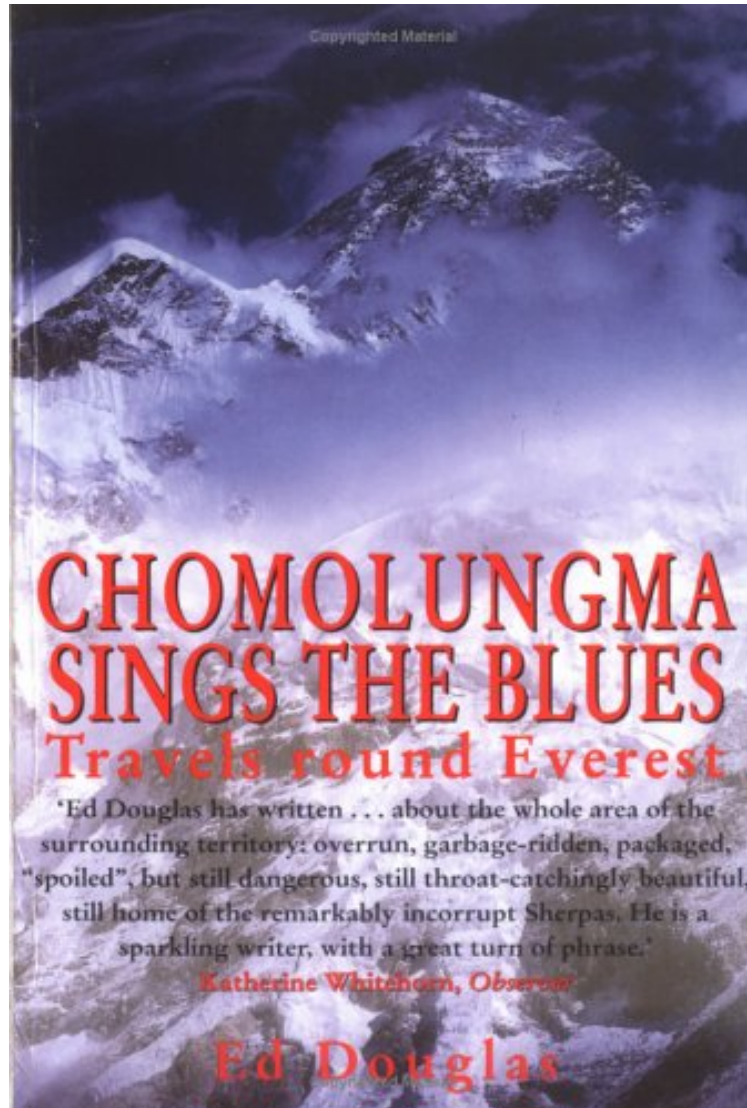


Chomolungma Sings the Blues

Ed Douglas

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Ed Douglas : Chomolungma Sings the Blues before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chomolungma Sings the Blues:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good addition to the literature By Rachel This is an engaging and nicely written perspective of the "Everest/Mountaineering/cultural " gestalt , basically a look at how the growth of commercial and "holiday' mountaineering and trekking has impacted the general regions around the Himalaya, around Kathmandu and the general region of trekking routes. After reading a number of other "Everest' and mountaineering related "climbing" books, (usually relayed or written by some of the mountaineers themselves, or their

biographers,) this book offers yet another perspective of some of the lore and stories which have accumulated in the past 30 years or so. For me it would have been a finer book if the author could have edited out his continual anti-american sentiment, but I guess this is a British thing- perhaps out of guilt for their 800 year journey or arrogant tyranny throughout the world. Still, don't let that stop you from reading it- it gives a genuine insider's view of the Sherpa and other local cultures, the conditions in which the tribes live, how they are treated by mountaineers (some good and some bad) , and how the Nepalese and Chinese cultures contribute to the mess. And it is a mess- the title is well chosen. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Really enjoyed this book By Joe Borondy Really enjoyed this book. I am headed for Nepal and doing treks in a lot of the same areas as where this book was written. It was an eye opening read. Highly recommend 32 of 32 people found the following review helpful. Hits the peak By saliero How can I give this book 10/15/20 stars? This is the most wonderful book I have read on Chomolungma (Everest). You will discover why he didn't call it by the other Nepalese name, Sagamatha. Douglas is a mountaineer, though he admits he does not really understand the compulsion to climb Everest, and he says towards the end of the book that he never could climb it because he does not want to enough. This book is sensitive, respectful and self-effacing. Its purpose is serious - to really discover something about the cultural impact of the trekking and mountaineering industries on the people and environment of the Everest area. Along the way, Douglas makes some insightful observations about the role of governments, the impact of non-government organisations and the activities of some of the successful business - people - Nepalese, sometimes Sherpa, all involved in the Everest industry. In all three instances he shows us the sometimes misguided, sometimes successful and sometimes outright fraudulent efforts. At all times Douglas remains thoroughly respectful of the Nepalese (and in the first chapter Tibetan) people, despite also being able to show us the cultural and political warts. Whilst having a few harsh judgements about some trekkers and some mountaineers, he also manages to treat them fairly and - no mean feat at times. Perhaps, however, he is hardest of all on climbers: "...there are so many other climbers whose photographs of locals punctuated their articles and lectures to break up all those shots showing what heroes they'd been with a little local culture. Anthropologists and environmentalists must have a strong suspicion that most climbers and trekkers see local people as a human backdrop to their adventures. I almost admired the climber who told me that if he could go to the mountain in a bubble to avoid disease and arguments with porters, he would. At least he was being honest." Douglas writes movingly of the unrecognised and mostly unheard about porters who have been the casualties of the industry - ill-clad and ill-equipped, some have been turned out by expeditions and left to fend for themselves when things have got sticky. There are generally no helicopter rescues for the porters. Douglas calls this "moral squalor". The myriad cut-price trekking companies pay cut-throat rates and fail to equip these workers well. On the other hand, Douglas shows how portering is integral to the local economy, and quotes statistics debunking the view that permanent physical damage is the result of portering. After you have read Krakauer's 'Into Thin Air', and Boukreev's 'The Climb' and the other expedition journals and diaries, and coffee table books about Everest, turn to this one to find out about the people and the impact on their lives. This book also reads as a travelogue, as it recounts, in the main, Douglas's own trekking experience in the spring of 1996. He encounters along the way many of the groups that became caught up in the storms and tragedies of May 10 1996, including Scott Fisher's group and David Breashear's IMAX film team. Some of the descriptive passages are wonderful word pictures. I had a real sense of what it is like at the top of Kala Patta and Gokyo Ri, for example. Some passages that particularly spoke to me (you will surely discover others): "Professional climbers earn their living describing their own achievements, while those with a more long-term or scientific purpose can claim some benefit to mankind other than the realisation of ambition. It was clear, however, that they were prone to the same jealousies and quarrels." "The truth has to be faced that guides have treated the mountain as a resource, just as the Nepalese authorities have. It's a way to cash in on the regular flow of books and films about Everest, a package deal to the roof of the world for anyone with enough money and an excess of self-confidence. As for the motivation of people who are prepared to spend a small fortune for a chance to be pulled up Everest, I can only guess. If it is to impress, then the huge resources and assistance required to get them to the top should temper their sense of achievement. If it is for a love of adventure, then they probably get more than they bargain for. But then why climb Everest at all? That's the hardest thing to explain. That's the sixty-four thousand dollar question."

