

MATH, SCIENCE,
AND TECHNOLOGY



Handling the Earth with Care

After his awakening at the foot of a tree, Buddha would live and meditate in nature for the rest of his life. He claimed the reasons to be both personal benefit and concern for future generations. The practice of caring for the earth is inherent to the Buddhist religion. The practice is also a reason seniors and cousins Tashi Gurung and Gyaltsu “Abu” Gurung are majoring in environmental science and natural resources respectively

“Growing up in Mustang, Nepal, my Tibetan Buddhist upbringing taught me that we should take care of the planet,” says Tashi. “Majoring in environmental science heightened my awareness and intensified my understanding of why it is so very important.”

For Abu, the focus is on wildlife and

saving the endangered snow leopard, a cat native to the mountain ranges in Central Asia. He had the opportunity last summer to work on greenhouse gas research with Assistant Professor Katy Smith in an area sugar beet field. This research, while not distinctly in his major, gave him the opportunity to work across disciplines.

“I love every professor here,” Abu admits. “They are knowledgeable in their field and are accessible to students.”

Tashi says one of his favorite classes has been introduction to natural resources taught by Associate Professor Phil Baird. “When Phil is teaching, my friend is teaching,” he says. “I can ask any questions I want.”

Both the Gurungs felt the influence of Professor Dan Svedarsky. “I want to be like

Tashi Gurung is an environmental sciences major and a cousin to Gylatso Gurung.



Abu Gurung is a natural resources major, and both he and cousin, Tashi, graduated in December 2013.

him,” Tashi and Abu agree.

Tashi was awarded the prestigious U of M Scholarly Excellence in Equity and Diversity (SEED) award last fall. The SEED awards program honors and acknowledges diverse students who are doing outstanding work at the University of Minnesota, both in and out of the classroom. One of Tashi’s goals was a clean water project in his home country of Nepal.

“Last summer, I completed a clean water project in my village in Nepal. It had an impact on more than 2,000 lives by providing clean drinking water for the community,” Tashi explained. When the villagers expressed their gratitude and appreciation, Tashi realized that what was a project for him was a blessing to them, and the experience has become a powerful moment in his life.

Tashi and Abu graduated in December 2013 and are now preparing to head to graduate school. They will miss the campus they say. “We might not miss the place exactly, but we are going to miss the people a lot,” Tashi says. “The people made this campus and community my home.”