. It depicts communication as a mechanical means to convey that which are pre-determined expectations of those whose subjectivities are reinforced. Again, by and large, it does not necessarily lack noble intentions but its applications in context require understanding that which it supposes to achieve. There is a distinct clarity on the ability of such social actors to display possession of organizational resources and communicate their intentions as to the use of such resources. Indeed, the discourse of representation is significantly used in the economic and political sectors of society.

In the above arguments, communication as a tradition of communication seem to suggest that it lacks that characteristic of authentic subjectivity. There is a clear separation of the subject and the object/world, a modernist bifurcation (Shepherd, 1993) that simply needs to be accepted. In such a causality, communication is determined as a “hand-maiden” of all other disciplines, that which ordinarily informs already established political relations or knowledge. It is not far from suggesting that communication does not possess any ontological substance, thus, failing to qualify of any quality of that which Husserl posits as “intentionality”, nor bearing any truth as to

its property of constituting experiences that are experienced in subjectivity. This study argues that the representation model is not to be interpreted as lacking in that direction, but that it can only satisfy certain communication outcomes that does not necessarily consider the above.

In addition, this misunderstanding over decades requires further clarification such that communication is limited to as a “relaying mechanism” of information as many often defined and referred to in various disciplines. Further research is required to build on this clarification to ensure that communication can be considered to possess properties that are constitutive, experiential and existential.

Discourse of Understanding (Modernism and Interpretivism)

In this context of interpretive modernism which can be seen as alternative to positivist modernism that maintains the separation of subject and object to attain and sustain information and knowledge, it places dialogue into perspective of dialectical possibility that can be productive and to some extent signify a reconciliation of merging the subjectivities on its objects. The origin hails from the German Idealism with the Kantian notion where it believes that the knowing mind contributes to the constitution of knowledge, and not necessarily confined to mirroring of society.

Interpretive modernism is based on “consensus theory of truth” which claims that the existence of communication society depends on it, as a priori condition within a context. It recognizes truths as emerging, not necessarily out of methodology or limited to processes that recycles information and knowledge, but out of individualities’ involvement and grounding in a system of beliefs (Gadamer, 1989), subjective experiences and an awareness of the otherness in its communities. Furthermore, truths are not merely out of reproducing knowledge but that which is produced out of

virtue in engaging into various communications exchanges that are dialogical and dialectical in context.

According to Gadamer, “truth eludes methodological man” (Palmer, 1969) for reasons that knowledge is a linguistic and dialogic production of individuals, thus, a hint of recognition of the ontological nuance, where privileging of epistemology and methodology limits. Several authors have argued that reason and truth does not reside in the representational mirroring of society as exists per era, rather found within every individual of linguistic capabilities who engage into dialogically discourses with the self and the otherness of others. In other words, the discourse of understanding stance is to open possibilities of exploring “to understand” what constitutes knowledge ontologically, while persistently integrating “what” is that already constituted and widely communicated. This study observes that the transitions of thoughts in history seeks to better improve the rhetorical narratives of political and social perceptions of majority, however, confronting the challenges of casing scenarios into its respective contexts did not gain enough attention, hence, the non-consensual recognition of communication as a field.

The invitation as read by Bernstein’s (1992) into Gadamer’s “entire corpus” signifies a direction into revisiting salient points which were neglected, to reclaim possibilities of rediscovering and redeeming of the richness and concreteness of subjectivities of human beings. As Mumby puts it, as communication scholars, such as invitation has permitted a meeting point for all who are willing to explore the discourse of “interpretive modernism” in order to expand understanding of various members of communities and society’s evolving through discourses and knowledge. It does not necessarily opt to seeking an entire and universal claim of truths, but simply to attempt to enhance capabilities of human beings to understand or misunderstand

productively, others, and in this study, particularly to understand oneself through dialogue.

The response of scholars (Shepherd, 1993) points out the importance of the discourse of understanding as the only position based on which can defining features for a discipline of communication can fully be thrive. It is a beginning, a starting point that links modernism, interpretivism to postmodernism, without losing the merits and virtues already established by the former. The existing arguments surrounding the field of communication, that of phenomenology in particular, hovers on pointing out the efficacy of recognizing the ontological aspects of communication of which in no doubt, disciples and advocates of contemporary communication pledge to achieve. However, this study argues that such and such claims over common knowledge placed on by society is all but essential, to enable massive numbers of people to be organized, thus sustain a reasonable co-existential and permissive cooperation among economies and nations.

The emergence of such ideologies had been dictated out of the need to manage, control and stabilize an enormous “intersubjectivities”, that without for example, the rule of law, chaos persists. In other instances, one may see that to vote for an independent and casual approach to “subjectivities” in certain contexts, will encourage unruliness or chaos within societies. This is to say that, contemporary narratives that promote independence and freedom on certain ideologies will not necessarily bring about the consequences as envisioned by those promoting them. As a result, this study observed that there are significant changes or evolving narratives that continually reform the thought of the previous of the other. Based on these traditions, there are opportunities for further research to understand the consequences of change and impact to future generations of human beings, economies and nations.

It is however important to state clear the emergence for a new foundation of human sciences and the methodology of such an understanding that envelops the ontological status of human beings capable of linguistics and dialogical communications with others, designates this conception of the science of communicative understanding (Apel, 1981). Ultimately, modernism defines knowledge with aspects of scientific forms of reason and groundings in linguistic mediated forms of being in the world (Mumby, 19xx).

Over the years, interpretive modernism has achieved a certain recognition in the communication field, where ethnography as a method of research is widely recognized. Ethnography focuses on the relationship of communication to identity and community. The acts of communication or dialogue is seen as an expression and medium to understanding and identity (Mumby). The fundamental assumption of this method is that, community and identities are constituted not by structure nor geographic location, but by means of linguistic or language through descriptions and interpretations of shared information and knowledge counted as truths and what is meaningful to them.

Ethically, the discourse of understanding as a dialogical model of communication assumes an attitude of goodwill and willingness to listen and permit one's prejudices to be set aside in order to understand the content of that conversation, thus, a sense of freedom to socially construct authentic understanding and community (Gadamer, 1989).

Additionally, the discourse of interpretivism has been criticized to lack consideration for possibilities of "genuine conversation" occurring in a political context, thus, possessing not of any politics in itself (Deetz, 1992). In that, the model has failed to sufficiently expand its considerations that dialogues can be characterized as

“systematically distorted” in the context of institutional or organizational power and domination (Habermas, 1970). Progressing an analysis in this direction happens by examining the twists and turns within the modernism domain.

Discourse of Suspicion (The Critical Modernist Project)

The discourse of suspicion fundamentally questions the negligence of interpretivism and discourse of understanding to explore relationships of communication to power, ideology and domination, hence knowledge, identity and community where certain outcomes are favored than others. Thus, the assumption that facades of superficial meanings and behaviors of those in dialogue exist, to suppress deeper structural conflicts of interests, contradictions and systemic approaches that limits authentic process of democracy (Mumby).

The manifestation of this assumption evolved into two approaches both rooted in neo-Marxism and the latter with a perspective from the Frankfurt school. The first approach focuses on questioning the dominating economic aspects of capitalism, where it argues a divergence of attention to the superstructural, cultural behaviors and institutional levers of power. The second approach is concerned more on assessing the systems of logic, reasoning and acceptability of relationships among knowledge, politics and capitalism. It progresses the thought on what conditions perpetuate a “social progress” that exudes the “fallen nature of modern man” instead of emancipation and liberation from such sufferings. The conditions that permit a particular mode of rationality evident in the modernism project, has pervaded the logic to question realities of the assumption of suspicion in communities of communication, particularly those in dialogue with economic and political power to dominate.

The pervading arguments at the time of the Enlightenment project, were that of questions as to the unique approach the modernist project to rationality, emancipation

and identity. It has been interpreted by many of those in various fields of discipline to be twisted and distorted, to assert control, mastery and domination (Adorno, 1973). For indeed, in the view of the positivists it is what is necessary to emancipate the masses from human suffering, at the very least from an economic suffering. However, it has become evident that, that which has been commonly accepted has resulted to unintended consequences such as overly depending on the systems based on modernism project. This study argues that such a dependence has constituted ideologies that perpetuate a separation of the human being from the being, lacking critical self-reflection, rather an unconscious preference towards a pre-conditioned “thinking”, in pursuance of an economic game, which has led masses into excessive consumerism, over consumption, obesity, mental depression and poverty. While capitalism and technology bear immense merits for humanity, yet there is an assumption of a direct omission of “Enlightenment” project to secure the three “C’s”, closure, certainty and control. Beyond this, Adorno posits that the modernism can be re-constituted to include critical reflection on the characteristic of reason by which it is contextualized, thereby not rejection the merits of modernism, rather complementing into social freedom and that which considers the Enlightenment thought.

The work of Jurgen Habermas further elaborated on these claims that modernity holds an emancipatory potential, arguing that social theory can be reconstructed based on a linguistic approach that leads to communicative understanding, where communicative actions is that of rationality that serves society.

In other words, rationality is of dialogical or dialectical communicative happenings where ethical and political consequences occur in multidimensional intersubjectivities, of which when in freedom or emancipation context, communication and that of knowledge constituted in the absence of bias or constraints, depends solely on the

abilities of communication actors to engage in dialogue. The overbearing tone of such claims insists on the retention of the dominance that of modernism entails to promote its significance to addressing alleviation of suffering of society, that in itself appears logical and of rationality when applied in governing the masses.

Furthermore, Habermas' articulation of the modernism project bearing emancipatory potential and rationality emphasized that communication is experienced as a principal constitutive element of understanding and truths, of which can be enabling mechanism for power, control and domination in the society. Thus, communication that occurs in dialogue constitutes, expands and transforms knowledge depending on variables such as the subjectivities and intersubjectivities of those involved, platforms and conditions that supports or provoke dialogues and the era or period of that situational context. In practice of this model, the technical rationality (Zweckrational) that features the characteristics of systems (or commonly accepted norms in society by modernism) are considered by Habermas with practical rationality that focuses on reaching a common understanding or compromise and emancipation rationality where it promotes self-reflection, self-knowledge and rejection of any form of bias or oppression (Mumby). It can be said of Habermas as a modernist, that he was able to a) replace the sovereign subject (society in dialogue) that is seen within the intersubjective domains of rationality, b) introduced the idea of dialectical consensus instead of mere correspondence or representations – based on an interpretation of communicative rationality and intersubjective understanding, c) communication as constitutive of human experiences in dialogue and thus, social reality, and lastly d) posits that the theory of communication is also that of theory of society. (Mumby).

Discourse of Vulnerability (Postmodernism and Communication)

According to Mumby, the phrase discourse of vulnerability is his way of describing postmodernism thought which asserts claim towards considerations for departure from the “authority game” that the “crisis of representation” insists to retain (Jameson, 1984). This model is positioned to interpret notions of certain phenomenon which are new, emergent and context-bound of which could count as knowledge (Deetz, 1996), rather than based solely on elitist assumptions and intersubjectivities of society. It is further taken to characterize a provisional and risky attitude than the habitual, or to innovation and experimental approach than to authoritatively subdued into status quos (Said, 1994).

The postmodern thought on subjectivity is that of a construction, constituting of and characterization of varied discursive practices and knowledge structures (Mumby). It challenges the constructs of modernism’s claim to sovereignty, a knowing subject, considered as a “well-spring of knowledge”, that is retaining autonomy and coherence of commonly accepted subjectivity of intersubjectivities.

As argued earlier, modernism or postmodernism serves its own purpose, that in context can such of their efficacy serve the ensembled truths be realized for the benefits of those participation in dialogues. Unless such conditions are perpetuated, mis-understandings among communication actors can prevail, a misinterpretation of dialogical and dialectical conversations plunges into states of vulnerability. That even the idea of Habermas on “consensus” in dialogues cannot fully attain a status of coercion-free contexts, for intrinsically it is of the modernist project, which is perceived generally as that of totalitarian and totalizing ways of thinking (Lyotard, 1984).

The discourse of vulnerability is a consideration to seek a position of doubt, where inquiry of subjectivity occurs, an in-depth search for authentic ownership of that

subjectivity existing in dialogue, which can be borrowed of and from other subjectivities contained in several discourses. It is complex array of definitive identities, of which the search and analysis of where one subjectivity to another emerges, or that such occurring happens in communication, where it is constituted to one intersubjectivity. This model questions such mergers, as to the process of its beginning and ending, or as to expanding of such thoughts until it thrives as commonly accepted norms, yet belonging to the sovereignty of subjectivity. The suppression of the postmodernism epoch in such a direction, where communicators fail to visualize and realize their identities required to emancipate their expressions, often had led to handing over truths and power to others (Mumby).

Postmodernism can be viewed with utter embrace or rejection depending on the subject's choosing or essentially that which is necessary to self-actualize an individual or a collective understanding to the maximization of benefits that depends on the commonly adhered intersubjectivities. According to Mumby, postmodern thought is seen as monolithic enterprise, either affirmative or skeptical (Rosenau, 1992), or resistance versus ludic postmodernism (Hennessy, 1993), which is not the case at all. The former posits coherent and viable political, epistemological agenda possibilities are retained, while latter has a more nihilistic and pessimistic orientation that resists dominant power relations, to both, this study see merits depending on the contextual situation to which it ought to apply. Further to his concerns, Mumby questions the compatibility or not to communication studies are constituting truths if the speaking subject is no longer coherent or based on unstable signifiers. In other words, Mumby claims that truths are compromised if discourse constitutes out of institutionalized power-knowledge regimes, not unless understood in context, hence, his argues for the necessary consideration for postmodern communication conditions

– communication is (im) possible, communication is political and communication is subject-less in the discourse of vulnerability.

Phenomenology as a Philosophy and Methodology of Inquiry

The approach to defining what Phenomenology as a Philosophy in this study, stance from a deep sense of curiosity in favor of “awe and wonder” as to the revealing of knowledge, realities and existence of “lived worlds” sought out by those that question it. What is a phenomenology? What are its basic tenets on which it appears to present itself as a philosophy and or as a methodology? This study claims that phenomenology is a concept that aspires to evolve “mind sets” that bear various levels of capabilities of “knowing” thus, awareness of the appearances on to that which apprehends the appearances, beset on the premise of its lived worlds that describes its relationships to it. If this such a claim is plausible, then such an understanding arrives to an agreement of “actions to knowing it”, a starting point where possibilities to grasp the immense potentiality of its methodology can begin to happen.

Historically, phenomenology is seen as a science to understand the intricacies of what the “human being” as a phenomenon is and that of consisting an existence that exists in its existence. This study argues that phenomenology orchestrates an intellectual engagement of interpretations and meaning making of an existence of the human being, to that human being through its actions of knowing exercised as experiences at wakefulness or of higher attention to knowing.

Ultimately, the phenomenon is the “human being” to which the study claims that such a phenomenon can be observed by itself, where that human being capable to recognize, witness, describe and interpret itself, as it occurs to itself that extends to an otherness within its perceived lived world. Such a statement is ridiculously absurd to outrightly confirm a generalizing of that idea or to imply simplistically that such and

such an “itself” and otherness exist simultaneously or become parallel apparent to one another, or better yet, mutually engage into a meaning making that reveals the essences of “self” and “other” in a subjective lived world. However, a confusion lies within the thrust of getting to understand phenomenology as a Philosophy and yet a methodology, where it begins as a philosophy before transposing into a methodology? The literature reviews in this study suggest to confirm this allegation. The gap persists for many, to explicitly state the obvious demarcations of a philosophy to that of a methodology, but then with phenomenology, it is difficult to justify that approach as existing literature predominantly are numerous, often contradicting itself or criticizing elsewhere, thus misleading, a suspension of engagement into it or falling prey into disbelief of the efficacy of Phenomenology as a philosophy and methodology of inquiry.

Currently, phenomenology is gaining more recognition as a philosophy and methodology of inquiry around the worlds namely, countries in Africa, Brazil, China and India compared to previous decades. Phenomenology as a qualitative research methodology that goes beyond on merely understanding underlying logic or reasoning, motivations or opinions of phenomenon, rather it fundamentally emphasizes on describing that which appears to be appearances of experiencing of thoughts, ideas, emotions or actions and events as it occurs in the subjective description and interpretations of that to whom experiencing it. Thus, the authenticity of the phenomenon to the one witnessing it. Phenomenology as methodology is key to unlocking “great mysteries”, thus, the “great doubt” or great inquiry to crosscutting phenomenon across history. The purity of descriptions and interpretations of narratives of subjects in their own words or expressions, provide unique insights not only to the “things” that happened, but to also what occurs within a human being during

such and such experiences in their lives. Thereby realizing opportunities for itself, that could assist anyone situate oneself to learn, to know or at the least be informed of such possibilities of happening.

In phenomenological studies, the structure of experiences of the human being is the foremost focus, thus the structure. This study argues that, many research studies have delved into the experiences in itself without in-depth questioning that which constitute “the structure”. What is this structure? Who determines it and why does it occur? In this argument, central to this is the human being’s intentionality aimed at, of which a certain “knowing of” exist, thus the structure, where thoughts or actions, therefore the experiences originate. Earlier, this study suggests that a directedness to self-knowledge first is crucial to self-actualization, prior to considering knowledge or making meaning of experiences that involves the otherness and its relationship to lived worlds, therefore a structure is constituted based on one’s directedness, not by the otherness. By virtue, intentionality constitutes that structure, the structure through which experiences are brought to existing, not merely of physical happenings, movements or events, including linguistic experiences, but those experiences constituted consciously in thoughts and emotions of past experiences, or imaginations of experiences placed in the future, consolidated in the present that continuously are evolving in meaning, and revolving in the consciousness or compulsiveness of that human being’s lived worlds.

Various classical phenomenologists such as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger etc. had practiced three fundamental methodologies that supports 1) pure description of lived experiences 2) interpretation of a type of experience within a given a context, including social and linguistic contexts and 3) analysis of experiences to elaborate on the appearance of meanings or that which it appears as to its meaning.

The above remain undeniably relevant, however debates on varied views of these approaches in recent decades had expanded to include the logico-semantic model of phenomenology and that of experimental paradigm of cognitive neuroscience.

The concept of bracketing (Gearing 2004) allows researchers to explore the possibilities which Husserl (1939/1954) had discussed extensively in his manuscripts on his approach to “descriptive psychology” based on two distinguishable procedures of thinking a) “the epoche of the natural sciences – return (from theories) to the things themselves (avoiding explanations)” and b) “the Epoche of the natural attitude – the phenomenological reduction – becoming unaware of the presumptions and presuppositions” that researchers bear in mind (i.e. in wakefulness but unconscious of its biases towards that “appearing”) thus, involving or entangling into such biases that veers away from the original phenomena occurring (Quitoshi, 2008).

Furthermore, Husserl (1913/1962) worked on developing procedures of analyses he called intentional analysis - how experiences occur and what is experienced and eidetic analysis - intuition of essences, where added meanings are understood through the role of intuition of essences. The latter suggest that a wider meaning is given to the phenomenon under study, where Spiegelberg (1969) further claims as phenomenology as a methodology emancipates the “occurring”, giving that sense freedom from the pre-conception of what seemingly may appear as the obvious meanings. Such properties of a methodology in phenomenological studies are a great contribution to phenomenology as a philosophy.

From a methodological view point, phenomenology involves a seven-step process – silence, reflection, identification, selection, interpretation, construction and verification, which investigates the meanings of a phenomenon from different angles to its entire wholeness (Halldorsdottir, 2000).

Another approach by Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) is a four-step process – a) description, where broadly reading into, or b) by way of reduction – where meaningful units of experiences are sorted, c) search for essences – where each meaningful units of experiences is reflected or contemplated on, and d) intentionality – particularly based on essential structures of the phenomenon on which research questions.

The purpose of using phenomenology as a methodology is fundamentally seeking to closely explore the complexity of lived experiences from individuals' point of view who experience them. Overall, it facilitates understanding, not only of the individuals, but those researchers using this methodology, to know the phenomenon at a deeper level of understanding, where it can invoke an “intentionality” to explore their own nature, thereby bring about a “transformation” of biases or mindsets at a personal level. The permission to interpret with caution in bracketing, can make studies more interesting and meaningful (Quitoshi, 2008), particularly those aiming to present social structures, policies and development sector practices from perspectives of those impacted or beneficiaries.

Phenomenological studies can be based on single or multiple cases which form parts of an entire phenomenon understudy. However, there is an emphasis on the principle of minimum structure with maximum depth to keep a balance of focus on which the research addresses within the limits of time and other resources allocated to each study. Similar to other qualitative studies, data gathering and meaning making can occur simultaneously, in order to bring out the essences of specific experiences to identify the phenomenon that is experienced in particular situations or circumstances. It is crucial to present the phenomena based on the personal knowledge and subjectivity of individuals experiencing them. Therefore, methods including interviews, observations, discussions, focus group meetings and analysis of

the text or journaling of contemplations of personal experiences etc. are crucial in data collection and gathering. It is also highly recommended to formulate a knowledge management per category into a portfolio, to document findings and analyses of such studies in phenomenology. It happens that several analyses per category can be linked to different parts of discussions or observations. As such, summaries of findings, discussion on findings and recommendations or discussions on future implications can be vividly presented to readers.

The clarity in Husserl's notions that explains the philosophical and methodological approaches of phenomenology and procedures are to link directly the core idea of understanding the phenomenon that is related to the human being that possesses a deeper level of consciousness. For this the question holds "how to capture the phenomenon" in its original existence (Quitoshi, 2008), where Husserl implies that the adopting the heuristic principle that stays focused on the "appearing of the phenomenon" at the experiencing level, thus describing precisely whatever manifests as appearances, witnessed at higher levels of consciousness, reveals the "absoluteness of its existence".

Hermeneutics as a Study of Interpretation

In general, hermeneutics is the study of interpretation. It is widely used as a methodology for disciplines where subject matter requires an interpretative approach, more specifically because it explores the meanings embedded in human intentions and experiences, beliefs and actions in a broader sense. Philosophically, it is concerned with the meaning of interpretation – comprising of its nature, scope and validity as such - the benefits or implications to human existence, development and

¹ Stanford.edu/hermeneutics /December 2020

everyday practical life. It takes into consideration the context of fundamental concerns about – the being, knowing, language and history, arts and lived experiences.

As per Friedrich Schleiermacher, hermeneutics is the art of interpretation consisting of two sides of any contextualized discourse, based on which the success of understanding meanings depends on. These are – the grammatical (the general structure of the language used) and psychological aspect (dependent on the interlocutor's or creator's mind, a sense of style). This approach mitigates the risk of misunderstandings and ambiguity.

It is important to point out the contribution of Wilhelm Dilthey to Hermeneutics. It goes further to explain that conditions of interpretation, hence understanding is not absolute (it could and changes over a period of time) that it also largely depends on historical context. This is to say that he is supportive of the legitimacy of the epistemological foundations of research in the human sciences, or science in general, Dilthey's concern is to defend such legitimacy against charges that may question it. It should not be misunderstood that his direction of reasoning promotes one over the other (ie. legitimacy of fundamental science to relative, changing and particular phenomenon shaped by historical context), rather his approach was to establish a critique of historical reasoning that would secure epistemological foundations. In other words, openness to the possibilities of new interpretation of evolving phenomena (ie. beyond explanation of outer experiences but that of understanding of lived experiences), without discarding well established historical knowledge is founded.

In pursuit of grasping the full essences of hermeneutics in explaining the arguments of this study, hermeneutical circle is but necessary to mention.

Hermeneutical circle emphasizes on the circularity of the understanding – where a text, for example, or dialogue, conversation is explicitly understood to understand its

parts and vice versa. As if to say, it's a dynamic exchange of interpretations within a conversation etc. – where something new emerges each time. It enables interpretative experience – a new understanding and meaning is created not on the basis of already known beliefs or norm. There are new possibilities for knowledge to be constituted and explored vertically, adding layers of new assumptions to improve existing paradigms. However, without the necessary discipline and commitment to logical critique, scope, validity and grounding, interpretations of texts, conversations etc. will not result to any meaningful dialogue or understanding.

