

Listen to the Mountain

Research and Script - Hemant Lagvankar

This is the episode on the topic 'Protecting Mountain Ecosystem and promoting Ecotourism'. The episode tries to focus on the threats to the mountain ecosystem and talks about the remedial measures through the participation of local residents.

Also, the episode depicts the efforts which can be made for conserving the nature on the mountains and also how to promote eco-tourism for the sustainable development of the community living in hilly areas.

List of Characters:

Molu :	A school going boy – Age 10 to 12 years
Grandma :	Great - grandmother of Molu (About 80-85 years old)
Narayan :	School headmaster (Age about 45 years)
Sagar :	A manager working with a builder (Age about 25 to 30 years)
Ramanna :	A tea shopkeeper in the village. (Age about 50 years)
Shastri :	A villager (45 years old)
Kannaihya :	A villager (30 years old)

[Molu has just finished his exams and want to enjoy vacation. He is talking to his great – grandmother]

Molu : ***(with all the excitement, calling)*** Grandma.... Where are you? I want here a story from you....

(Grandma talking to him from inside and comes slowly out of her room)

Grandma : Beta Molu, I am here! What happened? What do you want?

Mamma : Grandma, I want to listen a beautiful story from you. Remember, you have promised me to tell a story after finishing my exams.

Grandma : ***(Laughing)*** Yes...

Molu : Then tell me now.... My exams are over! I am a free bird now!

Grandma : *(Laughing)* okey...Molu! I will tell you a story! But, let me drink a sip of water first.

(Grandma takes water in stainless steel glass and drinks)

Molu : Ready???

Grandma : *(Laughing)* Yes! Now listen. This is the story of my life....the one which I have experienced...

Molu : Ohh!

(Grandma becomes nostalgic. She starts describing the situation. Relevant background music should be played)

Grandma : I was born here when there were no motor cars, no vehicles, no television, no movies, and much less noise... *(Pauses)* I was born here— grew up, married, had my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. I have lived here all my life. Here, in this town, which was like a small village that time, on the slopes of Dharmagiri. The river, trees, flowers, birds and animals are all my friends; I have had a tough life, but a happy one. One day my son, Narayan –

Molu : Means my grandfather?

Grandma : Yes. He was the School Headmaster. He came to me with the most shocking news. *(Pauses)*

Molu : What was the issue grandma? Something serious?

Grandma : He had a discussion with Sagar at Ramanna's tea stall...

Molu : Who was Sagar, grandma?

Grandma : Sagar.... *(Pauses)* He was new to the village.... A stranger.... But came to the village with definite purpose in his mind....

[Change over music piece. Scene changes. A scene of Ramanna's tea stall. Background sound effects to create ambiance of the tea stall. Light film music is blaring. The sound effects fade as the dialogues start]

Ramanna : (To Narayan) Hello Sir, shall I make a special tea for you?

Narayan : Yes, of course Ramanna! **(Laughing)** *Aare bhai 'Teacher' Tea ke bina adhura hai. Banao...A special Ramanna tea!*

Sagar: Hello, I am Sagar!

Narayan : Hello, My name is Narayn. I am Headmaster of the school here! Will you take tea?

Sagar : Yes, sure! thank you.

Narayan : Make one more Ramanna! For our new friend... Sagar! Ok friend, tell us something about yourself. I have not seen you before in the vilaage... means you are new here!

Sagar : Yes, you are correct. I have moved into this village a couple of days ago, you know, rented a house beyond the market place. Bit primitive, but it will do. (Laughs) I am here only for six months, thank goodness.

Ramanna: (curiously) Why six months? Have you come on...for...business?

Sagar: **(with a sneer)** Yeah. Why will I come to a sleepy little dump like this if not for business? We are building a hotel here. A five-star hotel.

Ramanna: **(serving tea)** A five-star hotel! Here, in our village?

Sagar: **(proudly)** Yeah. A fabulous, multi-stored hotel. Three hundred rooms, shopping complex, swimming pool, health club, theatre.... and what not!

Narayan: **(surprised)** But ours is a small village, only five hundred people live here; what will we do with a hotel that has three hundred rooms?