Everest, a mountain known all around the world and surrounded by the tragic romanticism of climbers risking everything for a dream. Although much has been written on the feats and accomplishments of these climbers, what about the people who actually live in the shadow of the mountain and the ways climbers and trekkers affect their lives? Ed Douglas spent time traveling in Nepal and Tibet, talking to politicians, environmentalists and mountaineers, to local people who live around the mountain they call Chomolungma, Goddess Mother of the World. This sensitive account of Douglas' travels explores the issues facing a region struggling to develop and change-issues brought on by the growing mountaineering and trekking industries, issues that go far beyond how to clear up all the piling rubbish climbers leave behind. With honesty and humor Chomolungma Sings the Blues sheds a new and different light on the mountain and its people.

From Library Journal Interest in Mount Everest (called Chomolungma, or "Goddess Mother of the World," by the locals) and the surrounding high mountains of Nepal has placed enormous strain on both the physical environment and the people of the region. At any one time, thousands of foreigners are trekking and ascending the lesser peaks. Over 700 climbers have reached the summit of Everest itself, and it has become the sport of the wealthy. Permit fees run about \$10,000 per person; most expeditions have base budgets beginning at \$300,000. These groups, obviously well supplied, plus the many independent, low-budget travelers, leave behind massive amounts of litter and sometimes a shameful record of exploitation of their largely Sherpa porters. Douglas, a British climber and an editor of *Climber* magazine, reports skillfully on the two-edged sword of "adventure travel." Public libraries with books promoting trekking and climbing should balance their collections with this honest and disturbing look at its consequences.

A Harold M. Otness, Southern Oregon Univ. Lib., Ashland Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. "One of the minor classics of modern mountain writing, telling you more about the truths and corruptions of our western approach to mountains and their indigenous peoples than any other title in this genre that I can bring to mind." -- Jim Perrin, TGO magazine "Douglas' book is refreshing and honest. An excellent geo-political travelogue that takes the reader under the surface of the happy smiling trekking holiday image of the Himalayas." -- Roger Payne, High Mountain Sports "What makes this book most readable is its humorous eye for detail, whether it is the outrageous decor of the Chinese hotel or the bridge near Namche Bazar, which he describes as `a slender suspension of wire, wood and disbelief.'" -- Stephen Venables, The Daily Telegraph "The authority and balanced judgements of this book will make it essential reading for those contemplating a trek to Tibet and Nepal." -- Terry Gifford, Yorkshire Post "Instead of gazing up at the mountain, Douglas does something which hardly anyone else bothers to do: he looks down, at the people and the life around it." -- Charles Arthur, The Independent "A very accomplished climber and noted commentator on climbing-related subjects, Douglas is here more interested in the resonance that Everest has both for the local peoples and the visitors to Nepal and Tibet. He writes elegantly and perceptively with a light and informed touch." -- Jon Tinker, The Guardian "A wise and useful book, which has been asking to be written ever since Hunt's successful expedition in 1953. Douglas is a first-class journalist, whose interest in the Himalaya and its people enables him to get in close." -- David Craig, Literary "I had no prior interest in Everest or mountaineering, until I read Ed Douglas' *Chomolungma Sings the Blues*. Well written, it is particularly insightful on the damaging effects of adventure tourism." -- Russell Celyn Jones, `Summer Choice', The Times "Ed Douglas has written a book, not so much about the mountain - the Chomolungma of the title - but about the whole area of the surrounding territory as it is nowadays: overrun, garbage-ridden, packaged, `spoiled', but still dangerous, still throat-catchingly beautiful. Douglas is a sparkling writer, with a great turn of phrase." -- Katherine Whitehorn, The Observer

About the Author Ed Douglas is a writer and journalist with a passion for the wilder corners of the natural world. A former editor of the *Alpine Journal*, Ed is an enthusiastic amateur climber and mountain traveller with a particular interest in the Himalayas. His books include *Tenzing: Hero of Everest*, the first full-length biography of the first man, with Sir Edmund Hillary, to climb Everest.