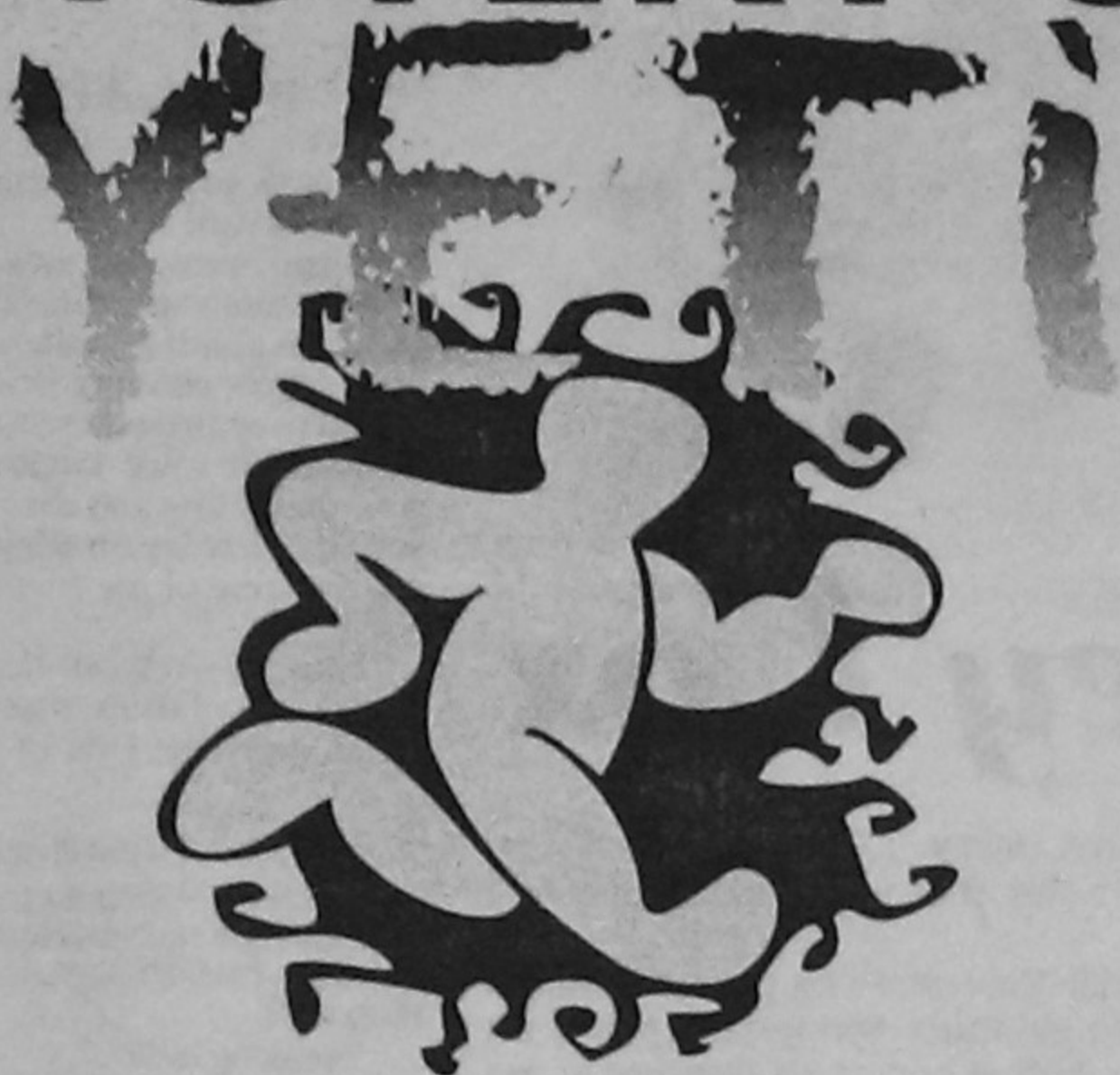


THE MYSTERY OF THE

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Do you believe in ghosts and ghouls? Do you believe in phantoms, vampires and monsters? Or do you believe in U.F.O.'s? Many mysteries lurk in this world and many people believe in them. But other people have different views. They believe that these mysteries are nothing but "Old travelers tales". They consider all this to be the stupidity and foolishness of people. In Asia "The Abominable Snowman" or the "Yeti" ranks with the Lochness Monster and Flying Saucers amongst the most fascinating mysteries of the age.

