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NE PERSONALITY: TINE MENA

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Born in Echali village in Lower Dibang Valley district, Tine Mena spent her childhood in the lap of mountains. She used to work as a porter when she was just 17 years old. At the age of 25, she became the first woman from Northeast India to scale Mount Everest, the world's highest peak. Mena scaled the Everest on 9 May, 2011. She was selected by Arunachal Pradesh' Sports & Youth Affairs Directorate after she showed climbing potential during a trekking expedition to the Indo-China border. The directorate sponsored her training at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute in Darjeeling. The rest, as they say, is history.

Here are excerpts from an interview with the girl with the never-say-die attitude and the will to conquer;

Look East Spark (LES): What inspired you to take up mountaineering?

Tine Mena (TM): I was born and brought up in the mountains. I started working as a porter at the age of seventeen. On one of my expeditions, I met Dr K. R. Meitei, who became my mentor and inspired me to climb the highest peak in the world.

LES: Besides mountaineering, what are your likes?



LES: Share with us an experience during the Everest expedition that changed your life.

TM: While going for the Everest's summit, we were stopped by a heavy blizzard and many in our group wanted to quit. But I was determined. My Sherpa and I waited for the blizzard to subside. We had just one packet of noodle left, so we shared it, and started for the peak on empty stomach at 8:00 pm. We reached the peak after fourteen hours, at ten o'clock the next morning, because of the bad weather. The experience changed my life completely as the trouble I went through made me stronger and taught me that hard work really pays.

LES: Tell us about Tine Mena as a person?

TM: As a person I am fun loving and friendly. I love spending time with my family and friends. People who know me say that I am very talkative, caring, and supportive.

LES: How does it feel to hear the words, 'The first woman from the Northeast to conquer Mt. Everest'?

TM: I am humbled to know that my achievement is being recognized; but sometimes people out of ignorance introduce me as the first woman from Arunachal Pradesh to conquer the Everest. I smile and tell them that I am the first woman from the Northeast to conquer the Everest.

LES: When you left for your training course, your mother passed away. Did it make you weak?

TM: Yes, it was very difficult for me when my mother passed away. I was about to give up my dream, but my father supported me and gave me courage to fulfill my Everest dream.

LES: You said that Sudarshan Kriya helps you to relax. How important is it to learn Sudarshan Kriya for mountaineering?

TM: It is very important because, there in the high altitudes, it becomes difficult to breathe. Regular practice of Sudarshan Kriya helps you to breathe normally and relax.

LES: Do you think mountaineering can be taken up as a career?

TM: Yes, mountaineering has a vast scope for today's generation. Arunachal Pradesh is opening up adventure tourism – activities like trekking, mountain climbing, bird watching, paragliding, river rafting, and so on. Those who have training and expertise in these fields are likely to earn a good livelihood.

LES: Have you received enough support from the Arunachal Pradesh government?

TM: Well, I don't have any complaint against the state government as I received full support during my Everest expedition. However, due to reasons unknown, I still haven't got the job I was promised, because of which I'm facing difficulty earning a livelihood.

LES: What message would you like to give to the people?

TM: I would like to thank all the people who supported me in fulfilling my Everest dream. It would not have been possible without the help of many, and I shall always remain grateful. To the youths, I would like to say, don't waste your time on drugs and alcohol. You may think it is cool to use such harmful substances, but they damage your health and weaken you mentally. Spend your precious time in games and sports. Education is a privilege and your greatest asset, so gather as much as you can from your teachers, parents, and elders.

- Kaya Pass Trekking Expedition 2007 (Arunachal Pradesh)
- 1st Pre Expedition August'2009, Mt. Kolahi, (Jammu and Kashmir)
- Mt. Shivaling Expedition May to June 2010
- 2nd Pre Expedition Oct to Nov'2010, Lama Wangdi Peak, North sikkim
- Mt. Everest Expedition (8848 Mtr) 2011 Summit on 9th May 2011
- Mt. Indrasen (6221 Mtr) First Women Expedition, 6th June to 24th June 2012
- Trekking Expedition to Paddar 19th to 28th Sept'2012
- Mt. Gorichen Expedition (6488 mts) Arunachal Pradesh 23rd September to 22nd October'2012.
- Mt. Kullu Pumori 6553 mtr, Kullu Manali, Himachal Pradesh from 20th
- July to 10th Aug'2013
- (International Alpine Course)
- Mt. Menthosa 6443 mtr, Kulu Manali, Himachal Pradesh from 28 June to 28 July 2014. (All women expedition)

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