According to Martin Heidegger, hermeneutics is somewhat an inquiry into sensing of the being, thus the human existence, in which in itself is self-interpretation. He posits that this inquiry is possible as human being are in general – interpretative. However, he remains outward looking (ie. interpretation of occurring affairs that permits understanding of the existentially being in the world). Instead of, exploring the interpretations of the implicit experiences of the being within itself. His views limit the arguments of this study, which is more reflective of Husserl's arguments to the use of the epoche and that of Cartesian methodology of bracketing. I argue that subjective experiences can be interpreted to understand the "human being" within – which this study postulates – the inner hermeneutics of communication. Thus, affirming that hermeneutics permits the study, to clarify the possibilities of deeper understanding of the self, through layers of interpretation free of bias. The use of hermeneutics as a methodology provides adequate guidance to ensuring the scope, validity and relevance of this study.

Considering Logic and Rationality in Communication Studies

The philosophy of logic is the study of arguments that solves philosophical problems and serves as tool to promote advancements of metaphilosophy. Such arguments are constructed depending on the logical reasoning used, which could either be – deductive, inductive and abductive. For deduction, the validity of an argument will depend on the its logical form, not necessary for its content. The logical form of any valid argument is represented in sentences constructed in a formal grammar and logical language such that its content can be used to interpret the texts, hence derive a logical inference or meaning– to which understanding maybe be cultivated. This study argues on the basis of deductive reasoning to derive the understanding from the interpretation of texts of the trekking lived experiences of the researcher.

Logic & Rationality, a Natural Attitude

Logic is derived from the Greek word “logike” translated to mean “possessed with reason, intellectual, dialectical, argumentative, “the word”, or “what is spoken”. It is based on the rules of inference, or conclusions – where formal arguments could be subjected to analyses and appraisals based on sets of other propositions, depending on its context (eg. traditional, foundational knowledge), should yield to a common and acceptable proposition. The arguments in this study follow a dialogical and dialectical approach to its analyses. It is dialogical - where it uses the texts of dialogue to understand the meanings of lived experiences, and dialectical – as it argues with “inner selves” of self and others, of different opinion or thoughts, but desire to arrive at meaningful truths.

In conversations or dialogues, philosophical logic is essentially connected to natural language (ie. including non-verbal, gesture or sign languages) and logic. It is

important to understand the process in which communication occur from “languages” or written texts appraised for its argumentative claims of interlocutors to intended inferences or conclusions. The levels of interaction of grammar and psychological content evolves the meanings in various forms of understanding, hence knowledge of that which was intended to be known in dialogue.

The interpretations of conversations will largely depend on the interlocutors’ personal preferences, varying rationalities, and historical context of their references, and the use of grammar of language - which may or may not enable to arrive at a common understanding or propositions as desired. The emphasis is on the use of semantics – deliberate or not, augments the results of any conversation. Broadly the goal is that of arriving at agreeable truths or the identification of falsity – where “truths” are agreements and “falsity” are disagreements (Antoine Arnauld, Port Royal-Logic). However, this will require further analysis of mapping the universe of individuals concerned in such and such a discourse. The complexity of arriving with a clean slate of explaining is almost impossible, given that there are varied notions as defining immediate concern in any given dialectical conversations.

Enlightenment as Logical Reason

In the 18th century, the Enlightenment movement was known to be the “Age of Reason, where discount the unfounded beliefs, superstitions or trusting science in blind faith. It promoted individual liberty and religious tolerance, opposition to monarchy and religious dogmas at the time. According to Immanuel Kant, “An answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” (1784), it is the liberation of humankind from self-incurred immaturity, where immaturity he defined as the inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. The emphasis on the process of undertaking to think for oneself, to engage into and depend on one’s own reasoning

and enable interpretation of life worlds – is the basis on which enlightenment is centered. Ultimately, enlightenment is geared towards becoming more progressively self-directed in thought, emotion and action by awakening one's senses, intellect which transforms oneself to a better and self-actualized existence.

It is also important to emphasize that the Enlightenment thinkers during that era were oriented in improving human conditions rather than concerning themselves with that of the dogmas of religion and the nuances of the afterlife. Enlightenment pursued promoting the goals of rational humanity – to be knowledge, freedom and happiness. This explains that during this period (17th & 18th century, early 19th century), rigorous, scientific, political and philosophical discourse were observed. It was during this time that the leaders of Enlightenment called the *Philosophes* published the series of *Encyclopedia* (17 volumes, 1752 – 1765, by 1780 – 35 volumes were published). It also produced and secularized theories of psychology and ethics, secular law, protection of human rights, separation of powers etc. were fundamentally rooted in the Enlightenment ideals.

In another foundational text of the enlightenment is John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Its influence is derived from the rigor of epistemology, to understand the limits of human knowledge - he posits that this knowledge is constructed in the senses. In the *Treatise of Sensations* (1754), he confirmed that knowledge arise from the sense of experience – which contributed to the science of psychology in that period.

It is important to be cautious of what Enlightenment signifies in this study – as to what it should promote and encourage such as “free thinking” or “thinking for oneself”, hence reason or logic. Intrinsically, as far as we know it as human beings – to think for oneself should be based on Nature and natural laws, based on good and

goodwill, or that towards the welfare and well being of people and of society in general. This is to say that I argue on basis the emphasis here is to think – based on rationality and virtues and on Universal truths etc. and not concepts based on self-gratifications of confused states of mind, or of political rebellion (ie. any form of violence, hate or discrimination, cultism etc). Instead, it promotes awe, beauty, courage, discovery, receptivity, gratitude etc.

Modern systematic philosophical aesthetics emerged in the context of Enlightenment contributed by Alexander Baumgarten, a German philosopher. Aesthetics is from the Greek word for “senses” – he believes that a science of the beautiful is a science of sensible, sensible cognition. With this the value of the senses is re-discovered – not only in cognition processes but within human lives. Thus, the connection of beauty to human sensibility. The study argues that there is beauty when there is an absence of any explanation for its existence (ie. void of the mind) just harmony.

In the 1947, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno of the Frankfurt School of philosophers published a book – Dialectic Enlightenment. It argues that “Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, had always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth radiates under the sign of disaster triumphant”. Indeed, in the modern society and with an advancing technology, to assume a level of enlightenment requires inner reflection of the self to surface from within the necessary to be liberated. The discovery of enlightenment – begets knowledge and awareness of that which existed, but had remained unknown.

Intrapersonal Communication as Points of Reference

Interpersonal communication is one of the major debates in the field of psychology in the 20th century. The cognitive approach to understand human behavior (and that of oneself), had focused more on the mental processes or intellectual processes (rather than just external stimuli) that are used to understand the stimuli and how it generates effects as responses (Runes, 1984). Theories that examine such cognitive and intrapersonal aspects of communication are – 1) interlocutor's point of references and historical background will affect message constructions and interpretation, hence meaning, 2) communication accommodation – focuses on the adaptation of one's messages depending on its own goals and perception of others, 3) uncertainty reduction, which explains initial encounters with people and 4) expectancy of disagreements, predicts and explains behavior when expectations are not met.

The above theories argues that the internal processes of interpretation result to highly personalized meaning creation, with various possibility of meanings and communication contexts, thus response and behaviors defined. (For more details on this topic, please see reference given below).

According to O'keefe (1988, 1997), because of different references of historical context of interlocutors, people tend to think of communication differently, hence the construct very different types of messages. The above theories explain - the realities as to the potential skewedness or possible falsity in relayed or misunderstood messages due to human being's tendency to adapt behaviors in communication that reaps most beneficial to their interests.

Why Ethics in Behavioral Patterns of Logic

Ethics from the Greek word *ethikos* means “relating to one’s character”. It is a moral philosophy that organizes, formulates and promote concepts of correct and wrong behavior in a society. Such concepts are good and evil, virtue and vice, justice and crime etc. many of which sets the guidelines to rationality – an appropriate means to behavior in the society and relating to others.

Role of ethics and Modernism, an array of pre-conditioned destination

According to Rushworth Kidder, ethic’s role in the society can be broadly be explained in the “the science of the ideal human character” or the “science of moral duty”. Ethics sets the necessary guidelines as to the necessary behavior that helps or not harm self or others. There is however a difference to ethics and behaving according with social known norms and social conventions, where the latter is an adaption to social behavior in a given locality, rather that setting the standards of ethical behaviors in any situation.

Larry Churchill wrote “ethics is understood as a capacity to think critically about moral values and direct actions in terms of values, generic to human capacity”. Ethics evolves with civilizations, without which society will become chaotic and uncivilized. Normative ethics further defines ethical action. This is that branch of ethics that studies the questions from – how does one ought to act or behave? It measures the standards of the rightness and wrongness of actions of any given society. There are certain actions that are considered right or acceptable to a society, but completely wrong in another.

From this review, it is important to mention the need for virtue ethics. It describes the character of a moral agent – which carries on the responsibility for ethical behavior. Socrates (469-399 BC) encouraged people turn their attention from the

outside perspective of the world to the conditions of human kind during that era. He had emphasized that placing knowledge about human life is of utmost priority, where self-knowledge is considered necessary to succeed and implicitly good. It is argued that a self-aware individual is better to act to one's utmost capabilities to be successful as compared to an individual who is ignorant of oneself and others. As such the view is to put efforts to ensure and become aware of every detail and the context of one's own existence to cultivate self-knowledge.

To Socrates, people will naturally conduct themselves in good behaviors if aware of what is right or wrong and the implications to themselves. While those that perpetuate the wrong, are incapable of understanding the relevance of doing what is right or good. It is also believed then, that unhappiness and frustration was as a result of wrong doings.

Aristotle asserted in his writings that the soul of a human being had three dimensions – the body (physical & metabolism), animal instinct (emotions & appetite) and rational (mental & conceptual). During this era, rational development was given more focus and considered as most important and essential to understanding self-awareness, thus attaining self-knowledge.

Furthermore, Immanuel Kant contributed towards the understanding that “to act morally is the right way” that people must act from duty, in other words, people need to take responsibility for actions and behavior. Broadly, ethical behaviors and actions originates from one's own level of awareness and understanding of one's self and its relation to the outside world. Ethics is important to guide and provide direction for civilizations to maintain order and harmony among peoples and their state of complex socio economic, political and environmental affairs.

Influence of Psychological Imprints & soft Traumas.

According to Dr. Gabor Mate in his book, *The Myth of Normal* – “that the entire context of social structures, belief systems, assumption and values that surround us – necessarily pervade every aspect of our lives” that it has become likened to what he referred to as “toxic culture”. It throws light into discourse of entire epidemic of chronic afflictions, mental and physical health issues – emphasizing that something is amiss in our existing culture itself. It is also obvious enough that such situations have created ideological blind spots that disables dialogues to address the issues from happening. Such blind spots prevalent in many cultures – which keeps us ignorant of the linkages and connections of such implications to our health and that of the very social-emotional lives.

Furthermore, he added that social life bears upon health and well-being of the individuals that require more focus and response. A few of such issues are stress, inequality of access to health care, food security etc. In the United States, for example, 60% of adults have chronic disorder such as high blood pressure or diabetes and over the 40% have two or more of such chronic illnesses. Across the Western world, mental health issue is escalating among particularly among the youth.

The above is reiterated to emphasize on the on-going break down of societies around the world due declining pursuit of nuances of ethical values and responsibility toward the self, other and the society in general. It puts an urgent question that – are we going to witness the downfall of our civilization in the 21st century? For more information on this topic please see the works of Dr Gabor Mate, Alan Watts and J. Krishnamurti.

Human Nature as reflection of Self & Society

Human nature is the essence of what it is to be human beings – general characteristics and dispositions that differ from animals, fundamentally that of reasoning. Based on this assumption that human beings can reason, hence think – has resulted to civilizations over hundreds of years leading into the modern world as we know it today. However, reasoning may have been only a gateway to other unknown things that precede it, but human beings are yet to evolve to a level that could enable them perceive higher levels of existence, to which this study intends to explore. This aspect of the argument brings attention to that nuances that human beings could become stagnant or unevolved altogether (ie. regress from the highest point of evolution, not necessarily physiologically) to a “mutated” state of reasoning.

According to Mencius, a Confucian philosopher, the capacity for evil is not grounded in human nature, that if an individual becomes bad, it does not come from its constitution because it bears emotional instincts grounded in goodness but as matter of injury. People can be misled through desiring outside that of its pre-dispositioning virtues.

It argues that as such “injuries” to the human being bring about questions to the society’s existing situations of “blinded chaos” – a psychological disorder of society where impactful implications that injures fundamental dispositions of human beings.

In effect, the idea of thinking inherent to arguments that which has led to such civilization may be justified or not – where questions emerge on what is orientation of thinking in the contemporary society? What motivates it in that direction? What is the end point for each thinking resulted? If so, questions the characteristics of the dialogical and dialectical discourse in every sphere of what makes a society. However, this is not the focus of this study, rather at an individual of thinking that makes the

collective, thus the society. It may lead to some impressions that they who are “thinking” reason based on “ideologies” that had taken advantage of what it means to be human being. The question concerning human being then affirms that that which is perceived collective in any contextual situation is a reflection of its society – of its reasoning. of truth – the possibility of enlightenment of every human being.

On Resiliency, Individual and Organizational Agency

The importance of self-knowledge, self-actualization and that of enlightenment. The discovery of the self, the being and its essences of communication that constitutes its knowing. The knowledge of self and its existence is perpetually engaged to life until its death. The distance, space and time in between life to death is questioned as to how the being continues to exist – in a state of enlightenment negates reflections, responsibility and resilience of agency.

From this perspective, it is necessary to explore the means at which one can employ to ensure its survival and sustainability. Using the approaches of the crisis management literature towards resiliency (eg. Pearson and Clair, 1998), (James and Wooten 2005, Boin et al 2005). The interaction of oneself with its environment is dynamic and continuously changes – where resiliency defines one’s ability to effectively respond to adverse changes before it happens, during and after it. Based on this, there are three resiliency stages considered– as anticipation, coping and adaptation, the capabilities of which need be understood, learned and enhanced.

Awareness of the Self and the Others, & External Situations

Anticipation of adverse events which impacts a human being requires a broad understanding and perception of one’s own situational context, thus identifying the possible sources of risks, threats and implications of negative events. The ability

to detect critical developments of such possibilities is important to prevent the scale of its impact on itself. While in reality, it is not possible to predict every such problems, however it is better to see unexpected events faster than others, or mitigate escalation of issues - that enable to respond immediately and reducing its impact, rather than adopt an attitude of “wait and see”. For example, its important to study and learn about the hazards and potential disasters like avalanches, high altitude sickness, failing rocks, slippery slopes etc. and know what to do. It is good also to know the geographical and topography of the trekking trails and routes.

Resilience includes coping capabilities that addresses the impact of any negative events made manifest (Wildavsky, 1991), it also includes possibilities of trauma or any medical conditions. Self-knowledge is key to knowing what to do, adapt a positive attitude and behavior that matches the immediate situation(s) (Mallak, 1998). Crisis management emphasizes the ability to – accept a problem and to develop and implement solutions (Madni and Jackson 2009). For example, coping with an injury or severe edema (swelling of ankles or face, brain etc.), nausea, headache etc., knowing one’s body, and mind is important. Also, to ask for help and allowing people to help (eg. to have garlic soup at high altitude is an “antidote” given by local people). One has to learn how to remain calm, respectful of traditions, trust and cooperative, even in dire situations in the mountains.

Development of Individual Agency thru Communication

Adaptation capabilities refers to adjustments and self-regulation in response to the crises and extending actions to recovery and advancement from the situation into the future. It requires in-depth, reflection and learning and self- improvement. Self-reflection is a review of lessons learned from experiences of the crises, seeking what could have prevented or reduced the impact on oneself. On

recognition of better option and adjustments approaches to any given situation – the ability to act on such improvements is crucial to being resilient. During this process, deep reflection is a mechanism of communication within the self, to surface the needed understanding. For example, during trekking, one needs to adapt to high altitude, thin air and extreme colds where the adaptation requires – cardio training, breathing exercises and investing in better clothing and gear.

Chapter III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The validity of the research study is anchored on the phenomenological qualitative research methodology, which permits the use of appropriate tools, processes and data. The data collected are highly contextualized and empirically evident with subjective accounts, photographs, documentaries and narratives of the writer (in a span of 3 to 5 years) which highly correlates to its claims. The researcher is also well travelled and prove to be at ease in dealing with varied cultural, social and environment situations.

The narratives were consolidated and analyzed based on the qualitative research methodology. The Phenomenology inquiry approach is used to described the experiences, in the thematic sections that enables the study to surface the meanings of each section. The research questions guided the selection and extraction of “texts” from the researcher’s main journals which were written during trekking. It important to note that the trekking journeys were taken in consecutive years which permitted the researcher to reflect and improve skills, physical fitness, psychological clarity to cope with the challenges in trekking.

Basis of the Phenomenological Analysis of the Experiences

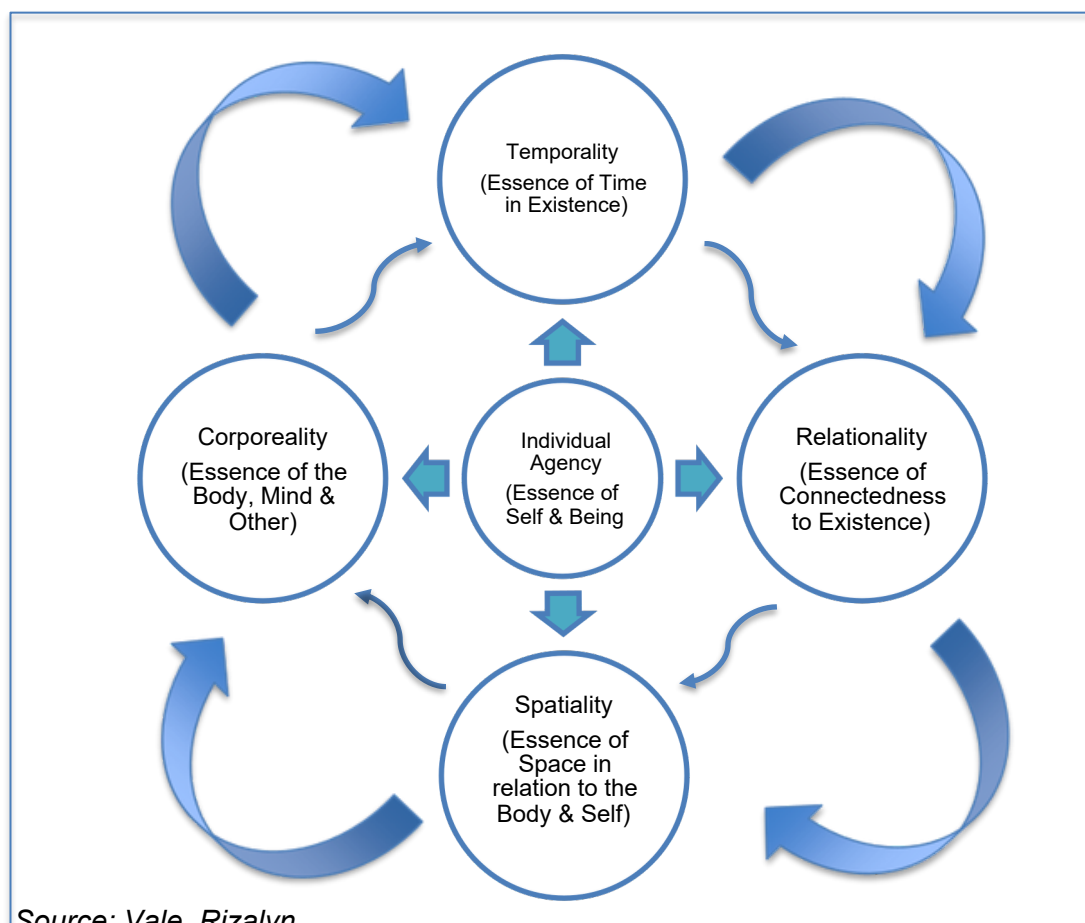
Thematic descriptions of the Trekking Experiences in the study provides the possibilities of interpretations that gives meaning that otherwise are not possible without the thematic descriptions. These serve as qualitative research tools integrating interviews, surveys and observations into each thematic descriptions of the narratives.

Based on the diagram above, the trekker's narratives of lived experiences during her treks will be evaluated accordingly. The emergent themes here are that of

1. Relationality - Adventures & Curiosity as a connection to Self, Others, Worlds & the Sacred.
2. Spatiality - Commune with Nature as an expression of awe, wonder, becoming mindful and aware.
3. Corporeality - Awareness of Self and Consciousness of presence
4. Temporality - Understanding of Self, capable of Eternal experiences

As depicted in Diagram 2, each of these themes will pass through a series of reflections that ensure an exercise to eliminate bias of the researcher.

Figure 2. *The Emergent Dimensions of the Lived Experiences in Dialogue*



Source: Vale, Rizalyn

Thematic descriptions of the Trekking Experiences in the study provides the possibilities of interpretations that gives meaning that otherwise are not possible without the thematic descriptions. These serve as qualitative research tools integrating interviews, surveys and observations into each thematic descriptions of the narratives. The direction of the arrows in the diagram denotes the flow of the linkages of each dimension in relation to the other. It is also designed to demonstrate the dynamic shifts toward each dimension over a period time, for each of the trek undertaken respectively. It is presented with an outward looking perspective of the individual, however given the results of the study, it will be observed that the it will bear as pronged arrow, where a dynamic exchange of perspectives outward and inward looking of the individual happens, experiencing more in-depth the self and the other in dialogue.

Relationality discusses the experiences of the writer in terms of one's own feelings, emotions that allowed realizations of connectedness to the self, communities encountered, including cattle, wildlife, plants, trees and Nature. It also looks into the impact of weather conditions, low temperatures, elevations of the mountains and the changing nutrition requirements, water quality etc. on the writer's health, perceptions and behavioral patterns.

Spatiality as a means of integrating of the five senses, first through vision, analyzing the magnanimity of mountains, distance of trekking trails in long expanse of varying elevation, creating interpretations of physical struggles, challenge and goals needing to be achieved. It analyses the interpretation of space, distance and overall view of the skies relative to the Himalayan range – to itself. The senses awaken to the reality of the miniscule size of a human being to the “Otherness” of Nature. Corporeality permits the interpretations of what it is to be human, bearing a

human body in all its possibility and limitations. The realities of encountering the shadows of death, quickly one realizing that life possess an in-depth meaning entwined with the body, and that body only knows and craves, to hold on, even to a point of desperation - to stay alive.

Temporality defines time, the body recognizing time – that could seem endless yet is only of existing in a moment (of extreme pain, bitter cold, thin air experiences etc.), time collapses or expands depending on the occurrence. For example, a sunrise above the snow-capped mountains seemed to last to forever, but disappears in a moment. However, temporality can also be a game of the mind where past or future is brought to the present – almost capable of eternal experiences (ie. when time is collapsed into one).

CHAPTER IV

RESEARH RESULTS & INSIGHT DISCUSSIONS

Putting the Experiences Together

A JOURNEY TO SANDAKPUR, EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEPAL, NOVEMBER 2016. NARRATIVES BY RIZALYN VALE, Part 1. *(EXCERPTS FROM PERSONAL JOURNAL). In Search of Truth and Meaning, 2016.*



In 2016, I journeyed for more than 15 hours by bus to Ilam 486 km from Kathmandu to visit a place called Habre's Nest in Nepal. It is run by a local group of conservationists and photographers from India with a particular interest on the Red Panda. It has been my aspiration to be part of this advocacy since 2009. The habitat of red panda is usually situated in high altitude mountains, which required moderate to difficult trekking mostly in winter. It is quite difficult to see them in the wild as they have become more aloof and fewer in number.

Day 1

In Bitranagar, the sunrise greets me as I look out the window of the bus, it was misty and cold. I was happy to see the morning. I had travelled overnight from

Kathmandu, the bus was full of people, every now and then passengers would get down, and some new ones will join the journey. Yesterday afternoon was really hot



and the traffic out of the city was heavy, it took almost 2 hours. The bus had stopped over at a local canteen for refreshments of tea and later on dinner. I had a good sleep where I was seated, beside me was a

young lady travelling to her village to visit her parents. For a few times, we chatted randomly. She worked in Kathmandu as cashier.

