

# Everyday Lives of Female Ascetics in Hindu Pilgrimage Space

—Being and Becoming ‘Mother’—

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Key Words: pilgrimage space, renunciation, women, care, motherhood

## Backgrounds and objectives of your research (300 words)

The purpose of this study is to clarify how one becomes ‘Mother’ through describing the everyday lives of female ascetics called ‘*Mātā*’, who live in Hindu pilgrimage space spread through out India and Nepal.

Generally, anthropologists have regarded pilgrimage as liminal ‘sacred journey’ and investigated the pilgrimage process or relationships, using such dichotomies as secular/sacredness or guest/host. Little attention has therefore been given to ambiguous people who are both pilgrims (strangers) and locals at the same time. They are, so to speak, people who live not as pilgrims but live pilgrimage itself. This study will focus on their everyday lives, through taking pilgrimage for a part of life process and representing the place where they live on as ‘pilgrimage space’. The field is Hindu India that has historically developed pilgrimage space with the social and cultural background of asceticism of which renunciation (*sannyāsa*) has been typical.

Many studies on renunciation have been focused on the aspect of asceticism, such as lives in retirement from the world or practicing penance of male ascetics. However, little is known how not only male ascetics but also female ascetics, who are minority, live everyday lives. I’d like to consider how female ascetics’ motherhood and the self as ‘Mother’ could be created through relationship with others, especially through everyday care of selves and of others.

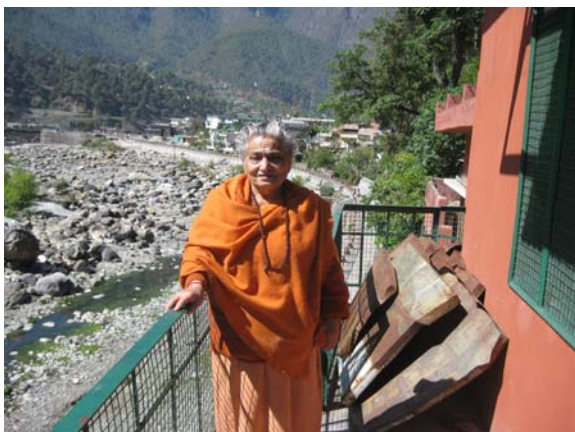


Figure1: *Mātā at Bhurgu Ashram in Uttarakashi*



Figure2: Tea break at Krishna Ashram in Gangotri



Figure3: The night before opening ceremony of Badrinath temple