

The heartening journey of a courageous woman who was Pasang Lhamu



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To mark the thirtieth anniversary of the historic ascent of Mt Everest by Nepal's first woman summiteer Pasang Lhamu Sherpa, the premiere of the film *Pasang: In the Shadow of Everest* was held at QFX Civil Mall, Sundhara on April 19.

In a world where being uneducated and indigenous was unfavourable, Pasang Lhamu persisted against family, foreign climbers, and her own government for her chance to stand atop of the summit in 1993. The documentary chronicles her relentless journey against all odds to realize her dream.

Sherpa's documentary is a heartening story of a brave woman who shows no fear and rises to meet any challenge that comes her way. Despite being set back multiple times, she perseveres to accomplish what she set out to do — reach the summit of the mountain. Her fourth attempt at conquering the mountain gifted us with not only with awe-inspiring visuals but also captivating stories of resilience, strength, and tenacity. As Sherpa's journey unfolds, viewers are filled with hope that if the mission is started for a cause, there is a strong chance of success no matter how challenging it may be.

Sherpa defied the traditional roles assigned to her and chose a path of her own — one that would eventually take her to incredible heights. Despite being denied a proper education and expected to submit to an arranged marriage, she instead decided to marry a man she loved, moved to Kathmandu and began challenging herself on many levels.

As audiences follow the gripping journey of Sherpa in the movie, they get attached to her life story and struggles. The last part of the movie leaves the audience in an emotional state. As during the time of descent, she dies along with her companion Sonam Tshering Sherpa on the South Summit, due to bad weather conditions.

It took American director Nancy Svendsen a whole decade of work to bring Sherpa's story to screen. It was at a family dinner that she first learned of Pasang with her brother-in-law Ang Dorjee Sherpa.

Svendsen said, "Pasang is an important figure for Nepal and her story has a universal appeal to the world. The foreign climbers completely dismissed her motivation, despite the fact that it was her mountain. She was a brave girl who faced many struggles and endured against all odds. She fought for a complete new image for Nepali women."

Sharing about her journey of making the documentary, Svendsen said, "The most challenging part was to find the materials and collect them from different people. The task was made even harder as all these materials were in different formats and it was very complicated to put them together into a contemporary HD format. Making a film to portray her life wasn't an easy feat, so we had to make sacrifices and selectively pick the things that would be shown in the film. Through this movie, I wanted to highlight her journey of overcoming obstacles as she strived towards achieving her goals."

Sharing about her impression of Nepal, the director expressed, "As I stepped on to Nepali soil for the first time in 2009 with my family, I was instantly mesmerised by the beauty and grandeur of the mountains. Over the years, my fascination with Nepal has only grown stronger as I became acquainted with its various colourful traditional and religious ceremonies. The experience of being surrounded by such a diverse tapestry of culture is truly fascinating."

According to her, similarities between Nepal and the US are tangible when it comes to the struggles of women. Sherpa's story of not wanting to serve resonated with many women in America who also want freedom and control over their lives. "Women's struggle for recognition and respect is universal. This is why it's important for women everywhere to have role models in their own country."

The feature-length documentary will be hitting cinema screens on April 28.