It was an arduous journey; the weather was unpredictable – it was hot and then



suddenly it would turn cold. I did not open the window of the bus on my side because the just dust would rush to my face, though

sometimes it was also pleasant because of the cool breeze. The view outside kept changing, and as we got farther from the city to towns, then to villages, the commercial buildings turned to houses, then farmlands on a stretch. There were several family-

owned businesses of varying sorts, from construction to tea lodges, mechanic workshops to retail shops etc. There were hawkers on road sides selling local snacks, soft drink or water for travel.

The music on the bus that played through the bus ride was dependent on the playlist of the driver or the conductor, most of which were local songs, sometimes Hindi songs



as well which all added to the characteristic of my trip. I enjoyed this subtle blessing, the kindness of the people, their conversations to they

travelled with friends and family. It was similar to what I had also seen in the rural Philippines. There was still the simplicity, almost a sort of innocence in their conduct of themselves. I admire their resilience and hard work, their sense of contentment and doing the best they can in every situation – was admirable.

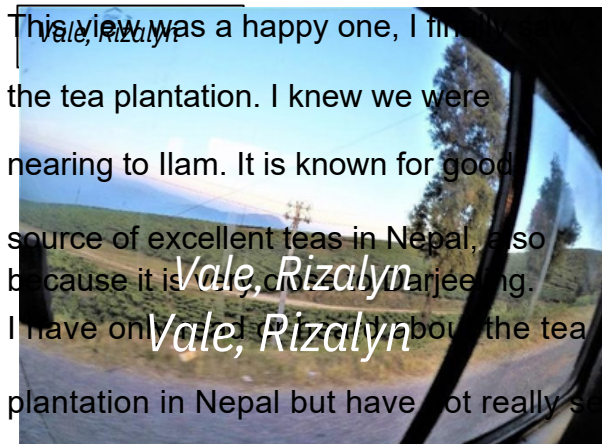
In my thoughts I continuously marvel that the world is indeed is a huge place, that every day, around the world – people continue their work, their lives etc. in ways and means best known to them. We continue to exist the way we found ourselves, sometimes not knowing what is happening in other places or countries in the same time.

This greenhouse along the side of the road got my attention. There was garden patch newly tilled – it's almost winter, I wondered if plants will still grow, if so, what will survive



Water
here? also
source be
seemed
nowhere, maybe
they have a well, I
thought to myself.
deeply
concerned almost
I was of
worrying – (since I
to a point
know from experience of my small backyard garden back home) how difficult it is to

grow seedlings in such situation.



This view was a happy one, I finally saw
the tea plantation. I knew we were
nearing to Ilam. It is known for good
source of excellent teas in Nepal, also
because it is only one of the Darjeeling.
I have only heard about the tea

plantation in Nepal but have not really seen one for myself. I was also told that this
was operated by Women run cooperative(s). There has stories both good and dire
ones about tea plantations in and around the world, I wondered if this was one of that
too.

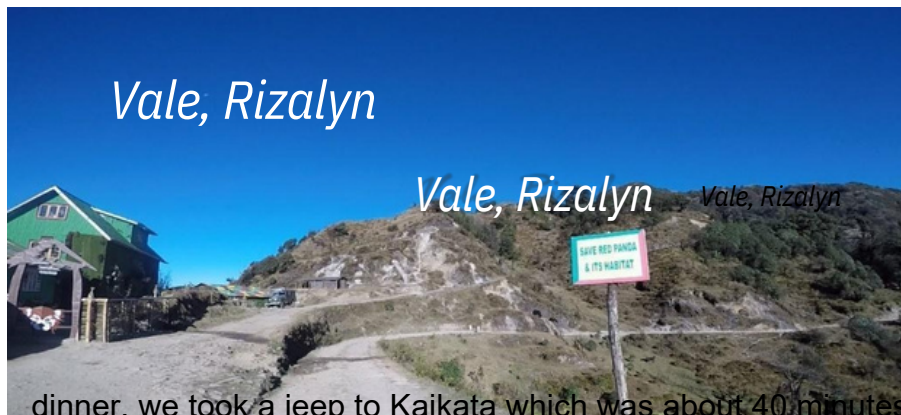


My mind would race with many ideas – of travel, advocacy and potential development projects that can be done here. But I knew that tasks I was doing were daunting. I needed to be realistic and objective when it comes to development work. I quickly reminded myself that this

trip was observe and get better information about what I could possibly document and provide clarity and help with prioritization of the things that can be done at the earliest

and that of for the

future.



On arrival to Ilam around 8 pm, I was my welcome by After guides

dinner, we took a jeep to Kaikata which was about 40 minutes ride to Habre's Nest in the mountains (3,000 msl). Eventually, after going through a road which did not look like a road at all, I reached the lodge at 10 pm. We were received by my host Tashi Gurung and his wife. They waited for us for so long, they prepared dinner thinking we would arrive around 7pm. The food was re-heated to make warm, as the temperature up the mountains had drastically changed to almost 5 degrees Celsius from some 16 degree Celsius.

At this point, I could feel the altitude and definitely the cold. I felt exhausted. I retired to my room and had a good sleep.

Day 2

In the morning, I had a short walk outside to see the view outside. The lodge is nestled up on a hill, the landscape was beautiful. In the photograph above, there was a barn where I was told by Tashi that housed a black cow. Approximately two months ago, her calf was taken by a leopard at the nearby hill where they had grazed, she could not save it. According to Tashi, the mother cow shed tears right there in front of him, and even after they had returned to the barn till that time I visited, the cow would cry expressing her loss and bereavement. Tashi added that he too, would cry and could not eat for days, feeling of sadness for the mother cow. I was utterly struck by this story which changed my perspective about animals, especially of a cow.

It was indeed an extra ordinary conversation, however, on reflecting about the details which include the possibility of encountering a tiger? Was something I had to



double check with my guide later on. (He explained that is always a possibility of meeting wild life anywhere since we were situated in the forest reservation shared by Nepal and Indian borders – the Conservation Sigalila National Park).

Inside of the lodge, this is how it looks like, it was simple yet well curated. I knew this place was special. I felt happy to have come all the way here and meet these wonderful people. I also had the chance to browse and read on books the group has published

on red panda and bird conservation. They have also received a number of recognitions and awards from the local government and local NGOs for their efforts in the area.

Here is my guide (right) –



most likely to see Red Panda. He explained that it required a lot of patience to see them at lower altitudes, so we needed to go higher up in the mountains, if we were to have a better chance to see them. At this point, I was not too sure if I can make it, I needed to observe how my body systems will adjust during these few days of acclimatization. (The Nepali guides and porters are swift and fast on trekking almost without any effort, their lung capacity is highly efficient and their blood contains and retains higher level of oxygen than an average person residing mostly in cities or Urban areas – in the Philippines, like myself).

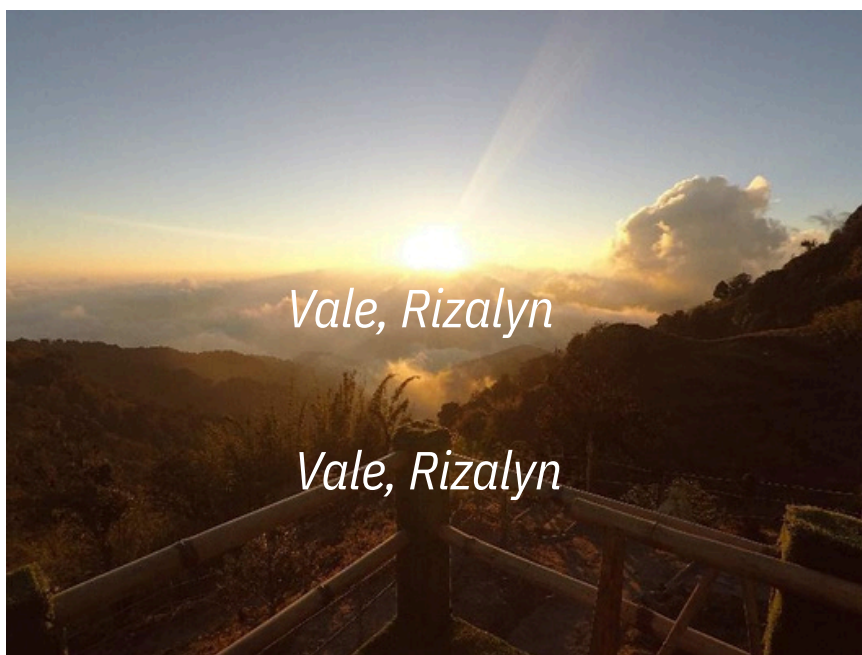


Her name is Maya, wife of Tashi Gurung. She was assigned to cater for guest's food and drinks – an excellent cook. I enjoyed all the meals she served, especially because she often smiled and gestured to me that I was so welcomed and that I should visit again soon. I did not know much how to speak Nepali yet, so I asked the help of Tashi to interpret my replies to her. I told her that I was so happy to meet and that her foods were excellent and

delicious. We became good friends during my few days of stay at the lodge. She kept me company during my tea breaks outside the lodge, and explain as much as possible the ways of life in the village and that her son is in Ilam because of school.

(As of 2018, news reached me that she had passed away because of a bus accident that fell in a valley. She was 32 y/o. May her soul rest in peace). In her loving memory, I decided to include this in my journal. I realized that life is fragile indeed.

Day 3



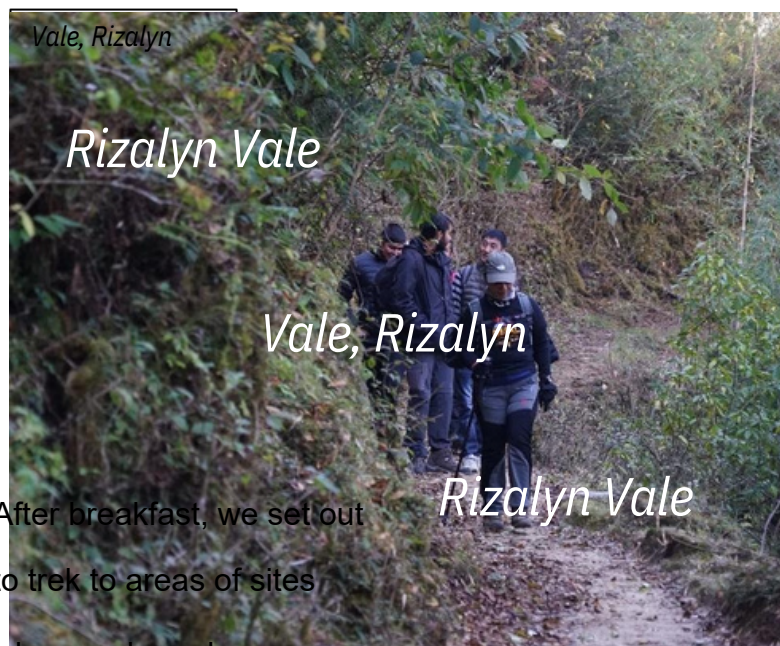
This is sunrise, above the clouds. It reminded me of Mt. Pulag, sea of clouds. In such situations, I thought, God is nearer up here. There is always magic for me to see the rising Sun. It does affirm a

new day, a new beginning – in every aspect of my life. At the time, I could not help to strong emotions, of joy and gratitude for the permission to experience all that I have gone through. That day, I decided that every day was a celebration, like a new year, Christmas, birthdays etc.

Outside the lodge, I would dare to spend some time to feel the cold and breathe the air, and adapt to it. I knew I had to quickly build immunity, capacity to breathe and maintain a flexibility. There is really no telling of how the body reacts each time to a place or situation during trekking in high altitude mountains. I often thought that – if my

body is not willing to adjust, then it is a sign that I should postpone my trekking and stay put until it is time to return to the city.

I decided that even if I'm not able to see a red panda, I'm more than happy and grateful to have visited Habre's nest for a simple reason to connect with people in conservation of them. At this time, I was feeling cold and with a head ache. I took medication for altitude sickness, had dinner and went to sleep early. Tomorrow we begin our trek to search of red pandas in the wild.



After breakfast, we set out to trek to areas of sites where red pandas were

Day 5

I woke up early 5 am to start preparing for the trek. My headache was gone, and I felt better. I had a good sleep.

mostly cited. It required hours of waiting and hoping for them to appear. The team uses high resolution binoculars and camera to document their citing. It is through photography that many endangered animals had been documented to bring awareness to issues of their survival and habitat conservation.

It was at this point that I learned the importance of photography in conservation. Using such images, the group has been able to write and publish a number of books for which they said it remains inadequate to make people understand the dire situation for the red pandas and their survival. The group promotes sustainable tourism where



there is minimal impact on natural habitat of the red pandas, as well as illegal prevention of poaching.

Day 6

The following day the team and I went out to trek on

higher altitude to keep trying to get a glance of Red Panda.

After several hours of searching and waiting, we were not fortunate enough to see the family of red panda that often came to these areas.



is a reality that sometimes even for days, there is not a single sighting. I was not disappointed rather I was happy that I was able to experience this. The team made me understand the behavior of red pandas – i.e., Eating patterns, what

they eat, how they are for their young, breeding season and their usual habitats.

Hearing the local stories and their several expeditions in the wild at very high altitudes,

made me somehow experience what they have seen. In a way, I felt that I have seen

the red pandas through their eyes, I'm content and happy to have been here.

My guide and entire team have been a tremendous source of support and information. On the trail, there were difficult places

where I could have tripped

or fallen over a rough edge,

but the team took

care of me as if they have known me for long. Their compassion for red panda was real, it was beyond tourism or conservation. They are my heroes, literally on the trail. Their decades of knowledge of wild life, fauna and flora of the area is super amazing, their work experience in the mountains is priceless. My sincerest gratitude to all of you.

Day 7



Today, I woke up at 2 am to prepare for our ascent to Sandakphur (3,636 msl) for the sunrise. It was so cold and I was feeling the heavy weight of the altitude on me. It was like being on the moon.

Taking a step was really difficult. I needed to literally warm up quickly and do a lot stretching to awaken my mind and muscles. After a cup of tea and light breakfast, the team and I headed out in the dark.



With help and cheer
of my team, I was
able to get to
Sandakpur just on
time for the last
minute of sunrise into
the full horizon. The
view was spectacular.
A full range of the

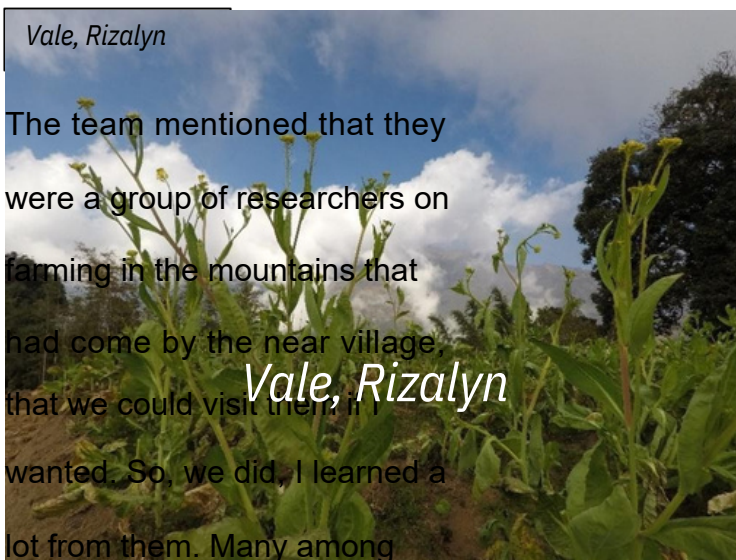
Himalayas unfolded right in front of all of us. It was majestic indeed. It changed my life
and my views about the world, literally. I knew that I was speck of dust relative to the
magnanious existence of the mountains. The so-called problems and expectations of
society about me, and vice versa just faded into the distance. I felt that there were
more bigger things in life.



After a while, I started
feeling exhausted that I
asked my guide that
needed to eat something
and have warm tea. It
was cold even with the
sunlight in the full
horizon. I could feel the
altitude was getting to
me, edema in my eyes had started to show (so I know I needed to get to lower altitude
as soon as possible).



On our way back to the lodge, I was able to see a sacred place believed by the locals as “Shiva’s footprint”. Given this encounter, I became something spiritual. aware of related. People depended on to these beliefs, they must have experienced the essences of it, hence their devotion. It made an impression on me that day.



Day 8

The team mentioned that they were a group of researchers on farming in the mountains that had come by the near village, that we could visit them if I wanted. So, we did, I learned a lot from them. Many among

them were also conservationist of red panda. I observed that they were passionate about what they do, of which would seem so simple to us back in the cities. Their issues were real, they owned them, it is about their survival, their income – they took responsibility, and acted on solutions available to them.



For example, they addressed the issue of prevention of frostings on leafy vegetable during winter. Their research will help local farmers to minimize their losses, understand the species to plant per season and the needed materials to canopy their gardens during winter to minimize or prevent the veggies eg. mustards, to freeze and wither as a result.

This inspired me, that when I returned home to the Philippines, I also started my own small garden near my home in the province. I began to study plants, herbs in particular.

I figured that food that the Nepalis have as their diet contributed highly to their resilience and agility in high altitudes and mountains. It motivated me to mimic their diet, that perhaps that can help me to be a better trekker someday.



This tea lodge depended on the produce of their gardens – they cook what they plant and serve tourists and guests who visit the area. Their income and livelihood depended on it.



This is the dining table; I remember seeing the sun rays coming into the lodge. It was cold, the food served was such a delight that it tasted as if I was in a 5-star hotel. I was grateful for everything.

Day 9

I stayed an extra day in Kaikata to take rest and simply based on the beauty of the mountains. I had a wonderful stay in Habre's nest, the hospitality of the local people made me feel so much at home.

Day 10



Reluctantly, I had to return to Kathmandu. It was an experience of a life time. I find myself with less words but deep in thought. I took a jeep to return to Ilam bazar where I took a bus to Kathmandu.

My bus ride was long but it felt very short. The people I saw and

changing features of the village

after village delighted me. The

landscapes were more visible to

me compared to

earlier. The

that run parallel to the road for

kilometer on end was beautiful. I reached Kathmandu around 8 pm. I felt tired but

thrilled in all that had happened in the last couple of weeks of my journey.

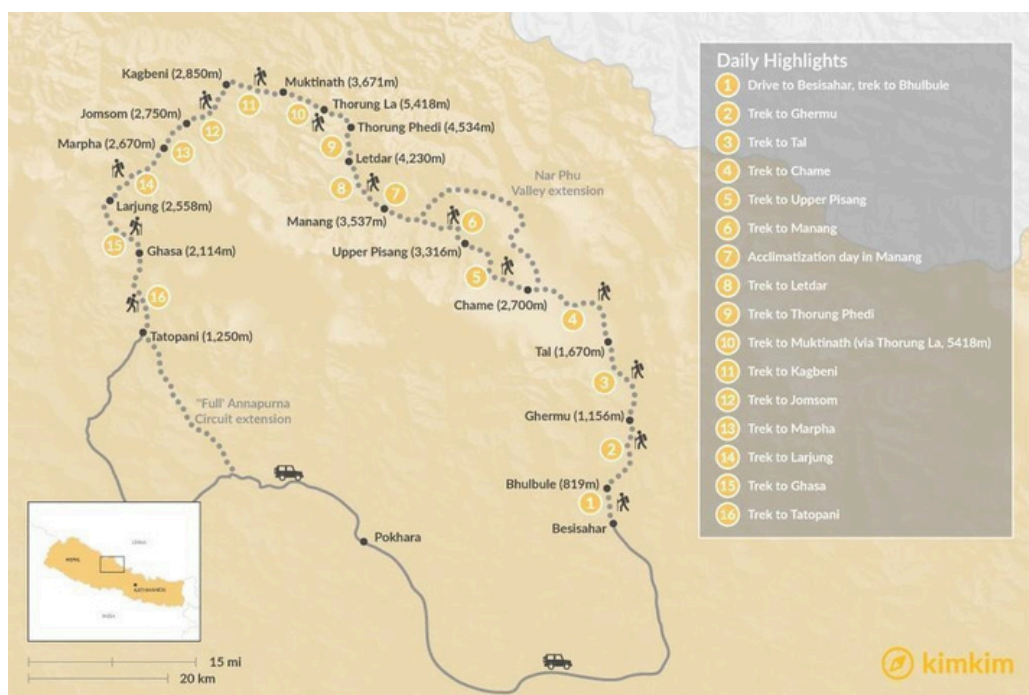


A JOURNEY TO MANANG, WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEPAL, NOVEMBER 2017.

NARRATIVES BY RIZALYN VALE. (EXCERPTS FROM PERSONAL JOURNAL)

A Roadless Path to Freedom, 2017. It is the beginning of winter, the weather was already cold with crisp gentle breeze this morning. Although yesterday, the bus ride to Bishesahar from Pokhara was difficult and bumpy, resulting to bodyaches, but recovered with a good sleep at the tea lodge. With a good breakfast of toast, oats, omellete and coffee, I felt better and in good spirit to commence this adventure. The goal is to reach Muktinath, there is a temple there I hope to visit. This trek on an average would take 14 to 16 days.

Figure 3. *Trekking Map to Muktinath via Manang*



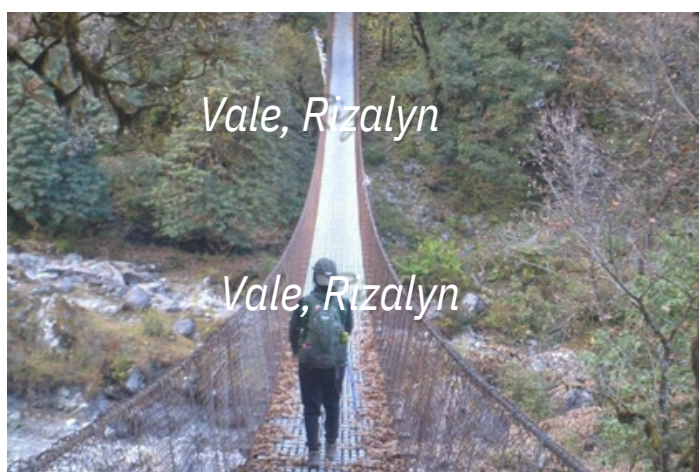
Source: <https://www.kimkim.com/c/annapurna-circuit-trek>

Day 1



I started walking uphill, but within less than an hour, the path was not steep, I could already feel the strain of the altitude. After several 5 minute breaks, I reached a tea lodge where I had cup of lime tea with honey, it always

entertaining that my mind away from challenge of the day – to get to Ghemmu (1,156 msl). Along the way, I saw this view, white snow capped mountains surrounded by green conifers, as though they stood in salute of a royal family – the Himalyan range. I wondered how the local people must feel having these majestic landscapes everyday around them, it must feel special. For most times, I observed that people here are reserved, traditional and meditative.



I encountered this hanging bridge, it had always brought me joy to see one and walk on it each time. The held tension across the metallic rope as I crossed the bridge, I felt safe even though it dangled as my

weight pressed across the platform.

