



Love and Honor in the Himalayas: Coming To Know Another Culture (Contemporary Ethnography)

Ernestine McHugh

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American anthropologist Ernestine McHugh arrived in the foothills of the Annapurna mountains in Nepal, and, surrounded by terraced fields, rushing streams, and rocky paths, she began one of several sojourns among the Gurung people whose ramro hawa-pani (good wind and water) not only describes the enduring bounty of their land but also reflects the climate of goodwill they seek to sustain in their community. It was in their steep Himalayan villages that McHugh came to know another culture, witnessing and learning the Buddhist appreciation for equanimity in moments of precious joy and inevitable sorrow.

Love and Honor in the Himalayas is McHugh's gripping ethnographic memoir based on research among the Gurungs conducted over a span of fourteen years. As she chronicles the events of her fieldwork, she also tells a story that admits feeling and involvement, writing of the people who housed her in the terms in which they cast their relationship with her, that of family. Welcomed to call her host Ama and become a daughter in the household, McHugh engaged in a strong network of kin and friendship. She intimately describes, with a sure sense of comedy and pathos, the family's diverse experiences of life and loss, self and personhood, hope, knowledge, and affection. In mundane as well as dramatic rituals, the Gurungs ever emphasize the importance of love and honor in everyday life, regardless of circumstances, in all human relationships. Such was the lesson learned by McHugh, who arrived a young woman facing her own hardships and came to understand—and experience—the power of their ways of being.

While it attends to a particular place and its inhabitants, *Love and Honor in the Himalayas* is, above all, about human possibility, about what people make of their lives. Through the compelling force of her narrative, McHugh lets her emotionally open fieldwork reveal insight into the privilege of joining a community and a culture. It is an invitation to sustain grace and kindness in the face of adversity, cultivate harmony and mutual support, and cherish life fully.

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