Invitation: Wild Pedagogies & Sacred Geographies Gathering

Nepal | Fall 2027

Dear Colleague,

We are excited to invite you to an interesting and hopefully enriching **Wild Pedagogies Gathering** in the Nepal Himalayas. Proposed dates: **1 May to 16 May 2027**

This gathering aims to move beyond the "adventure tourism" lens, reimagining the Himalayan landscape, physical terrain, as a genuine co-teacher while at the same time re/turning to ancient wisdom where that was the status quo. Rather than imposing a rigid western academic framework that often comes at scholarly conferences or gatherings, we are seeking to invite participants into a deep, rich immersion. Think of this as a Nepalese **"wilding" experience**. A community-driven, place-based, and local culture centric project where the process of being together, of sharing ideas/meals/lives, and leaning in with open minds is as vital as the insights we gain. By engaging with the land not as a backdrop for conquest, but as a source of living insight, we will think alongside local wisdom keepers to explore how the "Wild", wisdoms this place called Nepal, and perhaps even the "Sacred" can reshape the future of education.

Proposed Topics for the Gathering

- **Beyond Conquest: Shifting the Narrative**:

  We will explore the parallels between "summit culture" and "standard education"—both of which often prioritize competition, individual learning/success, and the extraction of knowledge and experiences. By moving from conquest to practices of deep listening, co-operation, and making ourselves present, we see this as an opportunity to “wild” tourism, ways of being outdoors, education, and Wild Pedagogies itself. Our sense is that this is learning that values the journey over the destination.

- **The Landscape as Co-Teacher & other Wild Pedagogies’ Touchstones**

  We will work to immerse ourselves in the Himalayan terrain—from high passes to sacred *Beyul* (hidden valleys)—thereby potentially engaging with these places as active participants, eco-democratic citizens, and teachers. We hope to have the opportunity to apply the touchstones of Wild Pedagogies to the Nepalese context, challenging assumptions that lead the land and the cultures therein to be seen, at best, as merely backdrops or novelties. Here, the "Wild" serves as a potential catalyst to shake our existing assumptions about what it means to be a teacher and what it means to be human.

- **Indigenous Wisdom in Dialogue**

We will seek the possibility of a genuine cross-cultural exchange between Western educational theories and the ancient ecological and spiritual insights of Himalayan communities. This is more than a study; it is an act of social justice (Wild Pedagogy Touchstone 6) that centers Indigenous voices and explores "another way of being" in the world, allowing participants to rethink their relationships with place, community, and education.

- **Philosophical Ripples & Practical Frameworks**

  Here, we will invite "philosophical rumblings and ramblings". Leaving space for questions, confusions, and possibilities to bubble and have the attention they deserve. The hope is that these encounters alongside the time spent in consideration and conversation will open possibilities for further research, for writing, and for interesting developments with regard to each participant' reality. While at the same time being enriched by the opportunity to think together as a community alongside, influenced by local people and places about how to create "richer experiences" that benefit both the environment and the community.

The Vision: Landscape and Wisdom as One

Integrating the Eight **Touchstones of Wild Pedagogies** with Himalayan concepts like **Beyul** (Sacred Hidden Valleys) and **Nekor**, Tirthatan (Pilgrimage) offers a profound framework and a possible way in to shifting to a "co-teaching" relationship with the land and changing our understandings of wild pedagogies and education.

In Himalayan philosophy, mountains are not merely geological features; they are sacred, sentient presences. If this is true, why do we so often perceive the landscape as inert/passive or experience a sense of disconnection and suffering? At the immediate level, our experience is clouded by the dichotomy of **subject and object** (*Graahya -Grahaka*). We create a rigid mental wall between the "perceiver in here" (*Grahaka*) and the "world out there" (*Grahya*). This dualism in turn creates friction—transforming the land into a resource to be consumed and the self into a consumer seeking 'get ahead'. To "shake" these assumptions, our gathering begins not with theory, but with the practice of **deep listening**. By experiencing the landscape through this traditional Nepali lens before we analyze it, we allow the place itself to "teach" us, potentially dissolving some of the boundaries between self and mountain.

A primary goal of both Himalayan practitioners and Buddhist scholarship is to dismantle the illusion of the subject-object split—the "grasper" and the "grasped"—which obscures our natural state. By challenging and perhaps integrating the **Eight Touchstones of Wild Pedagogies**, we are hoping to provide opportunities to move from "thinking about" this duality to actually experiencing its breakdown.

This will not be a traditional classroom experience, nor will it be a standard academic conference; this is a **facilitated immersion and shared journey**. We will be guided by local mentors and wisdom keepers—drawing from the deep well of expertise found in Kathmandu and the mountains—who embody these philosophical commitments. These guides will lead us

in "listening" to the landscape, allowing the more-than-human world to act as a co-teacher while at the same time challenging us to see beyond the edges of our own imaginations.