In the cold, snow-covered Himalayan regions cool winds blow making noises. People in these regions claim they have heard the growling and cries of a mysterious creature. They believed that this was the Yeti. The Sherpas call these creatures "Metch Kangmi" which means ragged, disgusting wild men of the snows. The Tibetans call them "Yeti". The Yeti as described by most people is a creature about the height of a man, with a pointed skull covered with long reddish hair. Others described it as a mix between a man and a gorilla. The Yeti created great fear amongst the Sherpas and the other people living near the Himalayan regions. Westerners who heard about this laughed at it, considering it as joke. But their attitudes changed after 1921.

The Yeti gained international recognition in 1921. A famous photographer Eric Shipton took a photograph of what he believed was a Yeti footprint. The photograph convinced many scientists that there was a large anthropoid creature in Central Asia, which was yet to be identified. The scientists believed that the footprint was either of a large monkey or a bear. Footprints of the same kind were found thirty years later in 1951 by explorers Lord Hunt and Eric Shipton. The footprint was 12.6 inches long and 6.5 inches wide. The legend of the dreaded half man, half demon is deeply embedded in the Folklore's of many people. Noted Nepalese and Tibetan writers and poets wrote abundantly on the Yeti. The news of the Yeti Spread like Wildfire as it appeared in movies, and was even turned into a cartoon character.

Man has come face to face with the Yeti many times. The Tibetans say that the Yeti has a fancy for pretty young girls. In the high Tibetan villages there were stories of girls who were carried away by the Yeti and never to be seen again. The Tibetans believed that the Yeti carried these women to their caves, to mate with them and probably kill them.

There were many stories on the Yeti. Once a Sherpa had seen his very own daughter being carried away by a Yeti. The poor man was totally helpless, he could do nothing against the huge giant. Once some Herdsmen managed to kill what they believed was a Yeti. This happened in Kashmir. A Snowman captured a girl and was about to take her away. In the nearby fields some herdsmen were working, and they heard the screams of the poor girl, and came to her rescue. The herdsmen killed the Yeti and buried it in snow. They did not dare to report this, as they were afraid of being held up on charge of murder, as they regarded the Yeti as human. The Kashmiri herdsmen, who had performed this daring deed, later recounted the story to Mira Behn. If they had reported the killing of the Yeti, at that time one of the greatest mysteries of the Earth could have been solved. The stories of the Yeti spread worldwide. Soon the Western investigators started taking keen interest in the Yeti mysteries. The Yeti was always reported with the same features- long reddish hair, semi ape like appearance. Many creatures like the Yeti has been reported from across the world. Starting from the Russian Pamirs across to Tibet, in the Siberian Ranges, to Alaska. People have even claimed to see creatures

near British Columbia. These creatures were called Sasquatch and more popularly Big Foot in America.

However the story of these strange creatures remained a big joke to many people. Wilfrid Noyce and Lord Hunt two great climbers had constantly spoken about strange whistles they heard in their daring expeditions in the Himalayan regions. They believed those were Yeti whistles. The first investigation of the Yeti mystery was made by Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb the Everest.

Sir Edmund Hillary's expedition started in 1960 from Kathmandu. Hillary was determined to find out what the Yeti really was. Before the expedition started the Nepalese government forbade the killing of the Yeti. This was a major problem for Hillary and his men. So they had one thing to do, they were going to use tranquilizer darts to paralyse and capture the strange creature. At the beginning of the expedition Hillary and his men were confronted with skins and scalps of different bears and monkeys. An expert zoologist who was in the expedition easily identified the skins and scalps. But none of the skins raised any bit of suspicion. Hillary met many people who claimed they were attacked by the Yeti. He gathered information from every single village. He investigated tracks, which the Sherpas believed were of the Yeti. Hillary went deep into the Himalayan jungles, he explored caves and different areas. After listening to stories of people and further investigations, Hillary could classify the Yeti in three kinds. The first kind were the shaggy, bear-like ones over eight feet in height and which fed on cattle. The second kind were common ones. They were small heavily built reaching upto six feet in height. They had red hair and pointed noses, they were probably the man-eaters. The third kind he believed were small rare monkeys in the Himalayan jungles. Hillary had gathered all the useful information he needed, now would go in saerch of the mysterious creature which terrorised all the people all over Central Asia. Hillary's expedition was very dangerous. Their path was always slippery and snow-covered. They had to climb steep mountains. The weather was even playing foul. But nothing could stop him. After a lot of hard work Hillary and his men arrived in a mountain village called Khumjung. Most of the Sherpas lived there. There Hillary was shown a Yeti scalp the most prized possession of the local monastery. It was guarded with extreme care by the Sherpas. Hillary studied the scalp very carefully. The scalp was of an anthropoid. It was furry and light

