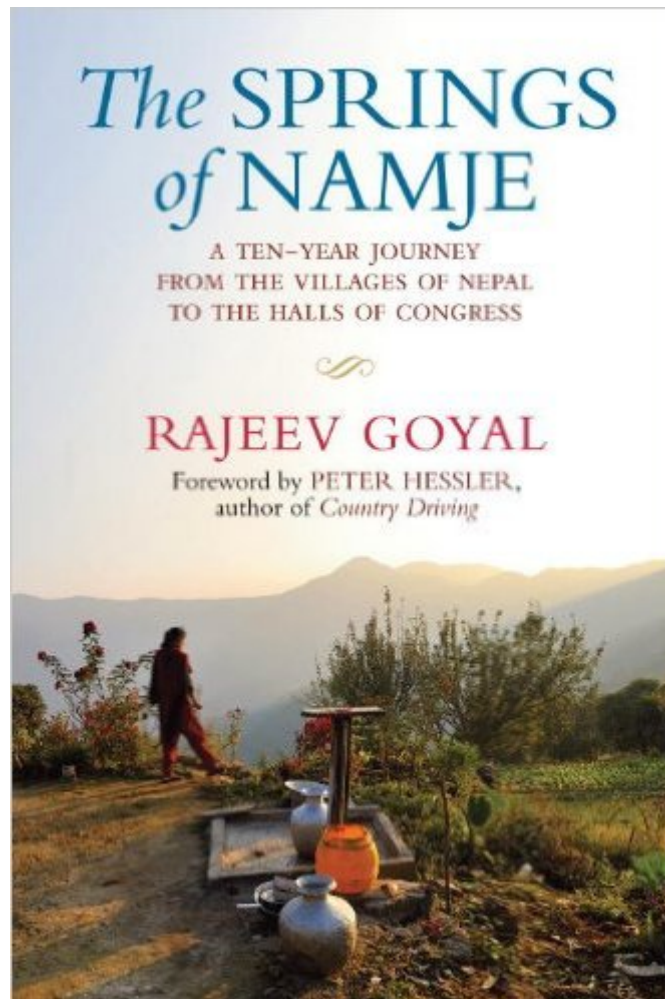


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# The Springs Of Namje: A Ten-Year Journey From The Villages Of Nepal To The Halls Of Congress



## Synopsis

A Peace Corps volunteer's inspirational story about the power of small change In 2001, Peace Corps volunteer Rajeev Goyal was sent to Namje, a remote village in the eastern hills of Nepal. Brimming with idealism, he expected to find people living in conditions of misery and suffering; instead, he discovered a village full of happy, compassionate people. After organizing the villagers to build a water-pumping system in the midst of the dangerous Maoist war that had gripped the country, Goyal learned how complex rural development truly is. He also witnessed how the seemingly lowliest villager can hold profound power to influence not only his or her own village but also the highest rungs of government. Years after this experience, Goyal applied the lessons he learned in Namje to his work on Capitol Hill. Approaching Congress as if it were a Nepalese caste system, Goyal led a grassroots campaign to double the size of the Peace Corps. His unique approach to advocacy included strategically positioning himself outside the men's room of the capitol building waiting for lawmakers to walk out. As a result of his determined bird-dogging, Goyal managed to make allies of more than a hundred members of Congress and in the process, he ruffled the feathers of some of the most powerful figures in Washington. But due to his efforts, the Peace Corps was granted a \$60-million increase in funding, the largest dollar-amount increase in the organizations history. On this path to victory Goyal endured a number of missteps along the way, and, as he reveals, his idealism at times faded into fear, anger, and frustration. In this honest and inspirational account of his life as an activist, Goyal offers daring ideas for how the Peace Corps and other organizations can be even more relevant to our rapidly changing world. He urges environmentalists, educators, farmers, artists, and designers to come together and contribute their talents. Filled with history, international politics, personal anecdotes, and colorful characters, *The Springs of Namje* is a unique and inspiring book about the power of small change.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Rajeev Goyal's *THE SPRINGS OF NAMJE* (2012) is one of the higher peaks in four decades of individual stories of Peace Corps Volunteers coming of age - and at the same time making a contribution to some community, somewhere in the wider world. This autobiography of the author's endeavors from 2001 -2011 is a critical self analysis of various steps on a longer journey, with a lasting significance beyond, perhaps, what he or his many fans may see or yet even articulate. He explains how his Nepal volunteer experiences then led him to seek US legislative support for "A Bold New Peace Corps". He candidly describes his own experiences as well as the wider lessons learned- and those yet to be learned in seeking sustainable development "alternatives", perhaps the central message of this book. The author is the son of the successful Indian immigrant community of Long Island, New York, which even after his PCV service from 2001-2003 financially supported his efforts in Nepal for building a rural water supply project and also basic schools in remote Nepali villages. His PCV journey continued with subsequent experiences at NYU Law School and then as a UN Volunteer translator in Nepal for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The record of his journeys end, for the moment at publication of this book, with his personal attempts on the US Capitol Hill to win support for a much expanded Peace Corps. In Part II, Ch. 8 he recalls that Sargent Shriver, JFK's choice to begin the Peace Corps in 1961, had wider Peace Corps goals in mind, which are still being promoted today by Shriver's long time advisor, Harris Wofford. By Ch.

In my quest to find out if the Peace Corps is right for me, I'm picking up as many books about travel and the Peace Corps itself to read about other's experiences and memories of their time. This was a very good book, and it certainly gave me a lot more history on the Peace Corps than I knew before. Rajeev Goyal spent two years in the Peace Corps in Nepal. First in one village where he was teaching, but was moved because of upheaval caused by the political tensions in Nepal, and then to Namje, a small town where he also taught. But he did much more than teach in Namje, because it was a village with scarce access to water, Goyal started an initiative to create a pump to pump water from a distant river to the town. His goal was to better the lives of the people there. After his

term was over, he moved on to Washington DC, where he became part of an initiative to secure more funding for the Peace Corps. The goal was 450 Million, and the amount asked for equivalent to 5-6 hours of what we spend on our forces in Iraq (figures obtained from the book). That's right, it's in the millions, which when it comes to a government agency, is a small number. He details his struggle at getting this amount and the lobbying he does with lessons learned from his time in the Peace Corps. In the last part of the book, he returns to Namje and Nepal to further work at improving peoples lives through permaculture programs. Goyal is very generous to those people he gives descriptions of in Nepal. It was easy to see that he really connected with the people in the villages and had great respect for them. He truly wanted to get to know their culture and not change it, but improve living conditions for them. I would say he definitely embodied what the Peace Corps is supposed to be about.

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