Sagar: Village folk. They are dumb! **(To Narayan)** See man, **(Rises from the chair, talks in an excited voice)** This is a lovely village, right in the middle of a valley. This river that flows through your village—it is the cleanest I have ever seen! And up the Dharmagiri mountain, such a gorgeous, breathtaking view. The waterfalls, the trees, the wildlife! Marvellous, simply marvellous! The plan is to build a five-star hotel right there on top of Dharmagiri, overlooking your village. (Points to the mountain) Fantastic, eh?

Narayan: **(shocked)** The only construction we have on Dharmagiri is the temple, built three hundred years ago.

Ramanna: The mountain is sacred to us. The river which starts there flows down and sustains our crops...our lives. How can you build a hotel there?

Narayan: There is only a narrow winding path to the top. Your vehicles cannot go up. And what will happen to the houses, including mine, which are along the slope?

Sagar: There is nothing to worry, I can tell you. This hotel is being built by Dixit. Heard of him the millionaire industrialist from Delhi? He has the okay from the government, and my firm has clinched the deal for building it. Everything has been arranged. I have come to get the work started.

Ramanna: (*agitated*) Arre...No one in the village has been told about it. The villagers will not like it, I know they will not.

Sagar: (*haughtily*) Ignore, my dear friend, ignorance! The village will not be harmed in any way, can't you see? When we widen the road to go up the hill and make it a tar road, some houses will naturally be knocked down. We will compensate handsomely, don't you worry, man! It will be one of the best luxury hotels in the country. Tourists will pour into your village, especially rich ones!

Narayan: (*doubtfully*) But, where are the men to build your hotel? Where is the machinery?

Sagar: (*laughing*) It is all arranged, man! Our boss, Mr. Dixit does not waste time. He has influence, He can get things moving! Soon, lorries and trucks will arrive with cement, bricks, steel, marble and other things. We are bringing the labourers, of course... a few hundred.

Ramanna: A few hundred? Where will they stay?

Sagar: We will put up some temporary dwellings for them at the foot of the hill. No problem.

Narayan: You mean, you will have slums here?

Sagar: (*shrugging*) Well...that is what they are used to, man! They live like rats, don't you know?

Narayan: (*annoyed*) Mr. Sagar, I strongly oppose this plan to build a hotel on Dharmagiri. I wish we, the villagers, had been consulted first. Mr. Dixit should have asked us what we felt about it.

Sagar: Don't make me laugh, man! Mr. Dixit, the multimillionaire—owner of dozens of cinema houses, three luxury hotels, two drug companies and the biggest biscuit factory in India- Mr. Dixit, who owns five mansions in different parts of the

world, you want him to consult you? *(pauses)* Look man, it is his money, his idea, his effort. You villagers have nothing to do with it.

Ramanna: *(Ruffled)* You don't know us. We certainly have something to do with it.

[Change over music piece. Scene changes. Again a scene of home with Molu and his Great Grandmother]

Molu : What happened next, Grandma? Why did you stop telling?

Grandma : Wait for a while Molu. I know you are excited... but those days were painful... not only for me, but for all villagers....

Molu : Yes! I can understand. All villagers were dependant on that mountain for water... for wood, even for food! And not only villagers, but all birds, animals, insects.... Mountain is their home too!

Grandma : Yes! You are absolutely correct Molu! Mountains have been recognised as important ecosystems.

Molu : Grandma, our teacher has told us that, some of the rare and most exotic species of animals and plants are found only on the mountains.

Grandma : Hmm... They are also a source of minerals, forest products and agricultural products. About 10 percent of the world's population depends upon these mountain resources. Most importantly, mountains are the source of water for us. Most of the rivers originate from hilly areas. In fact, mountains are often rightly called as 'nature's water towers'.

Molu : And Grandma, there is connection between mountains and climate, am I right?

Grandma : Yes, Molu. You are right. With their sheer height, mountains are able to mould the climate around their region. Mountains create their own climate, no matter where they are located. Mountains receive more rainfall than low-lying areas because the temperature on the top of mountains is lower as compared to that at the sea level. That is why you often see snow on the top of mountains all the year round.