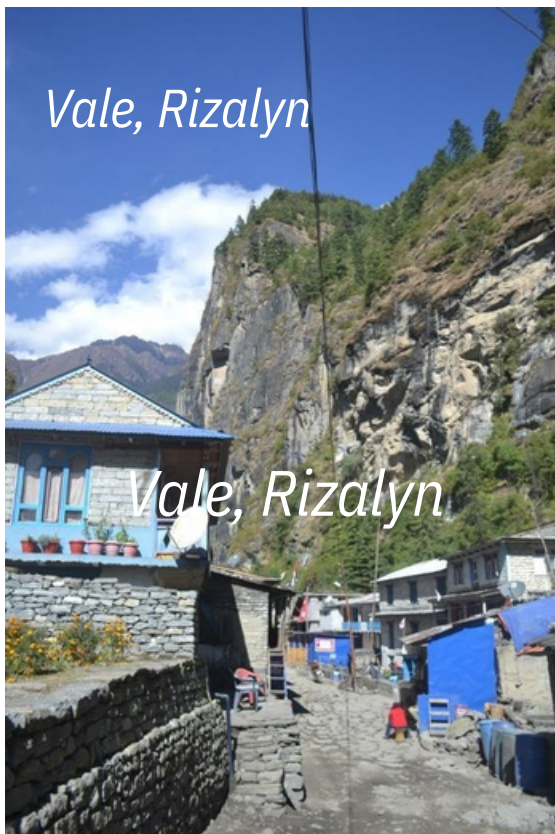
The river below did not seem too far as compared to other I have seen, but all the safe falling over or slipping out of the bridge would be fatal. Some of the hanging bridges in Nepal were damaged by the earthquake 2015 or destroyed due falling

boulders or rocks from above the mountains towering the construction. In other places,



I heard of a couple trekking through the Langtang valley where a rock fell off the cliff directly landing on the trail – where it hit the one of them on the head and died. The trails are relatively safe are that

cannot really be foreseen. As I remember these stories, I cautiously stepped into the bridge, whispering a prayer for keeping me safe and permission for passage. I arrive



in Ghenmu lata afternoon.

Day 2

Early in the morning I woke up to a distant sound of the gushing river by my window. It was beautiful to watch the turquoise water passing against the rocks in its path.

Similar to the day previous, after breakfast, I headed out with my backpack (containing the very essentials, water, trail food, headlamp, first aid kit, a cellphone and a pair of thermal sweaters and pants) towards Tal.

The trail had begun to take character – where I encountered steep hills, flats trails

before going back down to the path along the river that inevitably leads to another upward trail. There were several narrow paths on this trek, some were almost carved out of stone caves where I had to quickly navigate my way through before getting out into a clearing. There was a beautiful waterfall along this ridge, but I was not able to take a photograph, so I tried to remember it vivid in my mind instead, it was indeed beautiful and powerful.



One of the things I enjoy watching during my treks

are the cattle, who would often keep me company, even just for a moment. I would stand aside while they walked pass me, also to

keep safe, it is best to do so. Funny enough, I would even try to exchange glances with the cows or donkeys whenever I have the chance to do so. It's fascinating to see cattle to have somewhere to go, a purpose for the day – I wondered, do we as humans have such a direction or purpose, if so where to and what is it?



Day 3

The possibilities of trekking are many such as meeting local people

trekkers, and other eating various meals

and beverages unique to each region I visited.

There are many possibilities of uncertainties and challenges that one has not seen or experienced in other trails – it possible anytime. A few of such is sudden awareness of the surroundings, change of temperature, sudden fatigue or shortness of breath.

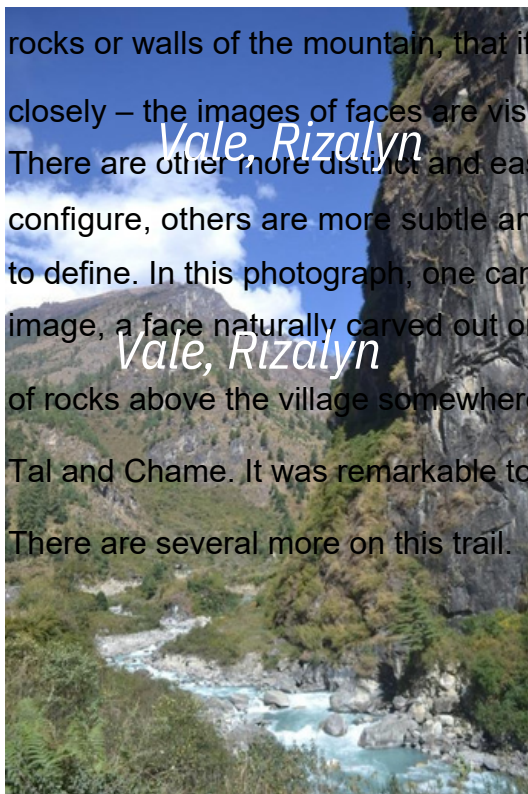
On this trip, I become more attentive to the shapes and features appearing on the

rocks or walls of the mountain, that if one look closely – the images of faces are visible.

There are other more distinct and easier to configure, others are more subtle and difficult to define. In this photograph, one can see an image, a face naturally carved out on the wall of rocks above the village somewhere between

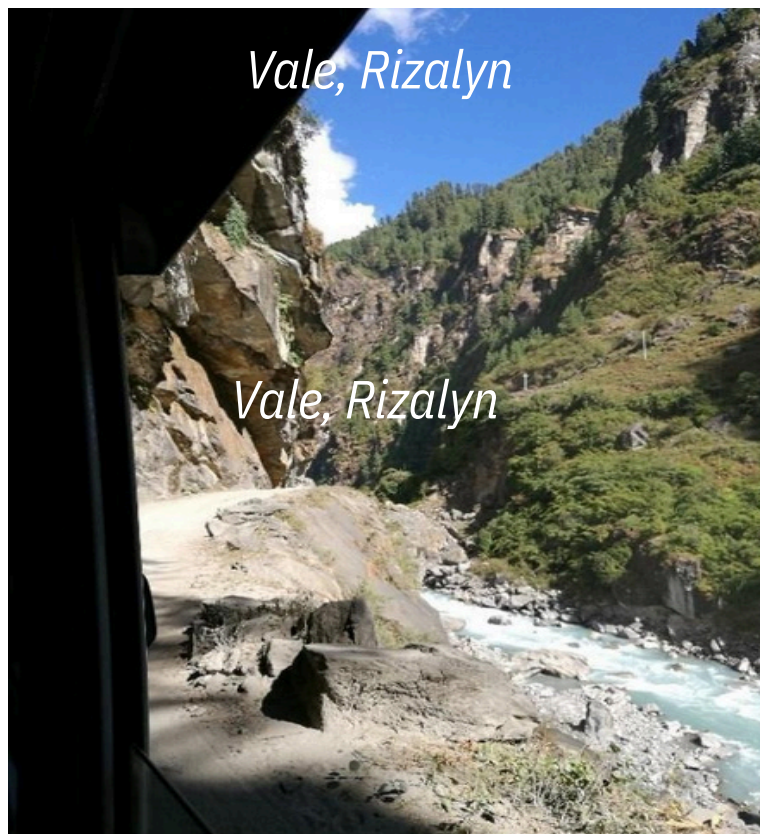
Tal and Chame. It was remarkable to see.

There are several more on this trail.



Typically, many of the tea lodges in Nepal are well aesthetically well designed, catering
m for t a nd g ive s a feeling of being home away
for the utmost co

enjoyed most of my stays in these tea lodges. The food is well prepared and delicious,
but sometimes can get more expensive the farther away from the city due to logistics
cost of transporting supplies to remote areas in the mountains. I safely reached Chame
after more than 9 hours of walk.



Day 4

From Chame, I was fortunate
enough to hitch hike on a jeep
going to Manang directly. This

photo was taken during that
road trip, the road was carved
out of the stone mountain, as

we went higher along long
winding steep road, (I have not

it
experienced anything like
before), it was like the wheel of

the jeep was just 12 inches

from the edge of the cliff, I marveled at the driving skills of those who ply these routes

– simply am a z in g.



Before reaching

Manang at sunset,

the jeep had a flat tire, I wondered if we were going to stay on

the road that night, if

they would not be able to fix it, luckily,

a

couple of hours. As we continued our trip, we had to stop to drop other passengers at

they did after

their respective villages along the way.

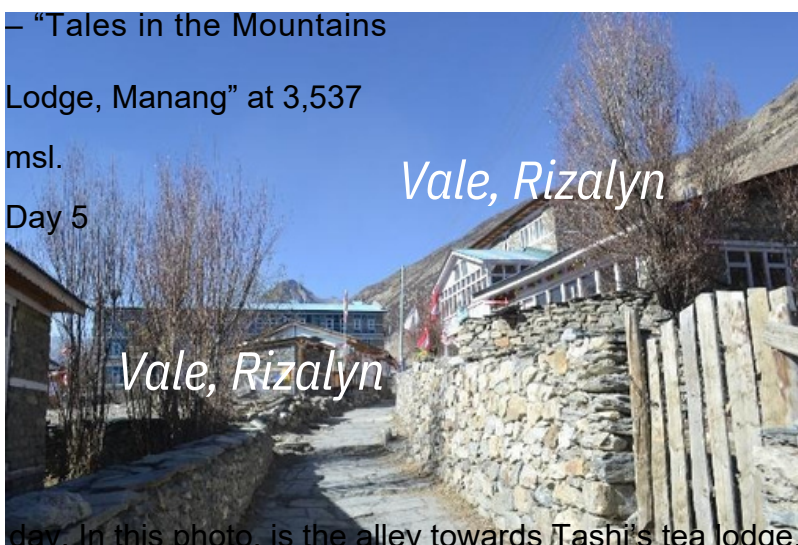
On reaching Manang, I was welcomed by my hosts, Tashi and his wife at their lodge

– “Tales in the Mountains

Lodge, Manang” at 3,537

msl.

Day 5



This was mid-November; it was getting very cold in the mountains even during the

day. In this photo, is the alley towards Tashi's tea lodge. It was beautifully architecture,

fully equipped to welcomed international and local tourists and trekkers. This is where

I planned to acclimatized before continuing my journey to Muktinath via Thorang La

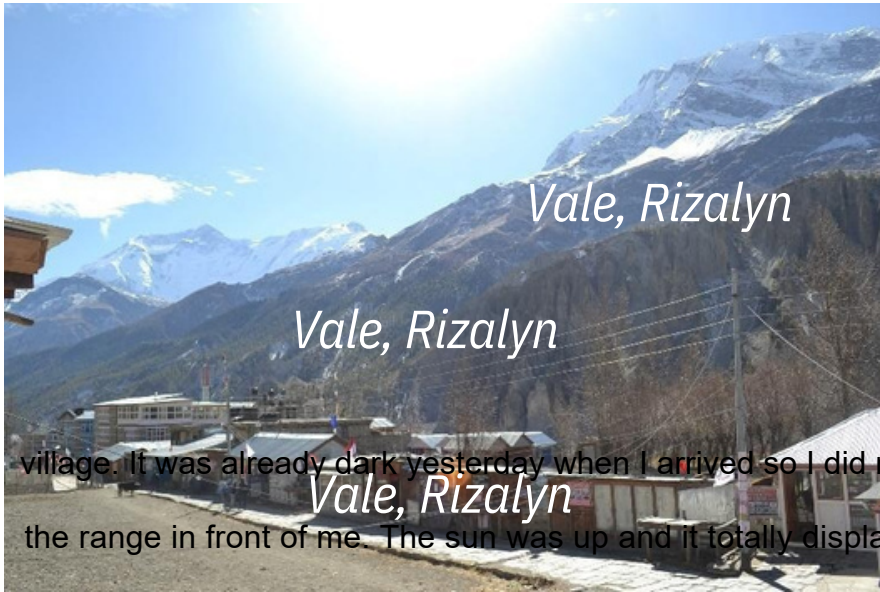
Pass in the next few days.

I had ordered a few dishes including the dhal bhat to prepare my system for my onward journey the meals served were delicious and nourishing which helped me recover from fatigued and cope with the increase in altitude.



trek the same routes over again. A few have shared of their reasons as to why they trek the Himalayas – one said it's for the adventure of it, some were recovering from a bereavement of a loved one, others were seeking for self-fulfillment, while many others felt it was just what they needed to do with no particular rationale behind it. They added, they are just drawn to the mountains, "Nature expressed in its splendid beauty".

Itotally agreed.



Day 6

The following day I went for a walk in the nearby area from the tea lodge. I was greeted with this view just outside the main entrance to the

village. It was already dark yesterday when I arrived so I did not see the magnitude of the range in front of me. The sun was up and it totally displayed the full range of the mountains, it was majestic and awesomely beautiful. I could not help myself but marvel at the landscape. There was a river running parallel to the dirt road which impressed on me of its presence through its sounds. In the quiet silence as the wind blew across of no direction, there was purity of existence I felt just standing there. This is one of the most wonderful moments of experiences of my journey.

Day 7



I could not help myself but marvel at the landscape. There was a river running parallel to the dirt road which impressed on me of its presence through

its sounds. In the quiet silence as the wind blew across of no direction, there was purity of existence I felt just standing there. This is one of the most wonderful moments of experiences of my journey.

I had taken walk further up the village and I came across more houses, tea lodges,



restaurants, internet cafes, temples and a museum. Many shops were closed at the time because

there were town meetings regarding the upcoming local

political elections in Nepal.



I went into a convenient store to get a soft drink and packet of cookies. This was store in the photo. I like the memory I had here, I felt happy. However, it was this night that I would feel so cold and a terrible headache. Whenever possible, I would visit the local museum in places I stayed to learn about their history, better understanding of their tradition and religion.

Inside this building, it housed artifacts, photographs and scrolls or books etc. of the village. As I glanced through the descriptions of the items inside, I had a glimpse of their past, I imagined what it was like to live here in those eras, the faces of the people in the photos reminded of rural Philippines, it held many similarities. I realized that I'm drawn to such things, I'm happy when I read about history, particularly how they lived in winter, in this cold in those many years ago – they were resilient, persistent and hardworking and determined.



The contrast of white and black photographs and the colored ones impressed me as I could see the transitioning of time and technology. The smiles captured in the photographs preserved the feeling of their joys at that time that allowed me to experience it. They spoke many nonverbal words, expressed in the lines of foreheads, the wrinkles at the end of the mouths, the innocence in the children's eyes gave me a glimpse of their everyday to day life

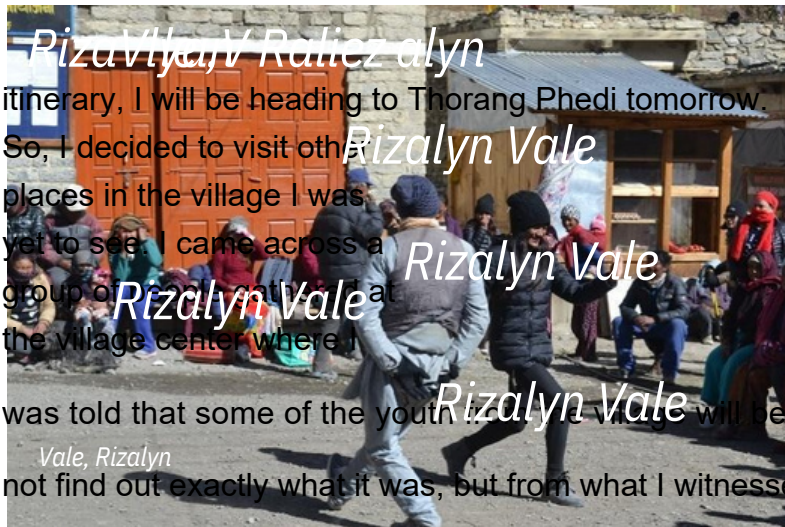
– was it good? Was it happy? Or was it difficult? I will never know or should I even aspi

asp

experiences is totally theirs and theirs alone, for which the interpretations is of their respective ownership, and no one else. I think, no outsider should dictate to them what meanings of life to them is, its not our place to dictate – for their joy is full.

Day 8

Woke up late in the morning since I was not able to know what has happened because this was unusual of me to have continued headaches especially during acclimatization. During breakfast, I realized that I had my head exposed to the cold during the night, which I would normally tuck myself inside the blanket. Perhaps I struggled to get air while asleep thereby exposing my head outside my blanket. I felt a bit dizzy and had to have a second round of coffee to bring myself to alertness.



According to my

itinerary, I will be heading to Thorang Phedi tomorrow. So, I decided to visit other places in the village I was yet to see. I came across a group of young men at the village center where I was told that some of the youth will be celebrating an event. I could not find out exactly what it was, but from what I witnessed they were happy. It was an experience for me to see them dance, laugh and chatter away the afternoon while others gathered to watch their performances.



The women I saw in Manang were beautiful, happy and somewhat content.

They take care of their children and family, cattle, and also backyard farming.

Here, they grew vegetables

such as cabbage, mustard and other leafy vegetables. They inspired me. Across the world, we live in different places, our activities may not be fully the same, but the love for family, community and Nature are common grounds where humanity thrive and sustained.



Later that afternoon, because of my persistent headache of which I thought would be gone by this time, I went to the village clinic to have a check up on my blood pressure and level of oxygen in my system (if I were fit enough to push through tomorrow to Thorang Phedi and then to cross Thorang La Pass to Muktinath. (Headaches at high altitudes should not be ignored, rather ensure medical check-up as soon as possible – it can have serious implications such as altitude sickness).

It turned out that my oxygen level was only 75% intake instead of 96- 98% which was not a good idea to continue to trek to even a higher altitude of Thorang La Pass (5,418 msl). After Manang village, there are really no tea lodges if any, they will be closed in preparation for winter (water freezes to solid ice in the taps of the houses). I was told that there will few local people there to cater for my stay at Thorang Phedi, that I might sleep in a tent or a stable – that with my condition it was best not to go.

Sadly, I had to postpone my trek to Muktinath and convinced myself that it is a good reason to try again next time. I decided to stay in Manang for couple of days more to have a good rest, until I was stronger to trek back to Beshisahar and then to Pokhara.

(Day 9 & 10)

During my extended stay in Manang, I had the privilege to speak and interview Tashi, the lodge owner, who happened to be a conservationist, and his key interest is of the Snow Leopard and ensuring the mutual co-existence of wild life and local communities. Over the years, his work has been recognized by the government and other renowned organizations in Nepal and abroad. This was truly inspiring.



Day 11 -- (Nov22.2017)

I took a jeep along with other passengers from Manang to Beshisahar. I was happy, my journey was full. It is time to return to Pokhara. Between me and that, long

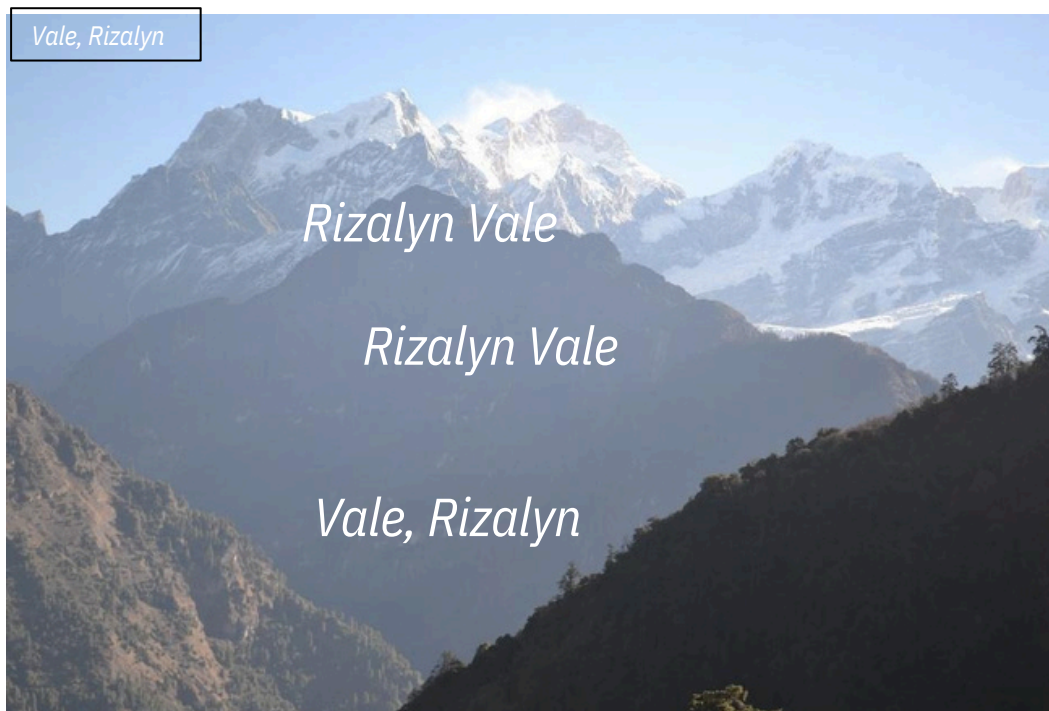
winding steep roads beside the gushing rivers that rushed down to everywhere in is the road ahead, the

Nepal. I we felt great that morning, I felt assured that this journey was great. With a lunch stop over near Pisang, I had that opportunity to chat with the group I was travelling with in the jeep. They were from different countries – Germany, Italy, India and China – we had a bit of difficulty understanding each other due to the language barriers, but somehow with a few gestures and pointing to the menu, we were able to order the food and beverages we wanted for lunch. It was funny and good conversations were shared.



The jeep driver was like a rock star on the wheel, he knew our lives depended on him. He had to do to do his best, he assumed a character with patience, bravery and calmness. It seemed most of us knew the way the road looked like, sometimes the lady beside me

would look me in the eye as if to say are we going to be okay, I'd would just smile and sincerely hope so. In all of this dilemma, in one of the villages we passed, a man hitched hiked, but the jeep was already full, so he decided to stand beside my window outside the jeep, he was literally hanging out there with one hand on the handle inside the jeep and another holding on tight to the side mirror gear. I feared for him because when we passed the ridge, he was right on the edge of it and could easily fall into the gorge if he loses his grip. In this photo, one can see the narrow road that only one vehicle can use the road at a time – drivers had to reverse all the way back down or up, to make the other go through, whichever way is easier for them depending on the situation.



We all safely reached Beshisahar around 4 PM same day, thanks to good weather, all drivers and to God Almighty for a safe journey. I took the bus in the morning back to Pokhara and later on to Kathmandu where I took a flight back to Manila.

In this journey to Manang, I learned a lot from Nature, people, from the trail, I realized many things I would never have known if I had not taken this trip. It challenged my physical body, my mental awareness and level of consciousness of my health, my surroundings and the experiencing of all that was happening simultaneous to me and around me. It awakened a sharper decision-making skill, a promptness of intuition and added a level of understanding, wisdom to clarifying my priorities in life – it made me understand better what are the aspects of my life that most important. I guess it is when we confronted with the realities in experiences that we are better in grasping that which is implicitly necessary and required to hold on to life and its essences.

Not a moment to waste, nor excuses to occupy the idle mind but resume a responsibility for a full life and holding to its reins to the end of its time. Namaste.

A JOURNEY TO MARDI HIMAL, WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEPAL, DECEMBER 2019. NARRATIVES BY RIZALYN VALE. (EXCERPTS FROM PERSONAL JOURNAL). Finding the Unknown in the Known, 2019

Figure 4. Mardi Himal Trek Map



Source: *Excellenttrek.com*

On an average the Mardi Himal trek from Phedi or Kande takes approximately 5-6 days to Mardi Himal Base Camp with an elevation of 4,500 meters above sea level (msl). It is short and moderate route, often taken and great for beginners and all trekkers who enjoy a more leisure pace on the trail. It is a total distance of approximately 44 km trek.

From the map, I understood the route and the tentative schedule it would require to Mardi Himal Base camp. However, I was also aware about the challenges and difficulties that could happen during this trek such the weather changes, temperature, and the altitude. It was December, winter had already started. The wind was crisp and cold, even just at the starting point of the trek at Phedi, I could already feel gusts of chilled breeze on my face.

Day 1

Arrived at Phedi from Pokhara (800 msl) by bus, it was almost midday. I had lunch at the nearby shop to the entrance of trail to Deurali (2,142 msl) via Pothana (1,990 msl), where I had planned to stay for the night. It was a 4 hours trek for the day. (See map above).