Rather than arriving with fixed outcomes, we hope everyone will engage in an **iterative, co-creative process**. Through dialogue with the land, the people, and each other, we will allow questions and critiques to arise naturally. In this space, the touchstones of Wild Pedagogies might act as a bridge, helping us navigate a more inclusive path where the landscape unfolds into wisdom (*Advaya*; *Nyis med*). Participants will leave with more than just theory; they will hopefully gain a sense of well-being and a reshaped perspective on their role within the world.

A Generative Dialogue

Rather than a rigid production of tools, this gathering is a generative space for shared inquiry. We aim to explore how a "cultivation over conquest" philosophy might reshape our respective fields:

- **For Educators & Academics:** We will explore how field-based learning can move beyond the "outdoor classroom" model to a state where the land itself acts as a co-teacher.
- **For Travel & Tourism Professionals:** We will rethink the "adventure" model, moving toward **slow-trekking and historical inquiry**. This isn't just about visiting temples, monasteries, or high passes; it is a deep, intentional engagement with the landscape that honors the environment and the local community.
- **For Media & Storytellers:** We will discuss strategies for narrative-building that honor the agency of the land, moving away from "landscape as backdrop" toward "landscape as character."

The Journey & Program

The colloquium is designed for a cohort of 15–30 participants, moving through three distinct phases of immersion, dialogue, and reflection at each iterative turn.

- Phase 1: The Seminar – Kathmandu & The Ancient Mandala (3–4 Days)

We begin with a grounding in theory and local indigenous perspectives. This phase includes visits to cultural heritage sites and sessions with, still to be confirmed, local scholars (e.g. Milan Shakya (university lecturer, author, & head of the Nagarjuna Institute of Buddhist Studies); Dr Ghanashyam Gurung, WWF country director Nepal; N. B. Lama (Jigme) (local guide, author, and wild pedagogies host)) to establish the philosophical framework of the *Grahya/Grahaka* (subject-object) relationship and its dissolution.

- Phase 2: The Practice – Trek in the vicinity of the valley national parks in (5–6 Days)

The core group moves into the field for an immersion in "land-as-teacher." This phase features silent hikes, reflections, experiences, and dialogues with local elders, naturalists

and cultural practitioners. We conclude this phase together in the wild with a series of shared discussions and "ripplings" to harvest our collective insights and questions.

- Phase 3: The Optional Extension – The Higher Altitude Wandering and wondering

For those wishing to test these pedagogical frameworks in more remote environments, an optional extension continues deeper into the Annapurna, Mustang, or Rolwaling Gaurishankar regions. While the extension group continues, those concluding their journey will return to Kathmandu for final departures.

The Legacy of Tsheringma: A Cornerstone of Deep Ecology

The inclusion of the Rolwaling region—specifically the peaks of Gaurishankar, known locally as Tsheringma (the Mother Goddess of Longevity)—is deeply symbolic. It was here in 1971 that three Norwegian climbers, including philosopher Arne Næss, the founder of Deep Ecology, protested the "assault" on mountains by military-style summit expeditions.

By choosing not to summit out of respect for the mountain's sanctity, they sparked a global movement that prioritized the intrinsic value of nature over human conquest. This legacy of restraint—honoring the "More-than-Human" by leaving the summit untouched—serves as the historical and philosophical cornerstone for our exploration. We do not walk to reach the top; we walk to listen to the mountain.

Logistics & Coordination

- **Local Focal Point:** N. B. Lama (Jigme) – Logistics, Institutional Networking, and Local Heritage.
- **Academic Lead:** Sean Blenkinsop – Wild Pedagogies and Educational Theory.
- **Weather:** Expect temperatures ranging from **20°C to 0°C**. Be prepared for "all the weather" at once—the mountains are unpredictable teachers.

Estimated Fees

- **All-Inclusive:** $2,950 USD[1] *(Note: International airfare and personal travel insurance are not included.)*

  Breakdown of the package

  - **Phase 1: May 1-4, 2027:** Kathmandu excursions, initial discussions and preparations (4 days) – $ 800
  - **Phase 2: May 4-9, 2027:** Shared Trek in Helambu, one of the *beyuls, sacred sites* near valley (6 days) - $ 1000
  - **Optional Phase 3: May 9-16, 2027:** More remote trek to Rolwaing (Tsheringma Beding / Na village) (8 days) - $ 1150

- **Student Rate:** $2,450 USD *(Note: International airfare and personal travel insurance are not included.)*
  - **Phase 1: May 1-4, 2027:** Kathmandu excursions, initial discussions and preparations (4 days) – $ 650
  - **Phase 2: May 4-9, 2027:** Shared Trek in Helambu, one of the *beyuls, sacred sites* near valley (6 days) - $ 850
  - **Optional Phase 3: May 9-16, 2027:** More remote trek to Rolwaing (Tsheringma Beding / Na village) (8 days) - $ 950

Note: In order to make sure the program runs and necessary supports are booked we are asking for commitments and a $300 USD down payment (will be subtracted from your total cost)

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[1] **A note on cost, economic privilege, and building a fellowship fund**: At this point the costs are being held to a bare minimum. We are making sure our invited Nepalese guests and guides are being appropriately compensated and selecting places to stay and eat that are culturally rich, comfortable, and outside the main tourist throughways of Nepal. In keeping with previous wild pedagogies gatherings, these are simple and comfortable places to stay with simple and good local food. They are not extravagant nor are they luxurious. And for some, these costs are incredibly reasonable (remember that the latest WEEC conference had fees that were $1000+ USD for 4 days with no room or board (but all the coffee you could drink!)) but for others they are still quite prohibitive especially with the added cost of travel. So, we would like to propose several options to make this conference as fiscally accessible as possible.