brown in colour. Hillary knew it could not be made artificially. Two elders in the village told Hillary many stories about the Yeti. The elders recalled the times when the Yetis attacked Khumjung frequently and even devour some of the villagers. The elders then said the villagers devised a plan to destroy the Yeti. They made the Yeti drink liquor and kill themselves. The story was a good one but unfortunately neither Hillary nor his men believed in this. Hillary's main interests however were in the Yeti scalp. Hillary wanted to take the scalp to America for examinations. It would not be so easy. The Sherpas disagreed at first, saying it was the most prized possession of the village. There were some Sherpas in the monastery who had the power to frighten away the Yeti by blowing trumpets and beating drums. The villagers of Khumjung were extremely dependent on them as they could drive away the Yeti with their power. These Sherpas told Hillary stories on the Yeti and told them to go to a village called Thyangboche where there were possibilities of finding Yeti scalps and skins. Hillary and as his men went to Thyangboche and returned back to Khumjung disappointed. None of the villagers in Thyangboche had ever seen a Yeti. But they believed they heard the high-pitched cry of the Yeti. The predecessors of the villagers had seen the Yeti in the past. Back in Khumjung, Hillary sought permissions from villagers in taking the Yeti scalp to Europe and America for scientific examinations. After a lot of the discussions Hillary was able to persuade the reluctant villagers to allow them to take the Yeti scalp for six weeks. Hillary had to pay a huge sum of money in order to borrow the scalp for six weeks. The party then carried the Yeti scalp to Chicago. The scientists of the Natural History Museum got to work on the mysterious scalp. There was scientific examination there. Then the scalp was taken to London. The experts of the Royal Zoological Society got to work on the scalp. At the end all examinations revealed that the scalp was not of a Yeti. It was a moulded scalp of a rare Himalayan bear. Hillary went back to the Himalayan regions to find more about the Yeti. The scalp on which so many examinations had been done was returned to the monastery in Khumjung. After all the hard work at last Hillary promised the world he would produce the results of his expedition very soon. Then at last he disclosed all his evidence. Hillary believed the Yeti tracks were made by the effect of the sun melting the tracks made by smaller animals. Hillary also said there was no such things as the Yeti. The people in the Himalayan region just believed in the Yeti, just like the people in the America who believed in U.F.O.'s. Most of the Western scientists agreed with Hillary. But people in Central Asia still refused to accept Hillary's conclusion.

Many years have passed since Hillary had solved the mystery of the Abominable Snowman. But the question is has the truth been totally uncovered? We as all the other people, will have to agree with some point of Hillary's conclusion. But what about the lost daughters of all the Sherpas? What about all the stories on the Yeti in Central Asia? What about the evidence provided by Everest climbers Lord Hunt and Wilfrid Noyce? What about the death of many people, people believed was caused by the Yeti? There are many other questions to answer. The truth is out there amongst the people in Central Asia. Like the Yeti there are many other mysteries in the Earth. If the Westerners can believe in U.F.O.'s, and existence of other strange creatures in the Universe, why can't we Asians believe in the Yeti. The truth is out there, and I believe we should let it be there forever.

Bangladesh won the Dana Cup, an under 14 tourney. The whole nation celebrated the coveted victory...people were jubilant, for once the footballers of the nation had delivered what the citizens expected from them. Alas! All their dreams were shattered when an astonished nation beheld an obnoxiously over-aged team play against the kids of Brazil, Argentina and Denmark to quench the 'historic' victory. Slowly yet gradually Bangladesh football lost its followers. For years the Bangladeshis were deprived of sporting spectacles. Advent of cable television however changed all that.