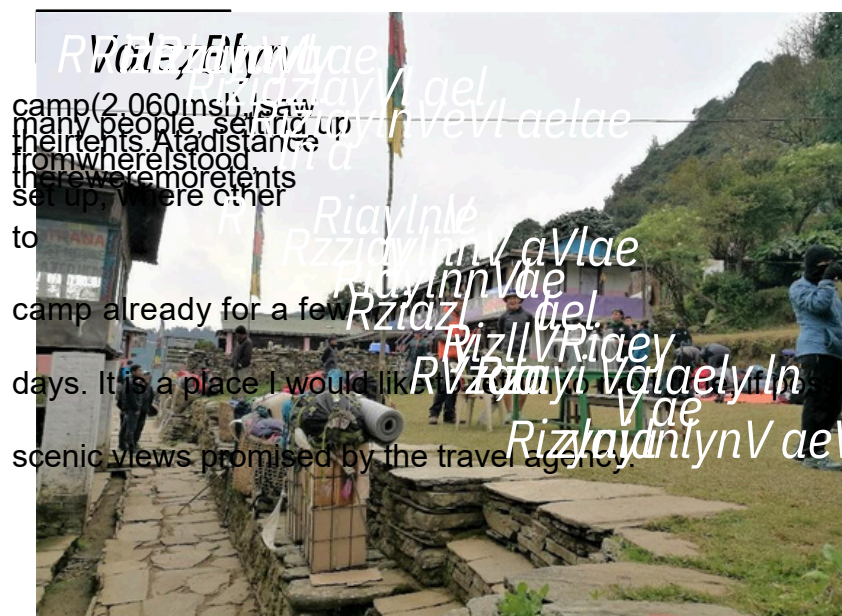
This is the starting point at Phedi, I saw this sign board “Way to Australian Camp”. It is said to be an excellent view point of the Himalayan range -the Annapurna range, Machhapuchhre range and Manaslu range.

The skies were blue and the weather really looked great, it was sunny. It was good to be back trekking again, I thought. The excitement had returned, but I was also worried that I had started relatively late – by midday, a trek that I should have usually taken on much earlier in the morning. I had depended on my guide to know the way and he assured that the trail was only moderately difficult. But I wished I had listened to my intuition.

Along the way, I had taken a cup of tea and biscuit to entertain the rumbling of my tummy. While I waited sitting on a wooden bench, I saw other trekkers in groups, or travelling solo. They seem to be returning from a route that connected to the Annapurna circuit, while others seem to just start, seeing that their backpacks and shoes were relatively clean without mud etc. In all, they looked excited and happy too. There was no news of anything, like bad weather in the mountains or any rescues in

the last few days in the area, which was nice to know. It is something that I had learned from previous treks to observe, listen or ask your guide for any information discussed among other guides or porters, and local community, to decide the best route of the trek or turn back completely.

There were so much to see and observe on this trail, the new flowers blossoming and the lady upstairs a hotel lodge across where I was, taking out all the beddings from the rooms out to the sun to dry. I wondered how they get to wash and dry all these thick blankets in this cold, which from the looks of it, they get washed and dried eventually without any washing machine or dryers – amazing. There is however the question of how often do they wash them? How many guests use the blankets before they wash them? That worried me a lot too. It was no wonder, that in a few of the tea lodges I had stayed in, the blankets had a sort of curated scent which I could not explain, if it was clean or not, but it did not matter most of the time, because all that worry about in such a situation is – the cold. It can be bitter.



HereistheAustralian

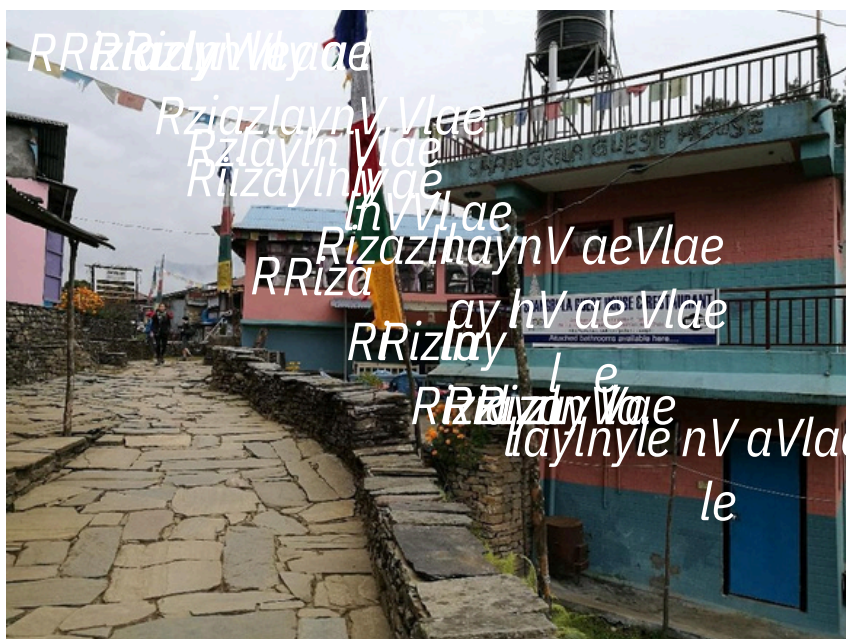
camp (2,060m) saw many people setting up their tents. At a distance from where I stood, there were more tents set up, where other to camp already for a few days. It is a place I would like to visit, to also experience the scenic views promised by the travel agency.

trekkers seemed



Already in this picture, I could already see part or tip of the snowcapped mountains, but mostly covered by clouds. I felt lucky to see these, on first day of the trek. I wondered on a sunny bright day, not in winter, the mountain range that be seen from here, must be mistand heart is happy and content.

Immediately, I'm reminded to take up my backpack and trekking stick to continue walking, this time up hill and steep. Trekking is full of ups and downs, literally, like in life, I often remind myself whenever this situation arises, I cannot run away from it or avoid it, I must just keep going.



On getting to Pothana (1,990 msl), I had to stop here for some food and a cup of tea, it was getting so hot and the sunlight had gone dimmer being covered with mist and clouds. I felt

tired, the altitude was too challenging, I was beginning to feel the strain on my legs. I

comforted myself that I was just about an hour or two away from Deurali (2,142 msl), where after a warm dinner I could go to bed early (so, I thought).



This house caught my attention, so did

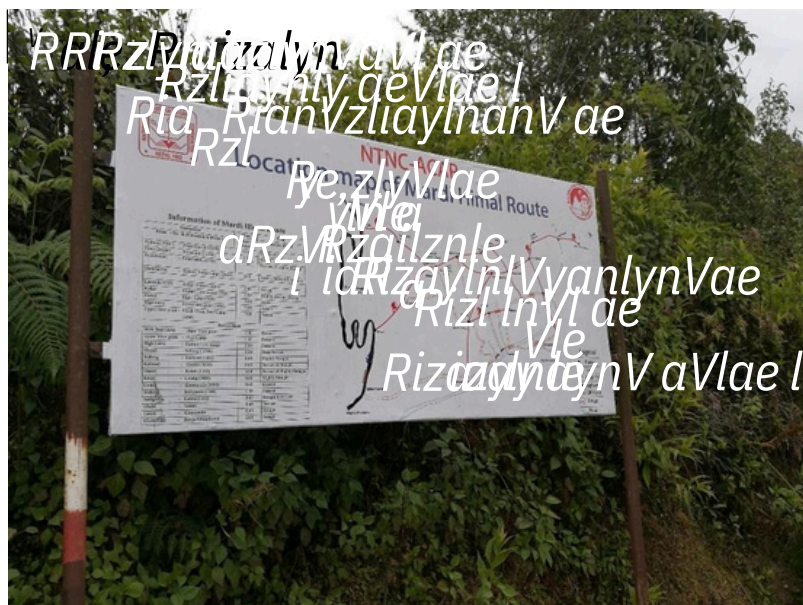
blackened window and the upper floor,

kitchen, a house where they had dried

their harvest of corn or

reminded me of rural Philippines, I was

happy.



After going through the check point for my TIMS card (Trekker's Information Management Systems), I have arrived in Deurali. This is where the trails from the Annapurna circuit and the Mardi Himal meet. It was really nice and felt

rewarding to get here.

But for some reason, my guide decided to push through all the way to Forest Camp (2,520 msl). It was 379 meters higher, and it would take 4 hours or more to get there.



It was not a good idea, but there was still light, and my guide thought we could still make it before 8 pm at the latest. It was around 4.30 pm. (This was a bad assumption). This is Deurali, a center point. I decided not to take any more tea or food here, and was just eager to

keep going so as to reach Forest camp at the earliest.

It was at this point, that we had taken the turn into the forest, that should lead us straight to Forest camp.

This is trail, it looked beautiful and alluring. I had a feeling enchantment in my stomach, I felt bewildered I remember. As we went into the trail, the forest became more apparent, the trees were higher, thicker and moss was everywhere, it was colder. This was not the first time I had been in such a situation on a trail, and the sunset was beautiful. The trees are usually marked blue or white, so trekkers or guides would

know which way to go. We followed the signs, but it seemed we were going in circles. Everywhere looked

the same, the trail leading to a dead end or a less travelled path.

It was then we were lost. I decided that we needed to look for shelter to stay for the night,

otherwise it would be too cold in the open and also for fear of wild animals, or bandits. There were no tea

lodge anywhere, only a newly built tea shop, but it was closed, no one was there. We

had no choice but to reach for the latch of the wooden door, and open it, later on, in

the morning, we would pay for our stay. Luckily, it opened, it was dark and extremely

cold. No food or water in the shelter. I found a kettle with warm water still on the

charcoal stove, and had some to drink. I found some blankets, (I thought about the

laundry earlier), it did not matter then, if it was clean or not, it was so cold (during a

sunny day in winter, the average temperature was 13 degree Celsius). I went to sleep,

but woke up in the middle of the night where two men were at the door, knocking. Fear

overcame me, I shouted and called out for my guide, who was fast asleep in a corner

wrapped up in a blanket – he jumped up, he was also shocked to see people at this

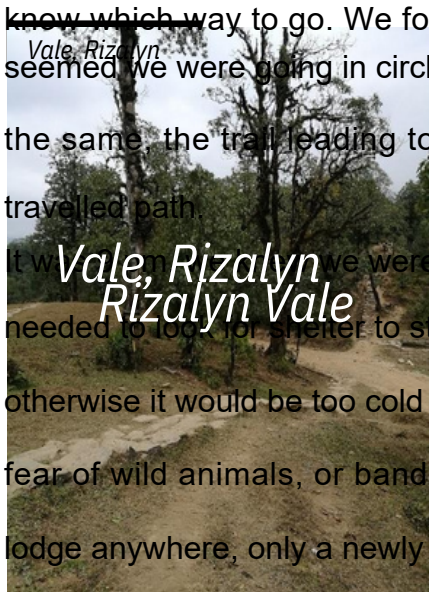
time, they spoke in Nepali, I was hoping to God there were the owners of the shop, so

we could explain our plight and not bandits (a possibility I knew so well because it

seemed the trail we had followed was not in the map) and there were no other trekkers

we met or followed us). I later was told, that these two men were also trekkers who

had lost their way – similarly they had been going round in circles for hours, until they



were led to where we were. I absolutely relieved and due to exhaustion, went back to sleep. I felt better since we were more people together, I felt safer.

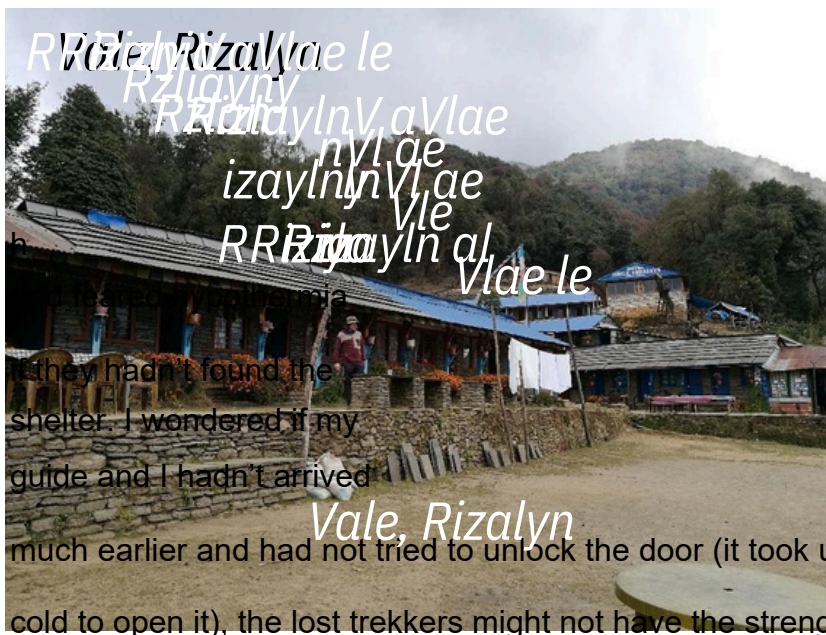


Day 2

Without food or water, the previous night, I woke up most grateful to be alive and survived the night. In spite of

being in the wild in the middle of nowhere I felt safe (in Nepal it is not common to have any type of violence or

crime on the trail because the local community ensure as much as possible to keep trekkers safe to maintain the tourism credibility in their district), however, one should still be cautious and alert at all times. In my case, getting lost in that forest remain a mystery, and that two other trekkers lost their way, just like us – made me think if we were enchanted by the spirits of the forest, did they lead us astray to the shelter? Was it all a coincidence? Were we all meant to meet each other? Did our paths cross for a reason? It would seem so. Later on, I realized I needed to hear their stories. I realized I learned a lot from them, their trekking adventures, they spoke about their challenges in their career, businesses and family lives etc. And that, trekking gave them opportunities to reflect on deeper meaning of their lives and how to cope or move on from their failures or frustrations, while being grateful for that they have and still plan to do in the future.

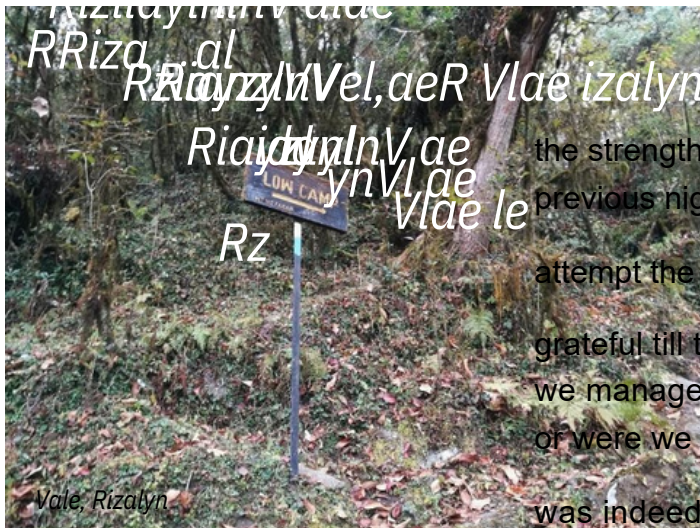


Over breakfast, I came to know that they had been circling the forest for four hours (10pm to 2am).

If they hadn't found the shelter, I wondered if my guide and I hadn't arrived

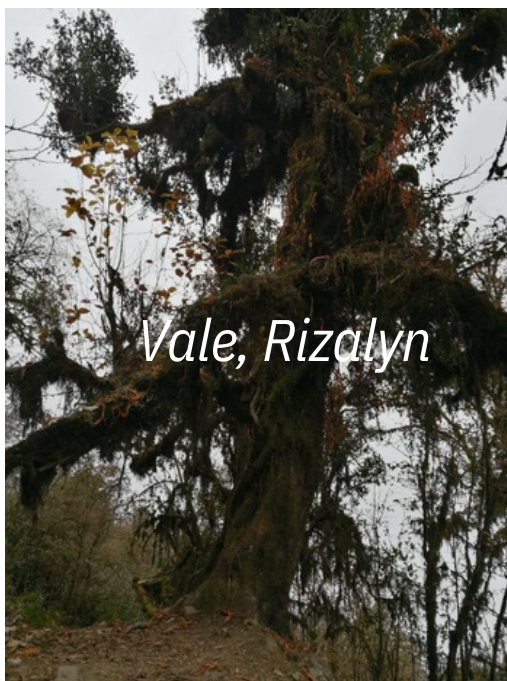
much earlier and had not tried to unlock the door (it took us more than an hour in the cold to open it), the lost trekkers might not have the strength to open it and stay outside in the extreme cold for the night. They were very grateful to us for opening the door and to share that space for safety. I realized that in life and death situations, people become the best or worst of themselves - deep emotions of despair, anger, fear or gratefulness, appreciation, goodness, faith etc. are embodied within us. Such virtue or vice, can be recalled to express violence, vengeance, regret, guilt etc. or redemption, forgiveness and compassion.

For the rest of the trek, the conversations were about science, arts, religion and politics, and more information on trekking destinations to explore.



On getting to Low camp, I realized that I would not have had

the strength or mental capacity to attempt the ascent in the cold. I'm grateful till today, that somehow, we managed to find that shelter, or were we led to find it? The forest camp area was indeed a forest – surrounded by moss of



what looked like decades old or more. It did not feel eerie at all, not of ghosts, but that of a presence of the forest itself was there. I felt I was inside a story book; a fairy tale being told of things you cannot see but definitely feel. I lingered a little more, but I knew I had to move on faster.

Some of the scenic views I encountered during the trek in Mardi Himal. It was indeed breathtaking (3,050 msl). Somewhere between low camp and high camp. This is like standing at the summit of Mt. Apo or Mt Pulag, or almost 3 times the elevation of Mt. Maquiling.

Trekking had been difficult for me since I was not even close to being fit, but out of a



sheer want to experiencesuch

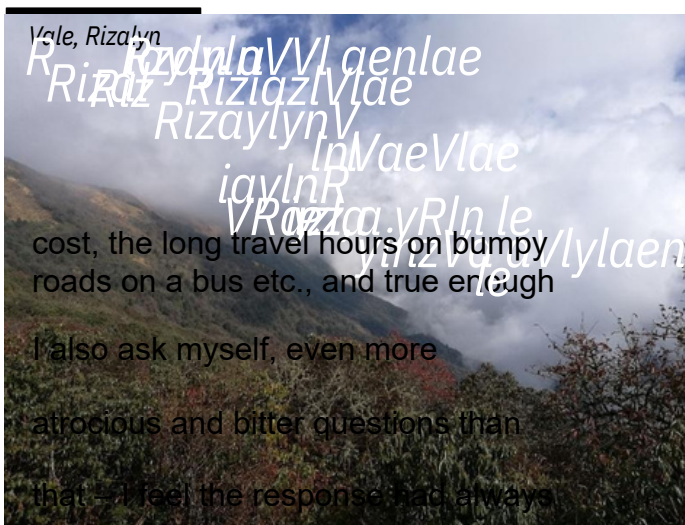
landscapes underneath theskies,

had mespellboundtokeep on trekking. body

Fortunately, the continue to obey. With help of the

Nepali Sherpa community, hospitality in general and the local

guides, porters – they make it possible for people like me to savor and bask on these gems of experiences.



The question often asked of me is

“whydoyoudoit?”giventhe

dangers,thephysicalconstraints,the

cost, the long travel hours on bumpy roads on a bus etc., and true enough

I also ask myself, even more

atrocious and bitter questions than

that – I feel the response had always

been, “it is a quest to know myself better” and the opportunities of better relationship with Nature and Others. Not so much of finding meaning or something to do, I felt, rather it is more regarding understanding “what is happening”.

I arrived safely in High Camp with my trekking colleagues. Dinner was good. I had a good sleep after spending a couple of hours by the fire place and later retired to my room.

Day 3

I stayed at this lodge at High camp surrounded by the mist of clouds all day. It was a beautiful day.



I decided not to go high to
Base Camp, as I was not
feeling too well due to the
cold and thin air. I have not
fully recovered from the first
night of the trek at the shelter.
I knew I had to take care of
myself first.

The other trekkers who kept us company went to base camp and returned the following day.



Day 4.

I had lost track of time, if not for the clock on the wall in the tea lodge, I wouldn't know if it was morning or midday or late afternoon. It was a good experience to just gaze at the clouds, the

changing shapes of the mist as it envelops the structures and mountains in its path.

The wind was calm yet purposeful in its direction. I realized that during this trek I had a better appreciation for my surroundings, I was more aware of my senses.



This is fireplace. It fascinated me how this was constructed right in the middle of the lodge. It kept the place warm at night, while a water kept the

Back in the city in the Philippines, I recall the many conveniences we enjoy, but often take for granted. I learned a lot in trekking including the simple details on simple living.

The owners of the tea lodge shared the story of how they started the business in the high camp. They had worked in the Pokhara in retail shops but after years of that, they felt the city was getting crowded and the “noise” became too much to bear that they decided to build a small place like this along the

Mardi Himal trail since they had inherited it from their grandparents. But their families and parents, remained in Pokhara as their children schooled in the city. Their earnings from tourism along the trail provided much of the income.

Although they also confided that it was not easy to do start-up businesses in the trail



as it heavily dependent on the number tourists and trekkers that choose the Mardi Hamal trail as more trekkers choose more difficult

destinations such as the Everest base camp and Annapurna circuits. Beyond the income, they are talented, and in the business instead of working for someone else in the

city, they preferred to bet on this to earn an income, while living harmoniously and peacefully in the mountains.

Day 5

The last day of the trek, I feared I would not even see the mountains and longed to see them when all of sudden



and revealed such majestic array of the

could stay much longer to view the mountains – to see the possibilities of changes of its appearance against the background light of the sun, the interactions among the billowing clouds among them. Its fascination to see the clouds as though paying obedience to the mountains to be revealed, and at their command conceal their presence from the outside world. The emotions stirred being granted such a passage were purely that of that awe and gratitude.

The owners of the lodge have rightly captured a what this place was about, by naming their lodge – “Panoramic”, an excellent description to communicate what may be

experienced at High camp, a promise however, yet so dependent on the mountains, if they will grant their present on your visit.



Around midday, after a light lunch I started to descend towards Pokhara on the same day. It was fast paced walk down, relatively a slow winding trail down all the way to Siding village where a steep trail has to be navigated more carefully.

I find going down the trail was more challenging for me as I have to have better control and consciousness of my knees, a misstep can mean a dislocation. I have seen a few trekkers over the years, getting minor injuries, treated at tea lodges – but they need to trek down, hopping with a broken ankle or dislocated joint etc. on the trail was emphatically painful site to behold. I learned a lot by observing other trekkers, I knew anything can happen when I least expect it, so extra care and attention is imperative when trekking. It is important to always take caution, while trekking so I do not inconvenience others and lessen the risk of injuries on myself.

In previous treks, I have had a few problems with my knees, the strain on the joints and leg muscles builds up, so it is necessary to do regular medical check-ups and do



daily exercises on a basis even when one is not trekking.

This photograph is special to me as it reminded

me of my own beagle back home in the Philippines. I was so amazed to find a trekking dog on the trail, I wondered if I could do the same for my beagle on my return. The lady was from Spain, she had been an arid trekker for many years in Nepal and other parts of the world. In her eyes, I could sense her understanding of the mountains, her respect and love for trekking. With a few exchanges of words in Spanish, there was a feeling of comradery, a common interest, a sense of belonging. She travelled with beagle as much as possible and where K9s are allowed on the trail. I felt happy to them both, an inspiration indeed.

On reaching Hyangja, the jeep was already there ready to take all passengers who had gathered there to Pokhara city. I reached Pokhara safely around 7 pm, just on time for dinner. After a few days of rest, I went on a journey to Ghorepani, a trek to Poon hill in December of 2019.

