



A HERO lost in Everest

The good fortune of returning home safe was not the fate of Sajal Khaled, the fifth Bangladeshi to conquer the world's highest peak. He lost his life in his tent while descending the treacherous slopes. The peak was a holy place for Sajal to visit, even if for at least once in his lifetime. Who can say? He might have found some sort of enlightenment during his summit and when he gazed upon the small, glass encased gold idol of Buddha. Mysticism aside, people seldom look upon the journey as a gateway to spiritualism. If they did, the climb would not have been called a selfish one. Those who fall are the ones left behind. Sajal has secured a place in the pages of history, and forever more will remain a hero in our eyes. It is still a sad ending, as his body is yet to be traced. Sherpas searching the South summit found only his bag in the death zone. We can only hope and pray the hero is brought back before the searches are called off on June 5.

INTO THE DEATH ZONE



In this photo, a climber moves through Khumbu Icefall, universally terrifying part of the southern route on Mount Everest. At 5,486 metres on the Nepali slopes of Mount Everest, this stage is surely a death trap. Khumbu Icefall is treacherous, constantly shifting like a bunch of ice cubes. Yet, surviving this part calls for little celebration. The real test is yet to begin. There is an area, above 8,000 meters elevation, where your body will no longer replenish its oxygen store. Only 14 mountains, including the Earth's highest mountain with a peak at 8,848 metres, allow you to step past this elevation. Everest is one of them. This is called the death zone.

PHOTO: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Of an open, icy graveyard

In 2006, a lone climber attempting the summit of Mount Everest for the third time was, purely by chance, caught in an amateur photograph taken by another climber of the scenic mountaintop ahead. The climber in the photograph was making his way up what is known as the Final Push of the Northeast ridge, between Camp VI at 8,230m and the summit. It was late in the afternoon, a foolishly reckless time to undertake the lengthy and dangerous route.

It would be many hours before the photographer and his climbing team saw the man again. Leaving the camp at the recommended time, shortly before midnight in order to reach the summit at daybreak, they were first in line of a total of roughly 40 climbers attempting the Final Push that day. A long train of men, all tethered to the lengths of rope permanently in place to keep climbers on the right track.

For every ten climbers who have ever reached the summit, the mountain has claimed one of them. In the 56 years since the first men in history reached the top, 216 people have died, and the grim reality of the horrific conditions of the Final Push is that 150 bodies have never been, and likely can never be, recovered. They are all still there, and located, almost without exception, in the Death Zone.

A lot of the people lying in the Death Zone simply went to sleep and never woke up.

An estimated 200 bodies currently cover the mountain's death zone, including climbing guide Scott Fischer, who died along with seven others during a 1996 Everest disaster and whose body lay metres away from where Shah-Klorfine collapsed, according to an article in Outside magazine.

Climbers on Everest often stumble upon injured men and woman along the way but have no way of helping them because of the location and the dangerous conditions and so, there is no choice but to leave them to die.

And who can blame them?

SOURCE: GIZMODO.COM

A date with death

MUSA IBRAHIM

There was a severe blizzard at Camp-I (23,000ft) at North Col on May 20, 2010. The ruthless snowstorm dismantled 12 tents in a few minutes. It also had two tents drift away. And we -- the two sherpas Kailash Tamang and Lakpa Nuru, the Nepalese climber Lal Bahadur Jirel, and I -- were trying to save our tent by staying inside.

When the wind stopped, we climbed up to Camp-II on May 21 and entered the death zone with auxiliary oxygen support. At night I could hardly breathe due to a malfunction of the oxygen apparatus. My sherpas managed to fix the problem.

Kailash was pushing me to start early for Camp-III the next morning. But I could not attach the crampon with ice boot as my fingers were almost numb and bluish. The sherpas helped me and I started climbing for Camp-III (27,000ft) after having a little water in the morning.

Up to Camp-III, I enjoyed the climbing but when Mt Everest's summit appeared before me, I was feeling like a tiny object before a mammoth creature.

