

The Man Who Moved a Mountain:

A Remarkable True Story of One Man's Endeavour

Dashrath Manjhi was a relatively poor man who worked as a labourer in a remote mountain village near Bihar in eastern India. After a tragic event, he dedicated his life to an incredible project which led to him becoming known as 'Mountain Man' or 'The Man Who Moved the Mountain'.

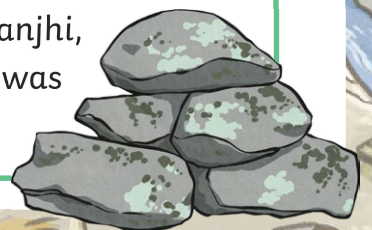
Living on a mountain just south of the Himalayas, Manjhi and his community were isolated from the nearest towns. When his wife accidentally fell one day, she was injured and in need of medical help. The journey to the nearest hospital or doctor was 55km and, sadly, Manjhi's wife died as a result of her injuries and being unable to receive appropriate medical attention in time.

The labourer said that he never wanted anyone else to suffer the same fate as his wife. He spent the subsequent 22 years single-handedly creating a passageway through the mountain with only a hammer and chisel. Before he ploughed the fields each morning, he spent hours of every day hammering the rock of the mountain. He would then return in the afternoon and into the evening to continue his quest. Manjhi had to sell the family's three goats to buy the hammer and chisel that he used.

When news spread about what the man was doing, many people thought that he had gone mad. His community worried that he would die before ever coming close to completing the mission. However, in honour of his wife, he continued for more than two decades, from 1960 to 1982, working day and night. By the time he had finished, he had carved a road through the side of the mountain. The village now has access to schools, hospitals and jobs for the first time, and Dashrath Manjhi became an inspiration to the whole society after the incredible feat that he was able to accomplish. Thanks to the efforts of this 'Mountain Man', the distance from the village to hospital was reduced from 55km to 15km.

The road that he created is flanked by 25 foot (7.5 metre) high mountain walls on either side. It is 30 feet (9 metres) wide and 360 feet (110 metres) long.

In 2011, a documentary film was made about Dashrath Manjhi, called 'The Man Who Moved the Mountain'. Another film was made in 2015 called 'Manjhi – The Mountain Man'.



The Man Who Moved a Mountain

Location Fact File: Gehlaur is a village in the Gaya district of Bihar state in eastern India. To the north, it borders Nepal. The famous River Ganges flows right through Bihar from west to east. The Himalayan mountains begin a short distance over the border into Nepal.

Dashrath Manjhi died on 17th August 2007. He was given a state funeral by the government of Bihar, which is a type of public ceremony usually only held to honour very important or significant individuals.



The Mountains of India

India is home to some of world's largest mountain ranges. One of the most famous is the Great Himalayan Range, which spreads across five countries. The northern region of India is covered by part of the Himalayas and the source of the River Ganges is in this mountain range. It is a popular destination for tourists to partake in rock climbing, trekking and adventure sports. This brings in money to the region from outside visitors. There are also beautiful views, valleys and forests. More importantly, the Himalayas play a large part in influencing the climate of India. They are a natural barrier against freezing winds from the north and also a defence barrier against foreign invasions.

The tallest mountain peak in India is the main Kanchenjunga peak, which is the third highest mountain in the world. The Kanchenjunga has five peaks in total. It sits on the Nepalese border and is more than 28,000 feet tall at the highest point. Around the mountain, a national park protects plants and wildlife such as the Indian leopard, musk deer, red panda and over 500 species of birds.

Many mountains in India have great religious significance and also bring economic benefits. However, there are also modern threats to the mountains such as tourism, deforestation and poaching. The negative aspect of attracting tourists is the potential damage or wear to the natural environment.



Kanchenjunga mountain peak, India.

Questions

1. What was the tragic event that prompted Dashrath Manjhi to spend so long carving a passageway through the mountain?

2. What did other people initially think of Manjhi's project when he first started?

3. Look at the first two paragraphs. Find and copy a word which means 'remote or far away from other places, buildings or people'.

4. *'The labourer said that he never wanted anyone else to suffer the same fate as his wife.'* What does this suggest about Manjhi's character?

5. What is meant by a 'state funeral' and what does this suggest about the way the government felt about Dashrath Manjhi's actions?

6. How do you think local people felt when the road through the mountain was finally completed?

7. Look at the **Location Fact File**.
Which direction is Nepal from India? Circle **one**.

north

east

south

west

8. Look at the section **The Mountains of India**.

What are the positive and negative aspects of the mountains attracting tourists to the region?

9. Complete the information in this table about **The Mountains of India**.

The first row has been done for you.

Highest peak of the Kanchenjunga in number of feet	28,000
Total number of peaks on the Kanchenjunga mountain	
Number of species of birds in the national park	
Number of countries over which the Himalayas are spread	

10. Explain why the mountains in the Great Himalayan Range are important to India as a country.