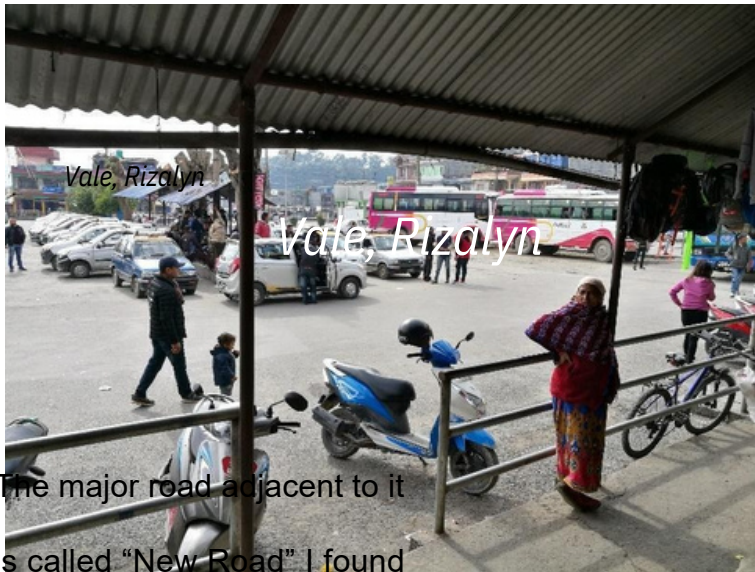
A JOURNEY TO POON HILL, GHOREPANI, WESTERN DISTRICT OF NEPAL, DECEMBER 2019. NARRATIVES BY RIZALYN VALE.(EXCERPTS FROM PERSONAL JOURNAL)



The Poon Hill trek (3,210 msl) isa5to6days trek from Bhirethati or Nayaphul, Nepal. I took an early bus to Nayaphulwithmyguide from Pokhara. We had a flat tire on the way, which delayed our trip forabout2hours.

This journey is one of the mostmemorable treks I have ever done (spent Christmas in the mountains), as if tosay,itisas if, my search was coming to a full circle (little did I know that in the nextfewweeks, the pandemic 2020 will begin and halt travels and major economic activitiesaround the world).

Day 1



This is the bus station in Pokhara, where I took the bus to Nayaphul. I have been here a couple of times on my way to other trekking sites in Western Nepal.

The major road adjacent to it is called "New Road" I found

that interesting, as it may have been commissioned as new road when it was newly constructed – so I thought. Maybe next time I would try to find out more about it.



This is one of the local canteens on way to Nayaphul - most buses stop for meals or snacks and tea etc. The food served here are delicious and satisfying (that is if you are fan of Indian – Nepali cuisines). For the first

time, I took a photo of it just to remind me of those times I was there. I was happy.



Rizalyn Vale
 Tirkhedhunga (1440 msl) just
 about 3 hours away. I reached
 the tea lodge by night fall. It was
 already dark. The weather
 had set in. A warm
 meal was served to me. My
 delight, it was delicious, a well-deserved reward after the steep stretch of trail I had to
 objectively navigate and complete.

The lodge was almost empty, but the night before, groups of trekkers stayed
 here before pushing for the Annapurna circuit earlier in the day.



Before they closed for
 the day, I visited the lodge. I met with the cook and her
 assistant, her daughter to thank
 them for a good meal (even that
 we arrived so late). The lodge
 still accommodated us. My
 guide was in touch with them,
 so they were expecting us. Her husband runs the place together with his brother. He
 was the one at the reception when I arrived earlier. I observed they have a rice cooker,
 this is the first time I saw one during my treks. I assumed that the use of it is becoming
 more common especially that this place is not that far from Pokhara, the city – so I
 thought, maybe I'm wrong too.



Day 2

I woke up early to prepare for my trek to Ulleri, which I heard was an easy to moderate trek with a few trails that could be steep (I realized, that it depends who I ask as to what is the level of difficulty,

Nepalis will say easy to moderate, but in my case, it was already high difficulty, that I find really a reality at the same time funny). Each time while on a trek like this, I'm often reminded that I should have done more preparations – like running, jogging and cardio for at least 3 months before venturing into form of trekking in Nepal (but I never learn, right, also because sometimes my work schedule come in the way – my excuse).

Figure 5. Poonhill Trekking Map



From the map, I will need to trek to Ghorepani (2,856 msl) via Ulleri, 6 hours walk up hill. From there, trek up to Poon hill for sunrise the following day. That was the plan, but plans do change – sometimes even for the better.



After a few hours, I had lunch here. Not many people as winter were already here and

lastbatchofgrouptrekkers were already in the mountains and would be heading back before Christmas to Pokhara.

For this trek, I designed my itinerary, I planned to stay a bit longer at each point on the trail where possible, so that I could give more attention to my experience and my environment. Previously, I had followed strictly what the travel agency had offered, but I negotiated this one this time.



This was my lunch, buttered chicken and rice. It was all I needed, I felt happy.



I came across this house, I fancied it. There was beauty in its structure, or was the essence of the house I was seeing, the presence of the people that lives here.

There was no one here, as common practice people

migrate to the city to escape the bitter cold of winter in many parts of the Himalayas.



After a few hours, the trail became steep or was I getting tired. It was cold and I knew my legs and feet were almost freezing.

I saw this woman rushing down the trail but in very steps, it seemed she was in hurry, but her movement was slow yet swiftly navigating the stones covered in snow.

I'm almost always stunned by the images I see along the trails, I had hope to know more about them, to converse with them – to ask, where are they going and why?

Where do you live? What is like to live here? How do you cope with cold? – these thoughts rushed through me. (Most of these questions were answered by my guide who had been working as tourist guide for many years).



The day was beautiful and weather was bright and warm.

I met a couple who sat by this stone wedge on the trail with a horse. I stopped by to say hello and ended up having a chat with them while we spoke to the horse too. The horse was owned by a farmer who lived nearby. It was a pure white horse, I thought it was a good sign and counted it a blessing.

One of the best experiences I have had on this trail.

At this place, I had some snacks and tea, while I caught up with my breath. The altitude



is getting more intense at this point of the trail. The weather had suddenly cold in the late afternoon.

Before sunset, I reached this place with a house in view as if it was in a movie. It was so beautiful, yet mysterious. On getting closer, we

found out it was a warehouse of some sort, local harvest and farm produce were stored there, perhaps for the winter.

Again, there was no one there.

It growing dark, and darker and we are yet to see any signs of Ghorepani. In the cold, the destination seems to always allude me, it keeps getting further. I was getting tired

and almost in tears.



Every step on the trail became heavier. But the beauty of every moment I experienced along trails

became etched in my

memory as if time was

these arduous set free.

I managed to reach Ghorepani around 7 pm, which is rather too late in the evening.

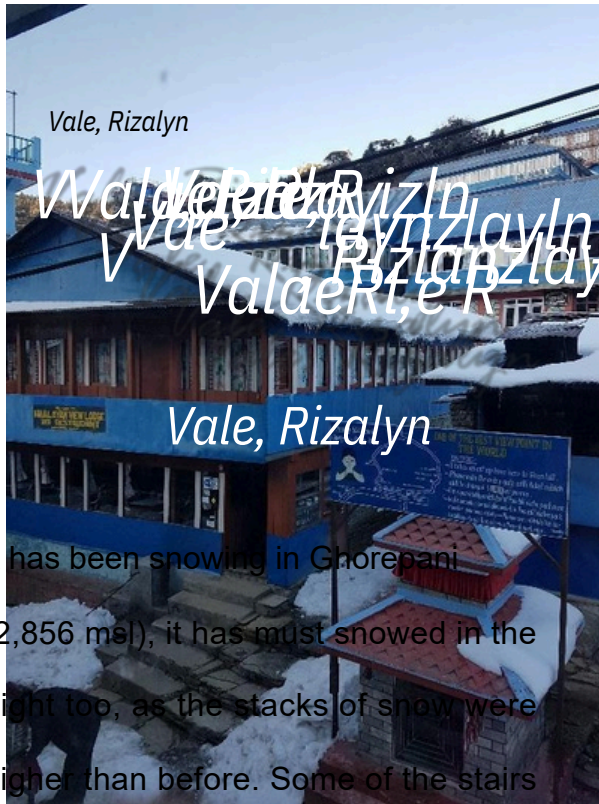


A dinner by the fireplace made

everything seemed well again. The day was full and exuberate. I'm very happy. Retired to my room and had a good sleep even though it was freezing cold, it was minus 2 degrees

Celsius.

Day 3



This is view from my tea lodge. It was

just in front of me. There were many

lodges here. I have not seen so many all-in-one locations, it must be truly a popular destination for trekkers and tourists.

It has been snowing in Ghorepani (2,856 msl), it has must snowed in the night too, as the stacks of snow were higher than before. Some of the stairs

on the trail had turned to ice, and had become slippery, I saw a few people slipping



down as they tried to walked on it. I wondered how will I be able to cross that path. The inventory of the tea lodge I stayed in was impressive. I have grown fond of the soft drink - Fanta during my treks. It reminds me home. At some point, I get homesick. I miss the warmth of my home.

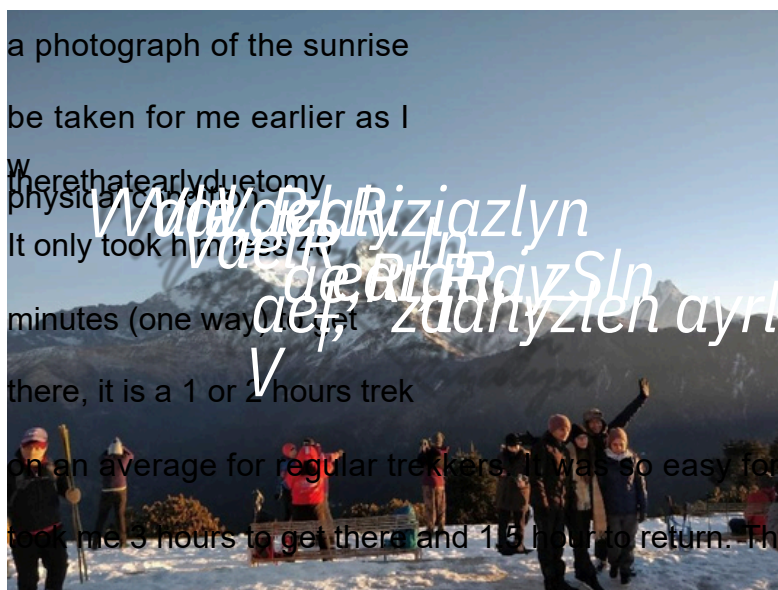
as it is the way up to Poonhill



It was 7.30 am, I just had breakfast, its time to get going – to Poon hill.

I took this photograph to remind myself of this street reminding me of the different directions. From Ghorepani, many trekkers push through to Annapurna Base Camp (ABC) or explore other parts of the Annapurna circuit. This was that time I was about to leave the lodge to Poon hill.

This photograph was shared to me by my guide – Tara Sherpa. I had requested that



a photograph of the sunrise

be taken for me earlier as I

was there that early due to my physical condition.

It only took him less than

minutes (one way) to get

there, it is a 1 or 2 hours trek

on an average for regular trekkers. It was so easy for Nepalis guides. In my case it took me 3 hours to get there and 1.5 hour to return. The trails were so slippery in most parts, and a lot of snow.

could not be able to get



This is the trail to Poon hill, more than 350 meters from Ghorepani.

It was a beautiful, the weather was excellent. The sunlight provided the much needed warmth for this cold ascent to Poon hill. From a distance, everywhere looked like a painting in real life. It was awesome to be here, the effort to get there was so worth it.

On seeing the tower up ahead, I

decided to take a few minutes to just sit on the snow, wonderful to see, touch and know the

presence of the snow. Time seem to have slowed down for me.



As I reflect about this journey, it was a good decision, there are many challenges, but there are more blessings. My life will never be the same again. To behold the beauty and magnitude of the mountains, and realize their presence, something changes within me, I have improved in getting to

Vale, Rizalyn
Vale, Rizalyn
Vale, Rizalyn
Vale, Rizalyn

know my thoughts better, strengthening my coherence to my life world and that of the outside. This journey has indeed – added valuable experiences that sometime my words are not enough to describe it.

On reaching Poon hill, I was awe struck by the scenic views that welcomed me.

I was dumbfounded by the majestic beauty of the Himalayan range. I just knew that within me – this creation was perfect. It is a place that I would recommend everyone to visit someday.

There are many mysteries around Poon hill as it is with other trekking sites. Over the years, things changed for me from being a tourist – to a devotee.

It was no longer about getting to the summit, or a destination per se, rather it is now about paying homage to places such as this that has been revered over hundreds of years. It is as though; I had begun to understand what is being “said” here. My



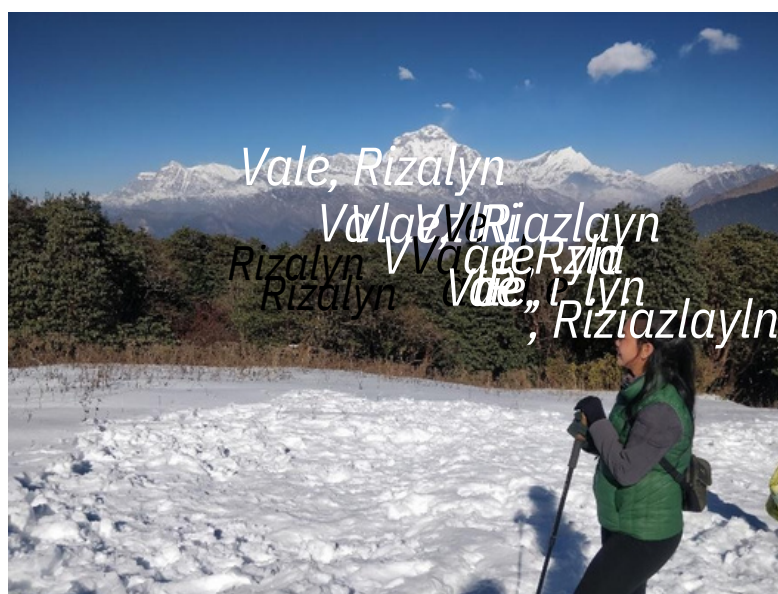
devotion to the mountains is about submission to awe and wonder of their “eternal nature”. It is not of religion or a what truly exist, and beyond me, will certain belief that I speak of, but that of the sign board, I was in tears, realizing the depth of my gratitude for the granting me the passage through the trails to be able to be here. I had begun celebrating – Life, that gives life - to my life.

In silence, totally alone in my mind and emotions, the breath connects everything to you. In these moments, the body recedes accepting that is which not easily understood – life and death.

There are many explanations of varied ve
re al to me i s t ha t the body, mind and emo
visit here, but one thing so
coherent – as one voice.

The continuous argument of what is real and what is not, reaches a certain level of agreement – while keeping reserved others that were not fully gained to another day. Here, toda y w a s a g o o d o p p o r t u n i t y to j u s t

able to understand – the truth. What is this truth? – to be alive, and live it to the fullest of existence of what can be



done, that everyday experiences need to be

profound. The profoundness

can only be reached in full accepting that which exist in

my experience. Such experiences – could be misery

or pleasant, the choice remains mine, that is – Truth. This does not mean that I gear towards becoming a martyr of an any situation, always finding what can be good in a bad situation, but to be logically doing what is but necessary. There are that of living on the outside and there is that living on the inside. That which is on the inside cannot and should not be disturb by the outside – this comes with the knowing of what and who I'm representing to the outside based on my interpretation of me.

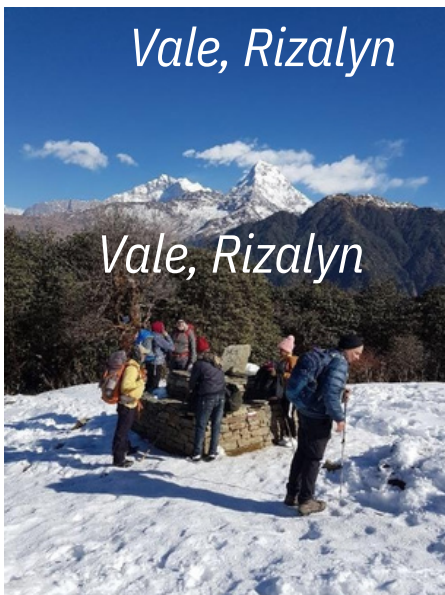


This was the trail on my return to the lodge.

It seemed short, yet it kept winding down as though it would never end. Perhaps this was a wish in my mind as the weather was beautiful and warm. There were so much

to see and gaze at, every tree, every stone – the snow was so white in sun.

I had taken a couple of rests beside the stone hedges; it was nice the cold damp moss on the rocks that lay beside the path. I wondered how long it would take for that to grow. Just curious.



I saw many people at the point, it was where one could take a few minutes rest, with a fantastic view of the mountains from a distance. Some of them were heading up to Poon hill and some were returning to their lodges. There were mixed facial expressions on them, mostly excitement– but I could not really tell what it was, but I could somehow see that some people were also in deep thought, almost

a look of bewilderment or confusion.

There was an elderly man I had briefly chatted here, as he inquired how I was doing - I explained that I'm rather too slow in trekking because I think I have a small heart that pumps the blood with oxygen in my lungs hence my turtle speed. He laughed, and said

– good you

have a heart, even though small, you doing great, that is so much better to deal with than me,

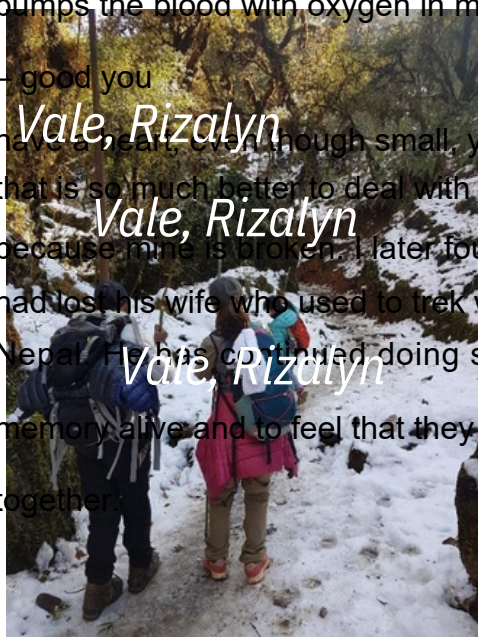
because mine is broken. I later found out that he

had lost his wife who used to trek with him in

Nepal. He has continued doing so to keep her

memory alive and to feel that they are always

together.



I reached the lodge around 2 pm, after a long-relaxed lunch, I went to read a book.

Day 4

I stayed an extra day in Ghorepani before continuing my trek to Ghandruk, where I planned to spend Christmas eve, 2019.



Day 5 In this photograph, on my way to Ghandruk,

I met a family with two children who also trekked to Poon hill the previous day on the trail. They were from Singapore. The children were so cheerful and took on trail so easily that I was taking so cautiously not to fall. On this path, it became very steep that one of the other trekkers ahead of us almost fell over a cliff, it was good that their guide was able to grab the lady's arm before

plunging into the gorge. That was a miracle. The slippery path contributed to the risk of sliding past the trail.

After hours of walking, I had stopped over to have lunch, similarly the family. I had the opportunity to chat with them and get to know about their trip. They have been trekking for two weeks – on vacation. And that they were returning to Pokhara in a couple of days – then to a flight to Singapore.

We all then continued to trek together – me to the direction of Ghandruk and they to Chomrong. Later on, we got news through my guide that the weather was turning bad and very cold and that there is no tea lodge ahead of us, the nearest was still 4 hours of trek. I shared the information with them so they can decide. (On the trail, information is very important but ultimately depending on their respective schedules and interests, trekkers decide to stay or go in spite of risks ahead). I decided to stay at the nearest lodge or homestay I would find nearby. Just about 30 minutes, luckily, we could find a lodge, smaller one relative to Ghorepani. The family decided to stay there also, given that it was getting late in the afternoon and very cold. It was December 21, 2019.



Day 6

A beautiful day to start trekking. The sky was so clear and blue. The children were excited to get going. They were so nice and so disciplined by their mom. After lunch, we all had to say goodbye. Our paths were in opposite directions. It was a wonderful time with them, I enjoyed their company and the stories we shared during dinner the night before. Till we meet again.

Take care. I reached Ghandruk before sunset.

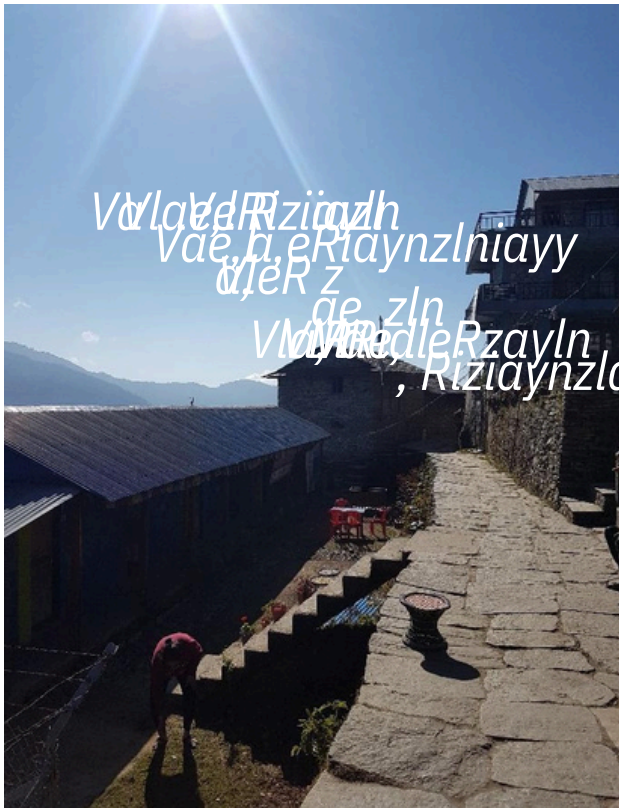
Day 7 – December 23, 2019



This is where I stayed for Christmas. The lodge is 235 years old; it also survived the earthquake 2015 in Nepal. It is a popular

destination since it is linked to several trekking sites along the Annapurna circuit. In the next few days, I made this my home. It was a time to “summarize” my journeys here. To spend time with the flowers, with the architecture, stone wedges etc. I had one of the most memorable times here in

Ghandruk. I felt so close to Nature, to myself and to others.



a large-scale solar panel outside the houses. I was later told that a few foreigners have

I visited the local museum, the weaving cottage and the bakery in the village.

The pathways were paved with stones carved out of rocks from the mountains.

It is fascinating.

Due to local and international tourism, the village of Ghandruk has greatly developed – there were more cafes, bakeries, and tea lodges fully equipped with WIFI and hot shower. I wondered how all these were possible, then I saw

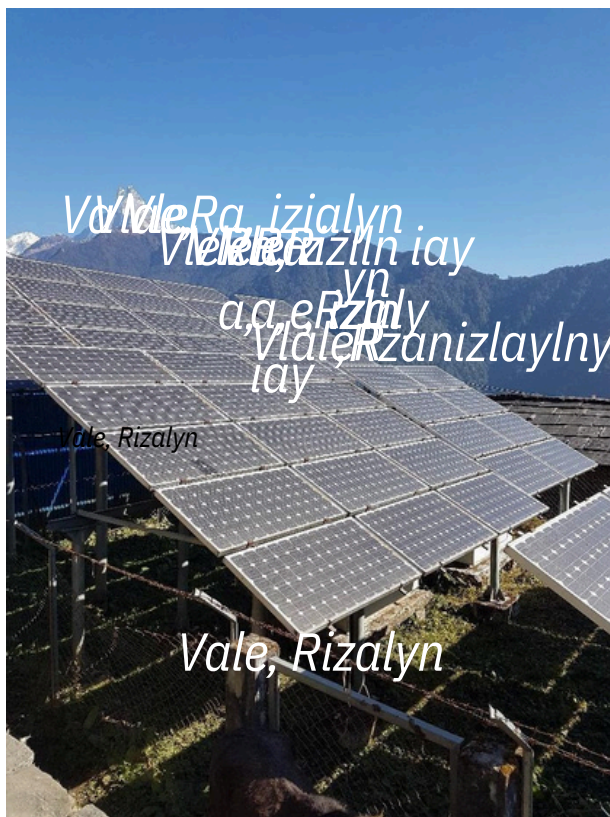
I was later told that a few foreigners have invested so much money in Ghandruk to developed the area with the help of the community they are able to support tourism

,businessesandlivelihoodsof

the villagers.

From Ghandruk, the Himalayan range can be seen in its full galore.

I also visited a school here.



Day 8 – December 24, 2019

Finally, I'm spending Christmas in the mountains, a dream come true.