A) Create a **kind of sliding cost scale** in order to make it possible for more colleagues (students, Nepali, and international) to join us. Thus, if you are able to pay a little more than the "all-inclusive" price listed above, say $200-500 (or more), because you are funded or have access to funds then do tell us and we will provide the necessary paperwork for your funder/institution and we will use the extra to support someone else.
B) Find funding support for another person, either through your own research funds or your institution. Could be someone from your institution or potentially an international/visiting scholar kind of exchange. Again, please let us know and we will do our utmost to help.
C) Alert us to possible funding sources and we are happy to help with grant writing or whatever is needed.
D) Tell your friends about this and have them sign up because once we get above 10 people fully paid we can start to wiggle costs a bit (e.g. a bus for 5 costs as much as a bus for 20) and potentially even open up a fully funded space (or a couple of half-funded ones).

by **February 15th, 2027**. If there are not enough participants this will also be our cancellation date (with full refund). For more information and to book a spot please contact Jigme at:

NB Lama (Jigme)

Budhanilkantha-1 I Kathmandu | Nepal

International / WhatsApp No. +1 510 590 8988

Nepal Contact: 977 - 9768662715

URL: Treks With Purpose Nepal

What Your Contribution Covers: To ensure this is a deep immersion rather than a standard conference, your fees cover the entire on-the-ground ecosystem:

- **Comprehensive Lodging:** Comfortable hotels in Kathmandu and traditional tea houses, homestays, or supported camping in the high mountains.
- **Full Expedition Support:** Expert local guides, porters, and a dedicated Nepali crew (including required insurance for all local staff).
- **Nourishment:** All meals while trekking and breakfast in Kathmandu.
- **Seamless Transport:** All domestic flights, private ground transfers, and mountain transport.
- **Access & Stewardship:** All national park permits, local government fees, and cultural entry tickets.
- **Expert Mentorship:** Access to specialized local scholars, monks, and guest lecturers.

Shared Creation: Moving Beyond the "Schtick"

We intentionally discourage pre-planned workshops or "canned" presentations. We invite participants to arrive with an open mind and a "wild" curiosity. We might even provide some pre-reading/pre-viewing offerings to help ‘grease the wheels’.

The Process:

- **Emergent Provocations:** Rather than a formal schedule of papers, we will develop "provocations" in real-time, sparked by the landscapes, the local elders, and the more-than-human beings we encounter.
- **Co-Creative Reflection:** During our final days in the field and back in Kathmandu, we

will synthesize these experiences into nascent forms of papers, artistic works, educational creations, or any other offerings that arise from our time together.

- **Challenging Assumptions:** We will use the **Eight Touchstones of Wild Pedagogies** as a lens to undo troublesome Western assumptions, including those that exist in Wild Pedagogies, about what "nature," "justice," “knowing”, “being”, and "education" really mean, allowing the Himalayan context to reshape, expand, and flex our core philosophies.

Call for Shared Inquiries

We invite you to bring your voice, your curiosity, and your professional lens to this generative space. To ensure our work is deeply rooted in the Himalayan landscape and community, we are moving away from pre-planned presentations and "canned" workshops. Instead, we seek **emergent contributions**—ideas that are prepared to be "shaken" and reshaped by the land and the experiences.

How We Engage

Rather than bringing a finished "product," we invite you to participate in a shared, iterative process of creation:

- **Emergent inquiries:** During our time in the Kathmandu foothills and on the trek, we will hold space for spontaneous sharings. We invite you to bring "seeds" of ideas—queries about environmental policy, social and ecological justice, pedagogical possibility, or outdoor leadership—that can be discussed in dialogue with local elders and the "more-than-human" teachers we encounter.
- **Future Offerings:** These collaborative reflections may, we hope they will, evolve into a published collection of essays, a new wild pedagogies book, artistic works, or new pedagogical possibilities—a "Himalayan Wilding" series that explores justice, culture, and learning through the lens of thinking with place, local ways of knowing and being, and ancient wisdoms lived in place. Please note: that while we are not stipulating a particular “outcome” at this point we do plan to give time for dialogue, reflection, writing, and creation throughout our time together. The goal is to have a gift/offering of some kind that is our collective response to, engagement with, this incredible place, peoples, and experience.
- **Collaborative Reflections:** During all phases (including the optional phase 3) of our journey, we will work together to synthesize our experiences. We aim to produce a series of **trans-cultural reflection pieces**—cross-pollinating Western theories like Wild Pedagogies, *Friluftsliv* and Deep Ecology with Himalayan Sacred Geography. Pieces that are useful in the Nepali context first and foremost and that can also potentially influence educational theories worldwide.