Molu : Yes, I know... The higher the place is above sea level, the colder it will be.

Grandma : Correct!

Molu : But what happened to the story Grandma?

Grandma : (laughing) Ohh... I forgot. Let's continue with it... Villagers came to know that, Sagar was firm and he might start construction work on the mountain very soon. So they had a meeting at one night...

[Scene changes. Villagers are gathered together at night time. Background sound effects of night insects are given to create ambiance of night along with the effect of crowd. Some people are talking excitedly. The sound effects fade as the dialogues start]

Narayan: Friends, friends...we must discuss about this issue calmly. Let us hear what each one has to say. Ramanna, you speak first.

Ramanna: **(With anger)** It is a foolish idea. Why do we need a five-star hotel in this village? Is my hotel not go enough? Ramanna's tea? Ramanna's coffee? Ramanna's *dosas, vada* and *idlis*? Not good enough, is it?

Shastri : Cool down, Ramanna. Your *dosas* and *idlis* are unbeatable. Your coffee and tea are famous in this village and beyond. I certainly don't think we need fancy, multi-storied hotel to compete with your tea shop.

Kannaihya : Umm...This tea shop is fine for me. But if someone wants to build a grand hotel, I don't see any harm. It will bring in tourists. Tourists mean money, and who does not need money?

[On this comment of Kannaihya, villagers start talking among each other and sound increases]

Shastri : Listen here Kannaihya, you are wrong, this is not the way to attract tourist in our village. We can have better idea which will not only bring tourists and money to our village, but it also conserves the nature here. A multi-storied hotel can never come up on Dharmagiri.

Narayan : **(Puzzled)** Shastri, what do you mean, 'never'? Mr. Sagar told me that lorries and trucks will start arriving within a week. The foundation will be laid soon.

Shastri : We have got to stop it! We cannot allow thoughtless people to ruin our beautiful mountain. There is another, more urgent reason. Dharmagiri cannot support a building that big. It is dangerous. My grandfather used to tell me about Dharmagiri that, when the temple was built two hundred years ago, they realized that the earth there cannot hold a structure taller than thirty feet. It will be dangerous to dig too deep for foundation. There may be a possibility of huge landslide.

Narayan : *(Excited)* That is all the more reason why a hotel cannot be built there. Come on, let us talk to Mr. Sagar before it is too late.

All : *(Spontaneously)* Yes... you are right....we must fight!

Ramanna : We will unite and fight... but will they listen to us?

Narayan : They will have to! They have to listen to the mountain.

[Change over music. The scene changes. Again the dialogue between Grandma and Molu starts]

Grandma : The meeting continued for long time. I did not know when Narayan came to home. I was asleep.

Molu : *(Anxiously)* Grandma, what happened next? What happened to the mountain?

[Immediately after this dialogue, loud sound of drilling is heard. After some time there is a terrific rumble and roar, like rocks falling. It lasts for about 5 to 10 seconds. Tremendous noise of horns blaring, voices screaming and shrieking. Then voices of many people are heard. They were shouting – ‘Landslide! Landslide!’]

[Narayan had a bad dream of landslide. He woke up all of a sudden....frightened... with increase in breathing rate, he shouted in a sleep only]

Narayan : Landslide! Run.... Fast, Save us!

[Grandma was sleeping next to him. She woke up due to the loud shouting of Narayan]

Grandma : *(In younger voice)* What happened Narayan? I think you had a bad dream!

Narayan : Maa, Dharmagiri.... The mountain is crumbling.... Listen to the mountain, Maa...

Grandma : Don't worry Narayan. Nothing has happened to Dharmagiri. You were in dream. See from the window. You can still see the temple there!

Narayan : Maa, where will they go—the rabbits, the deer and partridge? Who will listen to their plight? Who will listen to our river, our clean, beautiful, sweet-watered river that will now turn foul with filth? And who will listen to the sorrow of Dharmagiri when it is massacred by roads and pollution...oh! You may think I

am crazy, because I care for these things, because I can hear their voices. The mountains, the rivers, the trees and the animals, they all speak; sing just like you and I. If only we listen to them! But the world now is so full of noise, how can anyone hear the softly gurgling stream, or the flutter of a bird's wings?