Our neighboring countries India and Pakistan boast a huge following for the game of cricket and quite understandably too. From the very early years when these nations of the subcontinent were given test status, they excelled in almost every part of the game. It took no time for legends like Hanif Muhammad or Zahir Abbas to blossom. The arrival of cable TV for the first time truly introduced us to the game of the kings and soon we became hooked! People started loving the game and soon the stadiums were once again filled, but this time it wasn't the leather ball but the willow that drew the crowd. Soon names like Brian Lara, Sachin Tendulkar, and Wasim Akram became household names deposing Maradona, Luther Mathews and Ziko, the former Kings! Bangladesh had always been a minor powerhouse, along with Zimbabwe, dominating the 'non test playing' league. After Zimbabwe attained their status as a full

CRICKET ET JANAJA!

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member of the ICC allowing them to play the longer version of the game, Bangladesh became the undisputed king. What star sports did was it added life to the game in this part of the sub continent! Then came the ICC Trophy in Kenya. The dream of playing at the World Cup to be played in the sub continent was more realistic then ever. The boys left the country assuring laurels for the nation but returned empty handed, bringing nothing but shame as they failed even to reach the semi finals.

The following years were not easy for cricket. People lost considerable interest in the game but Malaysia changed all that. As champions of ICC trophy held in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur Bangladesh, along with Kenya attained one-day status and a chance to play at the WORLD CUP. The long cherished dream was about to come true and for once Bangladesh lived up to its expectation. But some dismal performances against rivals Kenya once again put our dreams at jeopardy. Nevertheless, the World Cup was indeed a successful campaign for our boys. Not only did they beat Scotland but also went a step further defeating the former Champions Pakistan, spoiling their winning spree at the world tourney. What happened next is pretty well covered! The whole nation engaged in a rather extravagant victory celebration and Bangladesh Cricket Board even applied for full

ICC membership hoping to become the tenth test-playing nation. Needless to say the appeal got rejected. The learned cricket officials should have know better...a mere win against Pakistan cannot be the basis for attaining test status. The ICC however decided to look into the matter in the next Annual Meeting to be held in June this year.

The recently concluded Asia Cup was the first major tournament that Bangladesh took part in after their successful World Cup campaign. Hopes and dreams became sky high and only the players are to be blamed for that. Best fielding side of the tournament they said, great batting side they said! The truth...we were all unfortunate to see. The fielding, childlike; batting was more befitting for the likes of the Argentine cricket team and bowling! Oh boy I think even the Fijians could manage something more respectable! Against its illustrious opponents Bangladesh revealed their true cricketing strength. How can we expect to withstand a formidable bowling attack for one whole day, if we cannot even survive fifty overs and score more than 80 odd runs! The test status, as all cricket connoisseurs would understand, is far more demanding than the one-day form of the game. Even in these days when a one-day cricket rule, the strength of a cricketing nation is judged not by its one-day performance but by the level of attainment in longer version of

the game. Allowing Bangladesh to play the five day version of the game would be like Bangladesh Football team playing the FIFA World Cup. Bangladesh still does not have what it takes to play at the highest level of one-day cricket let alone test cricket.

Being the cricketing novice that I am, I have no idea on what basis a test status is granted to a nation. However, I know this much if playing ability is the only criterion Bangladesh cannot even dream of the coveted status this year. After the shameful performance in the recently concluded Asia Cup that reward seems even more remote. But being the great negotiators that we always have been I am pretty sure we will get the test status even though we may not be suitable for it. If everything goes as planned by the cricketing authorities of the country, Bangladesh will be playing their first test match against either India, Pakistan or Zimbabwe late 2000 or early next year. Whether we will swallow an innings defeat in our very first test is as good as any ones guess right at the moment. Test Status will raise the people's hope by giant strides and the cricket lovers the world over will expect more from the Bengal boys. Once they fail to live up to the high expectation set ahead of them...people will lose interest and that may be a major set back for the advancement of cricket in Bangladesh. Performance in the recently concluded Asia Cup has already put the corpse of Bangladesh cricket in the coffin; a test status at this moment will only take it to the catacomb!