It was a new experience to climb at night for the summit and we reached the summit ridge at around 10:00 o'clock. After climbing for some more hours, I noticed a body on my route. None had briefed me about such a situation.

But we had to march forward.

I crossed the "easy" First Step with a ladder. After a while, the Second Step appeared and I had to struggle to cross the last five-foot overhang of a 30 feet vertical rock wall. I crossed the overhang but my oxygen tube had leaked following a scratch against the rocks. The first



time I felt as if I was dying, Kailash and Dorjee Khatri were there and they fixed the tube with duck-tape.

The final Third Step came and I was again awestruck at seeing the inclination of the rock wall. It was almost vertical and what frightened me the most was again a body, hanging from the fixed rope's anchor. Most probably, he died at this point, almost within 100 feet of the summit, and someone had hung him from his waist by rope to make the route clear for climbing.

My mind a blank, I was heading to the summit through a two to three inch wide edge on the vertical rock wall. It was only a few minutes away and Kailash told me if I could go beyond that step, I could see the summit. I was shaking with excitement and was wondering if it was true.

I reached the summit of Mt Everest and hoisted the red-green flag of my country at 5:16am BST. Our dream had come true.

While climbing down, I saw four more bodies lying at the Second Step area. But, strangely enough, there was no reaction in me. I was climbing down like a zombie.

I did not notice when I started getting less oxygen. The situation led to hypoxia as the oxygen pipe was clogged with ice. I could only feel thirsty, but we had no water.

The Australian Everest conqueror, Brendan O'Mahoney, came to my rescue. He cleared off the ice from the oxygen apparatus and gave me power gel. Then, slowly, I came back to Camp-III area. Okay, I had made it.

MALLORY & IRVINE Everest's mystery



Team 1924: Andrew Irvine and George Mallory (back row, first & second from left)

At 12:50am, June 8, 1924. The team's geologist, Noel Odell, glimpsed them for the last time -- two tiny black dots climbing one of the rocksteps of the Northeast Ridge at over 28,000 feet.

Then the veil of mist closed. The two never came back. Their disappearance became the greatest riddle in mountaineering history: Did George Mallory and Andrew Irvine reach the summit of Mount Everest before they died? Were they the first to climb the world's highest mountain, 29 years ahead of Hillary and Tenzing?

Asked earlier why he wanted to climb Everest, Mallory had famously replied, "Because it is there."

Seventy five years after Mallory's expedition, five young climbers retracing the route said they found Mallory's body lying on a windswept ledge at about 27,000 feet. No one yet knows if Mallory and Irvine met their end ascending or descending.

HIGH ALTITUDE ATTACKS

FROSTBITE numbness, clumsiness, death of tissues

ACUTE MOUNTAIN SICKNESS headache, exhaustion, shortness of breath and nausea or vomiting

HIGH ALTITUDE CEREBRAL EDEMA inhibited mental function, hallucinations, loss of muscle coordination, impaired speech, severe headache, nausea or vomiting and coma.

HIGH ALTITUDE PULMONARY EDEMA breathing difficulty, exhaustion, lack of motivation

SOURCE: ALTEREDDIMENSIONS.NET

THEY STAY THERE

The body of "Green Boots" (an Indian climber who died in 1996) lies near a cave that all climbers pass on their way to the peak. Green Boots now serves as a waypoint marker that climbers use to gauge how near they are to the summit. Green Boots became separated from his party in 1996 and sought this mountain overhang to use as protection from the elements. He sat there shivering in the cold until he died. The wind has since blown his body over.



Francys Arseniev, an American women who fell while descending with a group (that included her husband), pleaded with passerby's to save her. While climbing down the side of a steep section of the mountain, her husband noticed she was missing. Knowing that he did not have enough oxygen to reach her and return to base camp, he chose to turn back to find his wife anyway. He fell to his death in the attempt to climb down and reach his dying wife. Two other climbers did successfully reach her but knew carrying her off of Mount Everest was not an option. They comforted her for a while before leaving her to die. Feeling great remorse, they returned eight years later vowing to find the body and enshrine it in an American flag (they succeeded).