Grandma : You are right my son. But believe me, if villagers came together then we can definitely save Dharmagiri.

Narayan : We must... we all must wake up and do something before the mountain speaks loud enough for everyone to hear. **(Pauses)** Maa, I still remember the incidence that took place few years ago... **(Background music starts as Narayan describes the incidence)** It was happened in the village of Malin *(Pronounciation : माळीण)* in Pune district of Maharashtra. It was end of July and was raining heavily for the entire night... **(Sound effect of rains)** Early in the morning when all residents were asleep, landslide took place. The landslide was first noticed by a bus driver who drove by the area and saw that the village had been overrun with mud and earth. Entire village got buried into the soil.... More than 160 people lost their lives when they in deep sleep.... It was happened due to natural calamity, but for our village similar tragedy will repeat due to human intervention.

Grandma : Don't lose your heart, Narayan.

Narayan : So many mountains, hills are being destroyed rudely for constructions, mining, and for the so called development. These people are not only destroying the nature, but they are causing harm to mountain culture also.... They are uprooting many tribes and communities residing in hilly areas for many generations.

Grandma : I can understand your feelings, Narayan. I also want to release Dharmagiri from the clutches of greed of man. And I am sure, you all will succeed in this.

[Music Piece. The scene changes. Again Grandma in her old voice is talking with Molu]

Molu : Grandma, had the villagers succeeded in their mission?

Grandma : **(laughing)** Come on Molu, can't you see now Dharmagiri from the window?

Molu : Ohhh.... how mad am I? It means the end of the story was known to me. **(Both laugh)**

Grandma : Correct!

Molu : But, Grandma, I did not understand one thing.... how did this happen? What made it happen?

Grandma : Villagers came together and asked help from local leader. Fortunately, the leader understood gravity of the problem and he tackled the issue.... Dharmagiri was saved!

Molu : Thanks grandma, for telling the history of such a wonderful mountain. Now I will tell this story to my friends....

Grandma : Yes Molu you must tell this to your friends and also try to do something for the mountains like your grandfather did!

Molu : Yesss.... Grandma!

Grandma : Narayan not only saved Dharmagiri, but he showed the way to villagers for its sustainable development.

Molu : Sustainable development? Means?

Grandma : See Molu... Dharmagiri is everything for the people living here! It is providing all the necessary things required for the villagers. But, other people started coming here and wished for the development. This was alarming signal.

Molu : Why?

Grandma : For the simple reason, they don't understand the needs of local people. They just come here to extract and to make money. Narayan was saying that, the development should be such that, it will help everybody here including even nature!

Molu : Ohhh...that's great idea!

Grandma : So he asked villagers to have cherry fields here. That's why you can see so many cherry fields now. Cherries along with natural beauty here attracted tourists. Villagers here developed hut like structures for the tourists to stay on Dharmagiri. The local people were also trained to make decorative articles from the locally available raw materials. Tourists started purchasing these handmade articles... automatically money started flowing to the village and now... you can see ours is no longer a village....but I can say self sustained town. Our government also helped for the development of mountain ecosystem through various schemes which are being run by the ministry of environment and forest.

Molu : Yes. I can imagine now, how the entire scenario had changed.

Grandma : As the money started coming to the villagers, they kept some part of their earnings for the development of the village. From these funds, now we have school and even collage... well equipped hospital, irrigation facilities...

Molu : Grandma, today I have understood the true meaning of development. Development does not mean developing something by destroying some other thing, but the development means generating something by conserving the existing things. Am I correct, Grandma?

Grandma : Yes...absolutely Molu! This is nothing but the sustainable development!

Molu : And one more thing I have understood today....

Grandma : Which one?

Molu : I understood that.... my Grandma, the great grandmother is the greatest grandma in the world!

(Grandma laughs... Molu Joins her)

Grandma : Okkk Molu... but now it's too late. Go to the bed now! Tomorrow, we can go for the walk through cherry fields!

Molu : Wow... great! Good night, Grandma!

Grandma : Good night!

(Music piece. Episode ends.)

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