There was a narrow steep wooden staircase that led to the upper floor. I was truly



fascinated by the architecture of the lodge. I wonder how it has been built and survived for

I had biryani chicken and veggies for dinner. I decided to sleep early, so I could wake up before sunrise the next day. This is one of the bigger rooms upstairs. It is kept so clean and well organized.

Day 9 – Christmas Day

This was my breakfast – Gurung bread, fried egg, curried dhal and masala tea. It was one of the happiest breakfasts, I have ever had during my journey.



Before this, I witnessed sunrise in Ghandruk, it was magical, the snowcapped mountains turned golden yellow as the sunlight become brighter from the horizon. It is indeed a great Christmas present for me from Nature (sometimes the view from the lodge is covered by

mists or thick clouds).

I spent the rest of the day just staring at the skies and watching the ridges of the mountains. I saw small avalanches from a great distance.



Later on, I took a walk to the café and bakery and had coffee with a croissant. I took this photograph because I really liked the porch.

This is the last day of my trek, from here I will take a bus to Pokhara.

Day 10

This is the end of the trail from Ghandruk village, but also a beginning of another trek someday for me. The bus is just round the corner, waiting for passengers – I'm one of them today.

From all the experiences I have had until this point have been overwhelming, that I will need a few weeks or more to reflect on every detail I witnessed. For sure, this journey has changed my life completely. Any

I learned that with a clear goal (e.g., Poon hill), but remaining open to all the possibilities of experiences to learning and improving one's life, every trek is a book of wisdom where many secrets of the mountains are revealed. It is my hope that I would be able to have the opportunity and capability to continue trekking for the rest of my life. Till next time, I wish you all a happy journey.

Namaste.

The following tables provide the summaries of the experiences, expressions and results of the study.

Trekking Sandakpur. In search of Truth and Meaning, 2016.

Trekking Manang District. A Roadless path to Freedom, 2017.

Trekking Mardi Himal. Finding the Unknown in the Known, 2019.

Trekking Poon Hill, Ghorepani. The gift of Life, 2019.

Table 1. Sandhakphur, 2016 – Summary of Experiences

Themes	Description	Interpretation /Results
Relationality	The journey to Sandhakphur was full of anticipation and adventure. The bus ride for more than 10 hours from Kathmandu to Ilam became a time for deep reflections of my presence in the bus, people I saw and observed, the towns I happen to glance through as the bus passed each town until night fall. I felt happy and thrilled that I decided to take this journey. I also felt a sense of belongingness to the people of Nepal, particularly during my brief interactions with those whom I sat with in the bus, cafeterias where I ate meals and snacks, people I chatted along the way. I also realized the living standards and lifestyles in rural Nepal, not so different from the Philippines – simple, hard work, resilient and that of contentment. I became aware of the dust, wind, cold temperatures, fear, and the inconveniences of travelling by road, stomach particularly access to restrooms, availability of aches, drinking water and the hygiene of the food available. Indeed, it had taken me out of my comfort zone. On the trail, I was not aware of what to expect, what to find and if the success of seeing a red panda will happen. I was hopeful, but not entirely disappointed. Admiration, I also experienced a few sleepless nights due to trust, severe cold, then the headaches, loss of appetite, dizziness.	Amazement, joy Anticipation, vigilance, trust, admiration Apprehension nausea acceptance, fear, Optimistic

	I felt closer to myself, I began to pay attention to my feelings, senses, aches and pains of the body	
Spatiality	During this journey, the appreciation for distant mountain grew heavier in my senses – of seeing, which elated feelings of fresh air, natural colors of the surrounding forests, sound of the chirping birds, and insects in the background. I also become aware of the sound of rushing waters of the river or streams from the distance, which I have not ever paid attention to before. I remember a deep sense of gratitude for the experience of Nature in the wild.	Joy, serenity, admiration, awe
		Apprehension
	I also realized the surrounding forests and mountains, fear, were enormous in scale relative to the size of the tea distraction, lodge where I stayed. The stories of wild life (eg. sadness, tigers), cattle and others, gave me the imaginary vigilance vision of the angst for survival not only by humans, but also of animals.	
	The physical senses became more attentive not only to the pleasantness of the journey but also to the dangers that lurk around. (This was not included before in my adventure list).	
Corporeality	During this journey, the physical strain on the body was tough and challenging. The difficulties of travelling on a bus was magnified 10 times compared to other trips I have done in the past. I knew that I had to improve my fitness, regulate my digestive and excretory systems, sleeping patterns and level of alertness for safety and security.	Sadness, annoyance, anger, disapproval, distraction
		Fear,
	The events during the trekking at high altitude was a wakeup call to the importance of proper breathing	submission, acceptance,

	and cardiovascular exercise prior to trekking. The physical body need to be prepared to meet the basic requirement of fitness to keep up with the trekking guides and porters.	bodily aches and pains
	I became aware that I lack the necessary preparations to trek at high altitudes – or that the trainings I did prior to my travel were not enough to meet the level of fitness required to trek at high altitudes	Interest, optimism, anticipation, remorse
Temporality	I experience the sense of time, the few days I spent travelling and trekking, meeting the community in Ilam, Sandhakphur, all felt so fast. I wanted to stay longer, (but of course I could not). The sunrise in Sandhakphur was epic, with a view of the Himalayan range, as its time stood still. It felt sacred, not because of what I know or what I was told about the place, rather, the scenic views, the place, the climate and the people around, spoke for itself. I never felt so much closer to Nature until that day. I was happy, my heart was filled with gratitude and appreciation for the breath I breathe.	Awe, joy, ecstatic, serenity, optimism, submission, amazement, love

Table 2. Manang, 2017

Themes	Description	Interpretation / Results
Relationality	The journey to Manang was undertake right before winter in Nepal, the weather was already getting cold. I have an idea of this cold in Sandhakphur, so I brought extra clothing suited for such a challenge. Although it did not suffice, but at least I came a little bit better prepared than before.	Anticipation, happiness, joy Anticipation, vigilance, Having read more about high altitude fear, apprehension sickness, I took appropriate medicines and took meals like garlic soups to help my body to adjust to the altitude as I went higher on the trail. I also learned to take lemon and ginger tea as much as possible during the days I trekked which addressed dehydration and edema. I experienced less chances of a headache and fatigue. I had better sleep and improved flexibility in the morning. Given this opportunity to put to the test the body, that is high

altitude, thin air, 7-8 hours of trekking, I

became closer to my body,

understanding knowing how I function

better and what were my weaknesses.

Contempt, fear, sadness,

anger, vigilance, trust,

acceptance, submission

The psychological challenge and will

power to push forward during the steep

areas on the trail, was of great

challenge, pain and struggle, I

experience this in Manang. The trails

vary and can be obliterate daunting. A

feeling of loss, of giving up was so real.

The sense of adventure became

sadness, annoyance and disapproval.

Those moments lasted long in my

mind, the body was unable to carry on,

the presence of the body become even

more closer to me. I felt frustrated and

hopeless.

Spatiality

The vistas during the trek to Manang Awe,

amazement, joy,

were majestic and serene, almost surprise, serenity magical.

The scale of the mountains was different to other parts of

Nepal that I have seen. For every location, it offers

unique and exquisite scenery amidst the overlaying savannah like forests, the architecture differed, the cuisine also changed – the red chili sauce was green here.

Submission, acceptance,
awe, joy, anticipation

Manang bear enormous rocks on the mountain edges, I felt small and smaller each passing day. It seemed all the worries of modern life I left in the city became absolute, it did not matter anymore. I thought, there is nothing bigger than these boulders hanging by the cliff above the inroads I just passed.

Corporeality	The reality of the body suffering the aches and pains of high altitude, thin air and lack of appetite, makes it worst. There I understood that nothing can be done to push harder to higher altitudes, rather to accept my inability to do so. Extreme headaches were in almost every night, but enough rest and light walks in the town dissipated the pains.	Acceptance, gratitude, amazement, awe, apprehension, fear, vigilance, aches and pains
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I knew that I had to take care of myself

first, that I can return someday to Vigilance, acceptance,

continue where I left off. I also realize trust

that no matter the preparation one does

to trek, every season is different, every

location is different and the weather is

truly unpredictable.

Temporality Ultimately, the days I spent in Manang Serenity, apprehension,

were of deep reflections as to the sadness, optimism,

questions about life, meaning, purpose contempt, disapproval,

and activities needed to realize what it acceptance, gratitude,

means to be a happy human being. submission

There were no immediate answers, but

subtle understanding began to occur

within the self, recognizing the

essences of the presence of life, and

the fragility of it. In such moment of

being alone with the self, no verbal

words are needed but a silence in

which one could only hear the voice

conversing in dialogues with you.

Settling for the past thoughts were not

of this revelation of the intelligence that

engage the self in a dialectical
discussion of what – I wanted in life,
and if such and such were truly worth
the innate attention that seem too long
to be acknowledged.

On checking the realities of such
reflections, amidst the noise in the
background of people chattering, and
bleeping cattle, suddenly the
knowledge of truths – pearled in the
sensing of the body, mind, feelings and
emotions – your attention is drawn to
the breathing of life without which all
the experiences would not be possible.

The devotion is misplaced on the
modern world, that such devotion a
shift, a re-orientation towards the this
“breathing” instead.

Table 3. *Mardi Himal, 2019*

Themes	Description	Interpretation / Results
Relationality	The Mardi Himal trekking journey was a crossroad, a defining moment, of connections to self and others. It was meant to be one of the easiest trails in the country, yet it proved to be one of the most adventurous, not for the high altitude rather for the attitude. The loss of connection to the self, distracted by the appearances of the shadows of the past, failure and loss of a loved one.	Grief, sadness, pensiveness, disapproval, distraction, apprehension, fear, trust, acceptance
Spatiality	The trail promised a relatively easy trekking and the trail were good and unusually flat before climbing up to a steep. Getting lost in the forest in the night, was an experience I will remember for a long time	Fear, apprehension, vigilance, disapproval
Corporeality	The experience of fatigue, no food or shelter in the midst of possible danger on the trail was a reality, where the aches and pains of the high altitude did not even matter. It was fear for the safety of oneself from the others. It was a lucky day to survive that night with no danger to the self.	Vigilance, apprehension, acceptance

The Mardi Himal trek was one of the most scenic trekking sites I have ever seen, I experienced being closest to the mountains, as though I could touch the range with my hand. The Mardi Himal range offered majestic views of the Himalayas, especially the Fish tail seen in the photographs of the study. The trek was seemingly short and abruptly fast, the mountains made all the difference to

Temporality

Clarity of the mind, acceptance, compensate for the challenges encountered on the trail. Spending time in Mardi Himal gave me clarity of the necessary things to address the grief, and wavering shadows of the bitter past.

Deep reflections about the past, in relation to the present and what the future could offer became more apparent and glare with clarity. It also confirmed the bottled emotions within the self that required healing. This recognition of these emotions would not have been possible if not for the trekking experiences that I had undergone, because trekking had brought together the five senses, thoughts, memories, feeling and emotions into one cauldron – to be clarified.

Table 4. Poon Hill, 2019

Themes	Description	Interpretation/Results
Relationality	The experiences to Poon hill during trekking were delightful and full of anticipation. The trail was not as tasking as the other seen before or that one has improved skills and have improved coping mechanisms to high altitude and that of thin air. The feelings of the body feedback that of adjustments to the cold weather, enjoyment of the scenic views and taste of the meals served at the tea lodge. The sunlight was beautiful, a promise of a new day, the cool breeze renewed every step on a sunny afternoon. The connectedness to the body, to Nature and the immediate surroundings of people, houses, cattle, trees, rivers and mountains became profound, and sometime, finally I was able to breathe in the air out of thin air.	Awe, surprise, joy, submission, love
	The experience of headaches and pains in the knee's joints were momentarily	Anticipation, vigilance, optimism, trust, acceptance

felt, nor did it seem to matter as recuperation was easily achieved given the lessons learned from previous trekking journeys. Heightened sensing of the day and late afternoon, signaled to the body of nearness of fatigued and that the destination need be reached before dark.

Spatiality	In this trek, the scenic views never seem to fail to offer the intimate beauty of the Himalayas. The sense of seeing beyond the snow-capped mountains with winter surviving flowers on the trails scattered, made the dimensions set aside the lines that drew the mountains at a distance. The range of the Himalayas seemed endless in the horizon; the stretch was unbelievably magnificent.	Awe, amazement, gratitude, joy and happiness, optimism
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It felt as though the vision sees the promised "heaven" but questions its presence on earth. Amidst all the great spaces experiences in Poon hill, a

sinking feeling of minuteness overwhelms the observer, and resort to submission. Visiting these places and the knowledge of the dire difficulties of getting there, makes it a reality of the existence that cannot be reduced to a mere citation of economic jargons in the city. If wealth is to be found, it lies in the secret passages that leads up to the Himalayas.

Corporeality	Trekking experiences is a possibility that can completely change one's life forever. It not only makes aware of the frailty of the human body against the forces of Nature, it also pounds on the psychological mindset conditioned to order its life living solely on the economic stances – camouflaged as life.	Awe, amazement, gratitude, joy and happiness, optimism
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The human body is a diary of what makes life evolve through time, where the being houses the body into health or misery. The realizations of the wealth of

knowledge the Himalayas hold if truth is embedded in the intentionality of seeking, then it will reveal.

Temporality	The culmination of the experiment to find the self reaches a height that enable the researcher to conclude with significant accuracy that the self is made found if one gives attention to the “one that speaks”.	Awe, amazement, gratitude, joy and happiness, optimism
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There are infinite mysteries in creation and existence that if one is “lucky” somewhere, somehow such and revelations become a reality.

The experiences in the mountains, with Nature at high altitudes of thin air, brought a state of knowing, awareness and deep consciousness of the physical self, mindful self and the emotional self.

This is of great achievement to the researcher, to know the self – better, deeper and of higher understanding.

Results and Discussions

Experiences of Trekking

The experiences of trekking resulted to several realizations of the researcher, in terms of bodily challenges and difficulties, one's capacity to bear intense emotion of awe of the Himalayan mountain ranges and landscapes, immense aspiration and desire to connect with Nature, communities and understanding culture. Lastly, the experiences in the mountains expanded the researcher's world views, deep appreciation of Life, and sense of gratitude to time and the given space on which one exerts presence and perceives existence.

Bodily Challenges and Difficulties

The corporeality of experiencing altitude sickness resulted to realizations that of the fragility of the breath, which can be taken at any moment in time. The body was subjected to extreme cold temperatures and exertion of gravity, resulting to severe headaches, shivering, nausea and chest pains. I learned that acclimatization is important to manage or mitigate the risk of altitude sickness, and that in case it does happen, first aid and additional medications should be carried during trekking at all times.

The experiences of trekking exposed the researcher's inadequate preparation and poor physical fitness, endurance and flexibility. It also resulted to seeking medical assistance on the implications of edema, swelling of the joints, face and torso during harsh conditions in the mountains. Trekking resulted to realizations of improving one's overall health, nutrition and physical fitness.

Trekking is an outdoor activity that requires proper clothing such as thermals, tents, sleeping bags, winter jackets, wind breaker jackets, woolen

socks and caps, ear coverings, trekking boots etc. There are several equipment and items needed to ensure a memorable, pleasant and safe return from trekking such durable camera batteries, cameras, tripods, memory cards, electronic chargers, adaptors, water filter gadgets, flashlights, water bottle, water, trail snack, chocolates, first aid kit, thermal blankets etc. All of which can mean the basic survival of a trekker on the trail, where initially the researcher was not aware of the above, hence suffered a great deal of bodily challenges and difficulties.

The trekking guide and porter play an extremely vital role in trekking in Nepal. They provide guidance on the route, information of the local area and culture, provide historical facts and ensures coordination with the accommodation and safety of the trekker. The porter helps with any luggage of the trekker. Both of whom, reduces the bodily challenges and difficulties of the trekker. They also ensure proper food and beverages are served, coordinate the schedule and weather updates with the main office from the city.

Indeed, having experienced trekking in Nepal improved the researcher's life, awareness and consciousness of the body challenges and difficulties, thus paying more attention to nutrition, fitness and overall health and well-being.

Awe of the Himalayan Mountains Ranges and Landscapes

The spatial experience of trekking in Nepal provided the researcher the opportunities to experience the majestic and diverse landscapes of the Himalayas. The sheer magnitude of the mountains even at a distance resulted to overwhelming emotion of awe, wonder, amazement and deep sense of gratitude. These emotions, thoughts and feelings resulted to realizations of the researcher that the earth is beautiful, magnanimous,

indomitable and everlasting, and that the measure of a person is miniscule not even as a grain of size in their midst. The thought humility, nobility, anxiety etc. came to mind, but this has no reference to any of the landscape nor is anyone or anything bordered by the hundreds of tourists or trekkers that pass through the trails per year. This was one of the most profound realizations during trekking that one is so tiny, yet society demands otherwise.

Commune with Nature, Communities and Culture

The relationality of experiences to Nature, the possibilities granted during trekking of connectedness to every tree, plant, rivers, rocks, mountains, cattle, people etc. resulted to profound emotions of serenity, awe, gratitude, amazement and joy. The emotions and thoughts of closeness to Nature ignited the aspiration for conservation of wildlife in Nepal, particularly that of the Red Panda and Snow Leopards.

The communities and their culture enriched the life of the researcher in the realization that people may differ in race, color or creed, but such and such does not exist when people live in harmony, peace and solidarity. There was a sense of belonging for the researcher given the hospitality of the people, genuine smiles and the curiosity of my origin.

The interactions with people and places during the trek resulted to the researcher's utmost desire to also give back to the community visited, perhaps in the form of volunteering to teach basic literacy in the years ahead.

Understanding of the Breath, Self and Time

The realizations of temporality of the body, emotions, feelings and thoughts of the researcher resulted to evolving perspectives of live worlds in relation to time. Over the years of trekking, this realization continued to

influence the thought, emotion and the self of the researcher. It became more apparent that time is indeed so very limited, that to experience everything in the world will take several lifetimes to achieve. The researcher realized that one must live life to the fullest in every aspect of one's life.

During the treks, the researcher experienced near life death situations that made the researcher become aware of the self and the need to preserve life. The need to live responsibly and decisively is important in achieving the goal of living life to the fullest. Understanding the breath, in its deepest form resulted to paying more attention to it, not merely the breathing in or out, but the very life of the body it facilitates and supports. Without the breath, one cannot experience anything, hence cannot know, cannot understand and cannot experience life itself.

To understand what death is and what it could be, would require a recognition of what is life, not necessary in comparison as to what is death to life or life is to death either – for the two can only “exist” at the beginning and end of the other.

An experience of death is a separation from the life as we know it from the physical body. There is not substantial evidence (ie. acceptable to the scientific community or that they are unwilling to accept the possibility of it), however to support that the life after death, going beyond the physicality of the material world is ever possible. There have been several “texts” testifying to such phenomenon, however that is beyond the scope of this study, hence will focus on the nuances about death and life as a contextual background of the arguments of the study – to become aware of death is experiencing life in it

fullest appearing, to be aware of the possibilities of life creates meaning worthy of the glory of death.

In a modern world where life is reduced to “an averageness of living” is an actual insult to death – such a living that cannot escape the instinct of becoming a human with a being that is awakened to Life. To awaken is not that of coming out of sleep, it goes beyond that, it is a realizing of the profoundness of – the breath. Life is embodied in every breathe one takes, powerful yet so fragile and vulnerable at every moment. In this lingering speck of time, an opportunity of knowing death to life is often missed by many – even until the end of one’s life, fully ignorant of that which communicates the essences of the being.

In the presence of death, life is not threatened, it is the mind that is suddenly and almost forcibly “awakened” from the deep sleep of immaturity. It is the mind that ignores what is communicated through time, it is the mind that assigns disorder based on what it mimics from the outside. It is the mind that brings shame to death, it is the mind that deceives that being and holds hostage for the most and rest of its existence.

Death as the origin of one’s perception can be liberating and exhilarating.

It is experienced as “priori” needing not be expressed in a present moment in one’s life – an experience that can be “mediated” into consciousness with an intention of experiencing life. In these assumptions, no harm to the physical is necessary rather an evaluation of the thoughts of the mind – a dialogue where the existence of its being is placed at its most centeredness of time and space. It goes without saying, such an exercise of mind purifies the thoughts, until none

remains. In such a state, authenticity is manifested, one of such that the being that creates the thought and emotion, hence the experiences is known.

In this study, it argues that the realizing of death enables one to live a life that is awakened and exuberant, it is necessary to bring about the knowing that death is the very context of our everyday life worlds. It collapses time into eternity, where it ceases to exist that which exist into a happening of past, present and future into – No Thingness. In the stillness of existence in one's existing, the being can be heard communicating to every detail within its horizon of consciousness.

In realization of the above, death is celebrated, glorified and life of the being is heard and celebrated.

Expressions of the Experiences as Communication

The following tables provide the results based on the thematic aspect of the study. The expressions embodied in the emotions, feelings and thoughts of the researcher resulted to self-knowledge, self-awareness and consciousness (in a state of wakefulness. The study has resulted to an improved state of understanding of the conduct of day to day in general, thus, an evolution of the self towards resiliency.

The thematic aspects were experiences although different trekking journeys, but the realizations of each of the theme varied in different levels of intentionality, hence the emphasis on a particular theme for each trekking journey. The results of the thematic experiences are as follows.

Expressions of Understanding Corporeality in trekking to Sandhakpur

The journey to Sandhakphur provided the experiences of physical challenges, adaptations and coping mechanisms to survive, to experience Nature and meet people whose lives resonated with mine. The meanings of these experiences were interpreted through the feelings, emotions and thoughts experienced as the event occurred. It provided a better understanding of the self, body, mind and certainly the emotions – that helped shaped my senses, consciousness to these senses and led to better attention to the things needing improvements, particularly to become a better trekker in the future. It gave me inspiration to live, explore and travel more. It supported my aspirations to become a conservationist someday, to pursue worthwhile endeavors for wildlife, community and the environment.

Expressions of Experiencing Spatiality in trekking to Manang

The journey to Manang was physically challenging and difficult in its own right, but the beauty of the landscapes along the way continued to inspire the trek. The weather was pleasant for most time but the altitude was always overbearing on the joy that one could possibly have by dragging your body to the ground – the pressure was of great strain and dehydration a friendly pair to it. Surviving is a must, there are no options out there except to will one's own consciousness to stay alert and lively enough, to experience the days with the basic comfort and ease left available on the trail. It differs for everyone, depending on one's capabilities, abilities, preparedness and surely, depending on one's luck. The experiences in the mountains were both challenging, but of utmost rewarding. There are no words to describe the emotions and thoughts one garners in many moments up there. The interpretation of the mixed emotions experienced in Manang were that of realizing the true realities of life – that the breath of life is so fragile.

Expressions of Experiencing Relationality in trekking to Mardi Himal

In this trekking journey, healing of the self was the occurring focus. It seemed that at this time, the challenge was no longer on the physical tenacity of the body, rather it was testing the capability of the mind to reason, the ability of the emotion intelligence to heal from the past memories that still haunted the present.

The Mardi Himal trekking was a turning point from which made me realized the subtleness of the hiding unresolved memories that block the knowing of person that can be and the possessing of the light that bring healing to the temporality of existence. This is possible because the intense experiences on the trail – heightened my senses to the physicality of realities as well as the abstract realities that reside in the human being. In this heightening of the sense, emotions and thought in deep reflection – communication occurs among the “mind”, the “heart” and the attentive “intelligence” of the being.

The feelings and emotions, thoughts and attention ascribed in this journey resulted to understanding the self at a deeper level, a space that surfaced during trekking. With this, I was able to reflect, question the sources of grief, sadness, pensiveness, disapproval, distraction, apprehension, fear and eventually begin to trust and build on acceptance of the situations in the past affecting the present. It is important to recognize such manifestations of the mind and the “heart”, otherwise such wounded emotions can expand – that could affect the future. Understanding the self in this context gave rise to the clarity of the mind, better navigation of emotions and focusing attention to that what is truly important, necessary and those that matter most in life – Life.

Expressions of Experiencing Temporality in trekking to Poon Hill, Ghorepani

The culmination of the events that unfolded in Poon hill grants the researcher the achievement of realizations made possible thru sensing the five senses in its highest possible perception (that can continually be improved), listening deeply to the thoughts and emotions rooted in the intelligence of the residing being in a human being. It cannot be overly emphasized than already is in this study for obvious reasons that it can be experienced by anyone (even without going trekking), for as long as the intentionality to know, to listen, to hear, and to communicate with the self – will surely find the path to self-knowing. It is worthwhile and most important to engage in this journey – as it is the very key that hold in experiencing the Life to its fullest.

Essentiality of Dialogue to Self-Knowledge

Experience as the Other in Dialogue

The trekking experiences was the game changer - it challenged the body, mind and psychological tenacity – the rough terrain, extreme weather conditions and temperature, high altitudes and eminent dangers of landslides, avalanches and unstable edges of the trail hanging over a cliff etc. It awakened the five human senses and the being within (ie. that which who speaks and truly communicates). It makes the mind to re-examine life and death scenarios, what is truly important in life and the changes that are needed to make life meaningful, and even worthwhile, given that it is indeed short, and for that, it can be taken in any point in time (ie. anywhere, not necessarily in the mountains etc.)

The seeking for answers to the dilemma of “what is the quality of life?” impresses the need to understand, which existed in the possibility of communication. In other words, essences of the meaning of life and as to how

to improve everyday experiencing in general, were communicated through thoughts, feelings and emotions of the being within – thus the perceptions. Little or no recognition is given to such a happening, a happening of communication, rather to misconstrued illusions by the unconscious mind that over romanticizes the influx of external misgivings of unnecessary information and entertainment of a dulled mind and muted being.

Anticipation of adverse events which impacts a human being requires a broad understanding and perception of one's own situational context, thus identifying the possible sources of risks, threats and implications of negative events. The ability to detect critical developments of such possibilities is important to prevent the scale of its impact on itself. While in reality, it is not possible to predict every such problems, however it is better to see unexpected events faster than others, or mitigate escalation of issues - that enable to respond immediately and reducing its impact, rather than adopt an attitude of "wait and see". For example, its important to study and learn about the hazards and potential disasters like avalanches, high altitude sickness, falling rocks, slippery slopes etc. and know what to do. It is good also to know the geographical and topography of the trekking trails and routes.

Knowledge of Self as Resilience

Resilience includes coping capabilities that addresses the impact of any negative events made manifest (Wildavsky, 1991), it also includes possibilities of trauma or any medical conditions. Self-knowledge is key to knowing what to do, adapt a positive attitude and behavior that matches the immediate situation(s) (Mallak, 1998). Crisis management emphasizes the ability to –

accept a problem and to develop and implement solutions (Madni and Jackson 2009). For example, coping with an injury or severe edema (swelling of ankles or face, brain etc.), nausea, headache etc., knowing one's body, and mind is important. Also, to ask for help and allowing people to help (eg. to have garlic soup at high altitude is an "antidote" given by local people). One has to learn how to remain calm, respectful of traditions, trust and cooperative, even in dire situations in the mountains.

Adaptation capabilities refers to adjustments and self-regulation in response to the crises and extending actions to recovery and advancement from the situation into the future. It requires in-depth, reflection and learning and self-improvement. Self-reflection is a review of lessons learned from experiences of the crises, seeking what could have prevented or reduced the impact on oneself. On recognition of better option and adjustments approaches to any given situation – the ability to act on such improvements is crucial to being resilient. During this process, deep reflection is a mechanism of communication within the self, to surface the needed understanding. For example, during trekking, one needs to adapt to high altitude, thin air and extreme colds where the adaptation requires – cardio training, breathing exercises and investing in better clothing and gear.

The interaction of oneself with its environment is dynamic and continuously changes – where resiliency defines one's ability to effectively respond to adverse changes before it happens, during and after it. Based on this, there are three resiliency stages considered– as anticipation, coping and adaptation, the capabilities of which need be understood, learned and enhanced.

The summaries of the thematic results gathered from the narratives of the trekker(s), affirms the plausibility and validity of the answers to the research questions. In doing so, the study was able to build on the evidence that proves the appropriate correlation of the communication phenomena to self-knowledge, self-awareness and consciousness (in a state of mindfulness), hence enlightenment (ie. logical reasoning). Based on these results of the study, it supports and emphasizes the importance of the principles of the communication theory – as the constitutive model of communication as a metamodel and theory as meta-discursive practice (Craig, 2009). The importance of which is enables individual agency and its resiliency.

Furthermore, the study points out and stresses that, communication is not limited only to linear and transactional models of communication, rather its expansive reach includes all multidisciplinary fields of arts and sciences etc. for without communication such fields cease to exist in a subjective experience of the one experiencing it. Thus, the communication phenomenon is all inclusive, encompassing and embracing all existing multidisciplinary fields, which are in one way or another deeply rooted in communication. In other words, communication exist in all – that the communication theory as a field, is indeed – overarchingly, a dialogical-dialectical coherent field. This claim is subject to further research and arguments, however if taken in the direction and context of the Phenomenological framework, as a philosophy and methodology (as the study has demonstrated), brings closer to the understanding of the happening of Communication as phenomenon which unites all fields, hence its coherence.

It cannot be overemphasized here in the study, the importance of self-knowledge, self-awareness and consciousness – as it is the key to self-resiliency in many aspects of human everyday life. The contribution of the above results to the

Communication field is that - attaining self-knowledge, self-awareness, self-mindfulness, resiliency of human beings - where life could possibly be fully expressed and experienced into existence, remain a possibility for individuals who are seeking a better quality of experiencing and expressing their daily lives.

Chapter V

RESEARCH SUMMARY, INSIGHTS, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Summary

Trekking Insights emergent of Experiences of the Self and the Other in Dialogue

In this study, the researcher was explicit in discussing the trekking experiences and emergent perspectives from a subjective interpretation and world view. In each stage of the respective treks there was an in-depth intention to discover the unknown about the self in which it exists and interact with nuances of society, the economic civilization and the socio-cultural dimensions of the contemporary world.

As the findings of renowned discoveries in science, substantially gained through observation, one can also observe the intricate patterns of events, situations, occurrences, phenomenon, including human behaviour and outcomes etc., the possibilities of discovering the “unknowns” are limitless. Many of such “unknowns” does not necessarily bid obscurity, rather it is the oblivion trait of human beings that have prevented the exploration, understanding the value of its discoveries and the ignorance of what to do with it.

In the study, the grounding theories revisited are intertwined in an attempt to describe, though barely attaining the depth desired by the research to espouse the deep-rooted intentions of discovering the truths of what is it to be – human.

The overarching questions regarding existence, and as to why it exist in itself on the façade of several myriads of expressions emanating from the fundamental elements such as water, air, fire, soil matter and space, that have evolved for millions of years. In this vast of happening, where can the human being be situated? As best

known to all civilizations, but often ignored or denied, the entirety of the human population, human capabilities or atrocities and all human endeavours remain miniscule to the presence of the Existence. To establish prominence in existence or attempts to do so, instantaneously guarantees a happening that is defined within the limitations of the human confines, but not necessarily an accolade worthy of existence. In this argument, the asking is more directly focused and inevitably relevant to and at an individual level, that, what is the meaning or purpose of being human when all that it is, is but a speck of dust. Hence, the question of why, being human is an occurrence? What is the nature of its occurrence, of freedom? Or bondage? Does it necessarily bring about bondage to the body, to the mind and its emotions? But what is bound? Or what is in freedom to exist in the existence?

The ontology of the human being is briefly discussed in the study to points out the source of what is free or bound, that who speaks, what is being spoken and why? The merit of these questions lies in the curiosity of knowing the existence of the human being, first on its subjective perception, hence the knowledge of freedom or in bondage, and secondly, in such and such a state, enhance or denounce its interactions or connectedness with the self and the other, and the other in the outside worlds which determines the nature of its existence. The nature of engagements into the perceived world individually is largely assigned arbitrary assigned at birth, thereby assuming a certain belonging or identification which could define or redefine the circumstances of the human being, hence its existence.

Given the large volume of information and statistics on the comparison of various scenarios that display the interactions of engagements of several countries at large, or at an individual level, could confirm to a large extent that human beings thrive and also fail in different dimensions of their living conditions despite, of either

abundance or lack of resources etc. By observation of human activities, it could be estimated that the quality or non-quality of existing, significantly depends on the characteristics of the human being, that responds to their particular contexts. Thereby the emphasis on logic, reasoning and ethics were also discussed in the study. The ability of the human being to exercise rationality, act logically and with reason (or not) have resulted to the historical events of the world and the occurring worlds at present.

From the above, collectively or individually, lived experiences emanate affecting human beings differently, thereby shaping the level of resiliency, hence the quality of lifestyle or dependency on others and existing government institutional support systems. At this point, in pursuit of resilient materiality (while it is also important for living a comfortable life), one could easily stray from the quest of the real “truths”, what it is to be human? And Why? During the treks, the researcher experienced temptations to deviate towards “the materiality”. It become evident in many ways through the opportunities presented at the time, however deferred for later years, the researcher was determined to remain focused on questioning - the self. The answers, the results of the phenomenological study, turned out to be invaluable. It was during this phase of the journey to the self, that communication occurred.

As communication continued to happen within, the researcher experienced deeper understanding of self, others and the context in which the self, the human being existed. The various aspects of such a context were reviewed, analyzed and reframed. The epistemology of the being within the self, surfaced and gained more recognition thereby facilitating clarity, balance and harmony of the dealings, engagement and total involvement of the researcher to the dimensions of her perceived and lived worlds. It is not the matter of order or control of “the context” rather the consciousness (a state

of mindfulness) to decide on the choice and to take on the responsibility to respond appropriately.

The discovery of the self (at least to certain level of understanding, as discovery of the self is a continuous process in one's lifetime), has led to several improvements in terms of trekking, prioritization of plans and activities, appropriation of financial resources to meet the demands of travel and trekking, ensuring proper handling of study materials and archiving, improved coordination and collaboration with community groups and trekking associations etc. Further to these, the discovery of self has helped the researcher to prioritize health, connectedness to loved ones, families and friends, improved handling of career matters and income, learning of new skills including embroidery, gardening, vermicomposting, as well significant improvement on studying more about the afterlife.

Over a period of time, the researcher become more aware and self-conscious, more mindful of the immediate demands of daily life and that of the future in general, thereby improvements have been observed in decision making, and logical reasoning of the researcher, particularly while trekking in Nepal. Recalling the very first days of the first trekking journey undertaken by the researcher, it is but necessary to include in the study in recognizing the significant improvements of the researcher in terms of her preparedness for every trekking journey, resiliency at higher altitudes and improved connectedness to her surroundings and communities amidst the physical challenges of the terrain.

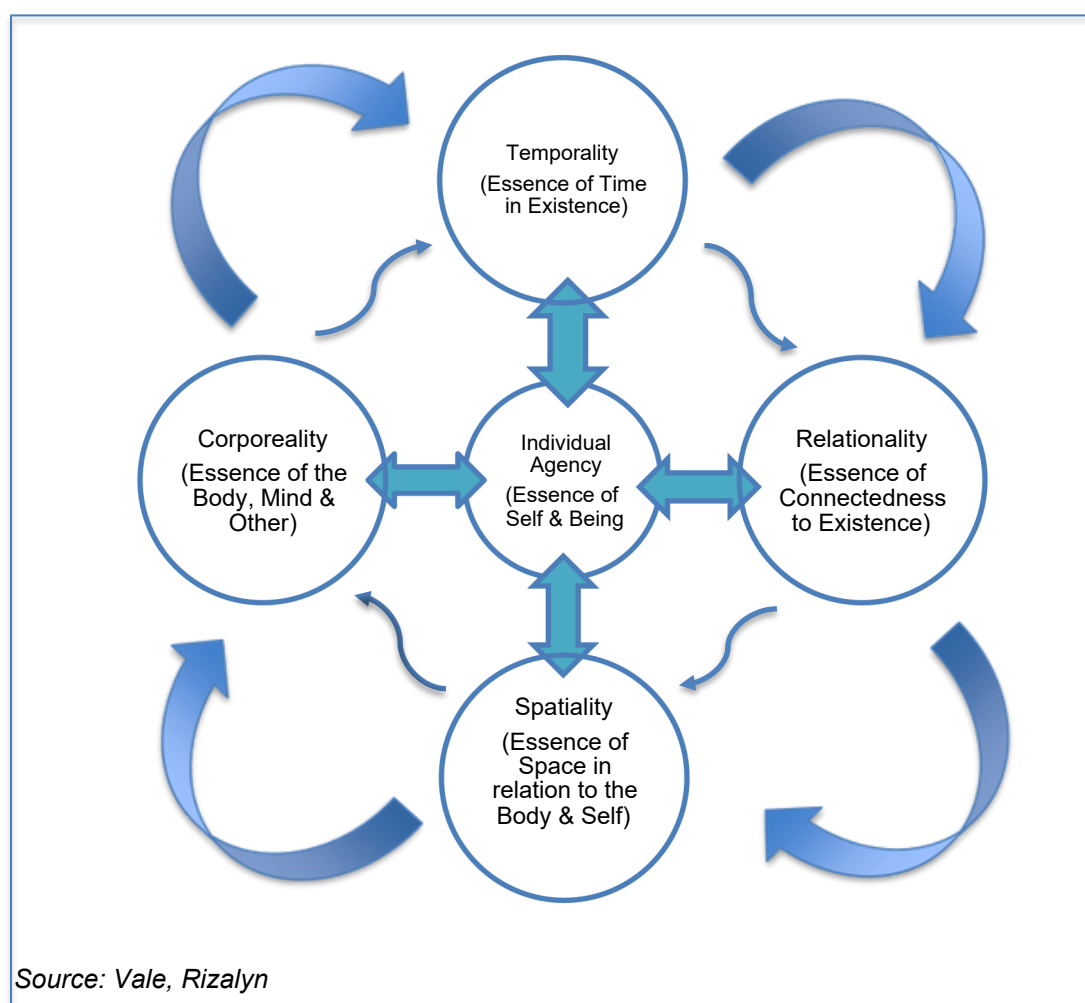
In 2019 while trekking to Poon Hill, Ghorepani, the researcher became more involved, more aware and more present at every step taken on the trail. Decisions undertaken sprang out of the heart, not merely cordially agreeing to the guide or surrendering to the dictates of the gloomy weather, on the ways in which the days will

be spent on the mountains. It became a dialogue from the self with others, a dialogue with the experiences and a dialogue with Nature.

A revision of the emergent dimensions of the study also became necessary to depict the evolution of understanding of the researcher beyond the four dimensions earlier identified. The changes include the observations of the interrelatedness and subtle influences in varying degrees on each other, which could create or discover new dimensions of experiencing towards an Embodied Communication Construct. In the diagram below, it can be seen that the Individual Agency exudes essences towards each dimension, where in return each dimension impresses subtle influences on it. Instead of earlier notion where the experience occurs in the subtle mindfulness of the one who experiences the experience, it suggests that each dimension dissolves into the human being, in such a way that it becomes part of it and vice versa.

The researcher claims based on the subjective interpretations of her experiences, there are possibilities of occurring merges through the five senses of the human being to that of the existing five elements of existence (ie. water, air, fire, earth and space). The bodily challenges experienced during trekking heightened the human sense to detect hunger, thirst, fatigue, sleepiness, cold, lack of air etc., there were also instances of sensing of danger of wild animals, insects, poisonous plants etc. and other unknown predators, or even dangerous people etc. that awakened the awareness on realities of travelling and trekking. It is also important to recognize the land or topography of the trails, potential landslides, avalanches etc. that has swept numerous trekkers on their path. The chilling reality of people disappearing under the white snow that were just a few hour ago, was a place worthy of a photograph to be posted on social media had suddenly become a graveyard, was indeed terrifying news to received for a trekker or anyone for that matter.

Figure 6. *The Emergent Dimensions of the Lived Experiences in Dialogue & Beyond*



In other words, a deeper sense of recognizing of the five elements of existing, inrelation to the five senses of the human being provided the researcher insights into addressing bodily challenges faced during the trek. An example, is that of nutrition, (ie. consuming lentils, nuts, garlic and rice and fermented vegetables etc. are beneficial to the body, particularly at higher altitudes) is from the soil. The quality of water is very important to the body, the quantity of water consumed on a daily basis during summer or winter do vary which require attention as to the ways in ensuring the appropriate amount is consumed per day during treks.

The air we breathe, and the technique of breathing is of immense support to attaining profound experiences while on the mountains. As the altitude goes higher,

the air thins out of oxygen affecting several functioning of the body, thus understand the merger, the transaction between the atmosphere and the body is important if not critical in some situations during trekking.

The element of fire, has often been underrated during treks by most people, where upon realizing that the food, beverages and the warm water bottle that keep the tents warm during treks cannot be possible without the fire – the researcher became of this and had remained in gratitude ever since. Another opportunity to sense the fire is during the day where the Sun become feasible and the warm amidst the cold dry misty day is highly appreciated. During the winter treks, the Sun was high up in the horizon the researcher could barely feel the blazing warmth it was suppose to bring in its brightness on a hot sunny afternoon, but alas the cold prevailed which made the trek arduous and long. The researcher recalls that the warmth of Sun back home had often been complained about, not knowing elsewhere it could be the only hope of survival.

The element of the soil, land or earth, in this case of trekking the trail on which one treads on is particularly endearing for the researcher. Many of the Nepal trekking trails were developed and maintained by the respective local communities in the area.

It is true that people depended on the tourists and trekkers that pass through their villages for certain amount of income it brings through their tea lodges, catering for the food and beverages of guests etc, hence, their commitment to be part of ensuring the trails are in good condition etc. but the researcher feels that the people are involved beyond the income they receive (at least for most of them), rather it is their love of family, love for life, love for Nature, love to share with others the beauty of the Himalayas etc. that they are committed to the trekking phenomenon. It brings pride and joy for the people to meet different Nationalities, to hear of stories from abroad,

and the similarities and differences each culture offer. The trails were carved out and hewn from solid rocks with the bare hands and basic tools by the Nepali people, the admiration and gratitude of the researcher unknown to them is embedded in the heart for paving the way to self-knowledge, and literally paving the way to get to peaks and summits the researcher would have never even dreamt of in a lifetime.

The fifth element consisting of space, a platform where all existence is laid out to occur, an invisible element yet encompassing even at the atomic level of scrutiny. The expanse of the mountain ranges on the trek is experienced within the space that permits the boundaries in between each matter to be identified to be such and such a thing, or person or river or mountain etc. Without space, it is impossible to exist, it is impossible to distinguish any thing from the other, if so, the experiencing of the experiencing is collapsed into a flat screen of nothingness. The appreciation for space, and that of it being an element of existence was an insight conceived by the researcher during the trek to Manang in 2017.

It is difficult at first to comprehend merging the five senses to the five elements experienced by the researcher during her treks, however with keen observation of the self, the body, the mind and the emotions, in silence, like a spring, this understanding was realized, hence the knowledge of self in relation to the five elements of existence.

At the mindfulness level, the insights on trekking went beyond the physical challenges imposed on the physical body of the researcher. An average duration of a trek within a day could range between six to eight hours depending the trail, weather conditions and the chosen village to rest for the night. The 6 to 8 hours of trekking were often filled with thoughts and emotions, lingering memories of the past, good and worst, emotions of interactions with events, people and places etc. arise during the long stretches of winding routes from the level of the rivers all the way up to the peak

with snow, then sloping down several more times in a similar pattern for the rest of the trek. The trails were sometimes carved out on the edge of the mountain of rock, trailing through on many occasions had often brought thoughts of falling rocks, or trees or even jeeps that transverse above. During these quiet conversations within, that emerges from the mind often go deep into negotiations between more time, more life, more chances to make things better etc. to keeping safe from the immediate dangers encountered or observed from a distance. Thoughts are powerful enough to reinforce hard questions that usually are not asked or often avoided by the self in normal circumstances of comfort, but during trekking the bridle is cut loose. Emotions on the other hand deals with the trekker, in this case the researcher, on a different plane of communication. It transcends the trivial of things, goes straight into the identities and egos that has been created by the mind over the period of time engulfed by the illusions of the past and the conditioning of the societies encountered. These emotions were of fear, anxiety for the future, remorse, anger, revenge, regrets and despair. The experiences of trekking provided the opportunities for deep reflection, setting out the relevant facts, timelines and possible reasons of the confusions and misunderstandings that enveloped that past, present and immediate future. The realizations and insights were difficult to come by and took several years to finally conclude the needed explanations it sought and the forgiveness it so deserved. In this state of mindfulness, the thoughts disappear, the chatter is silenced and the emotions found expressions toward devotions for Nature, the Sun and the Moon.

In putting together the experiences of and during trekking, the five senses subtly linked to the five elements, where the thoughts become mindful of the emotions and feelings, hence the direction of attention and awareness were redirected to the breath, to the voice and the human Being.

Self-awareness emerged slowly over a period of time, often struggling to be consistent to the findings of the study, however with continuous practice and sustained commitment, it became part of the daily routine. The new found state of mindfulness edged out the possibilities that were there but were not recognized by the researcher, for example, while remaining active during the day, conduct intermittent fasting of eight to 12 hours a day at a stretch of a couple months program, in preparation for longer duration of treks. On the trail the researcher was able to sustain the level of energy required to complete the trek, unlike in previous treks that several stops were made to have a meal to replenish the body and energy levels. At this point, where the focus was on improving the techniques of breathing and circulation of water in the body system, it took several attempts to practice a sustained 12 breaths per minute over a period of five minutes each set, before increasing duration to 10 minutes per set. However, during the pandemic the practice was interrupted to attend to other pressing issues domestically. The goal is to return to the practice and target 12 breathe per minute over a 30 minutes period. The breathing technique is to be at ease and stability of breath while actively performing other manual activities such as waking or running etc.

Another valuable insight of trekking of the researcher is that of the temporality of time in relation to the human being's lifespan or longevity or abruptness of it. There were several instances where the brush of death or hearing of the news of people losing their lives while trekking, the same route where the researcher had recently traversed or was planning to go to - were life changing moments for the trekker. These experiences on a number of occasions felt unreal, or questioning the reasons it needed to happen to others, the thought often lingered that it were a play of fate where

one could almost feel the “mapping of time” over one’s life. For many people, skepticism to this idea is normal, until it happens to them in some other way, grappling to explain the events unfolding right before their eyes, yet at the end crediting luck as the charm to their survival. There were several stories told across bon fires or a fireplace in cold winter nights where people shared experiences of this nature, to the researcher, were affirmations of the similar encounters with Existence itself.

Conclusion

The results of the study manifest the discovery of what occurs within the human being in communication with the self, the other and to a broader dimension of perception of the existing life worlds. Communication as phenomenon creates the worlds as we know it or made to perceived it. Self-resiliency integrates the realities of such man-made worlds or perceived worlds, that depending on the level of one’s awareness can the “quality of life” can truly begin to manifest itself.

Implications

The study argues that existence can only be experienced through existing in communication – in one’s experience. Thus, Communication theory as a field is that of the coherence as it exists in all multidisciplinary fields, for without the dialogical-dialectical constitutive nature of communication, no one can know the existence of anything that exists. To this effect, there seems to be very limited related literature on the exploration of the experiences of a trekker that expounds on the trekking phenomenon in the above context and its life worlds. Hence, the research study intends to contribute in its understanding. It also encourages further research studies to explore other opportunities in knowing the trekking phenomenon in its various and

multiple realities thru the subjective lens within an acceptable and overarching law of existence.

Recommendations

The recommendation is for further studies into self-knowledge, self-actualization when in dialogue with the self and others, particularly in trekking expeditions. The claims have left several open doors on opportunities for further research into, Communication theory as a coherent field thru the Phenomenology, “Inner Hermeneutics Phenomenology” and its applications, Embodied Communication as Construct, into the “Existentialism as a Domain of Communication”, “What Constitutes Dialogue in Economic-Social and Political Context? As well further studies into Questions concerning Authenticity of Communication of Artificial Intelligence (AI), who is speaking?”

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