

SPRINGTIME ON MOUNT EVEREST

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The world is propelled by the commercialization of human endeavors ranging from the use of cell phones to American football. Since Mount Everest was discovered to be the highest mountain in the world, it has emerged as the missing marketable commodity of Nepal. Nepal's unsurpassed natural wonders include a stunningly sublime tableau of peaks, valleys, rivers, and biodiversity. Because Nepal is situated in Southern Asia between China and India, the Himalayas and vast jungles serve as hindering borderlines. The commercial enterprise of Mount Everest mountaineering, however, has normalized the treatment of humans as disposable. This has also created a definitive line between those who seek personal gain and egotistical bragging rights, and those who simply wish to feed their families with more than rationed bread.

The latter is representative of the common draw for Sherpas and porters. These individuals make up an ancient ethnic community that lives in the shadow of Mount Everest. Prior to the popularity of the mountain, Sherpas worked as farmers and hunter-gatherers within the foothills of the Himalayas (Weathers 9). "Today, a Sherpa can earn a couple of thousand dollars or more lugging gear up and down the mountain for a typical two-month climbing expedition" (Weathers 10). In addition to carrying more than their personal body weight up and down the trail, Sherpas leave their families, establish camps, tend to the hundreds of pack animals, cook and serve their fellow climbers, and risk their lives on a daily basis. Springtime on Mount Everest is no walk in the park for Sherpas.

The exploitation of Sherpas depicts a fundamental, yet somewhat overlooked, role in the process of commercialization. This is because they are the mechanism that keeps

the commercial enterprise of Mount Everest mountaineering afloat. Apa Sherpa is a man who just recently summited Mount Everest for the 21st time, the highest number of successful attempts in the world. His name, though, goes unknown as the dozens of climbers he assists every year receive praise for their intrepid feat of conquering the highest mountain in the world. These are the same individuals who expend \$50,000-\$100,000 or more for a single expedition (McCurdy 139). This monetary amount is often insignificant to climbers seeking egotistical reward because for them, standing atop of the world for a brief second or two is seemingly priceless. The true cost of conquering Mount Everest, though, lies with those who truly know the mountain — the Sherpas.

If the number of annual deaths of various professions per 100,000 people with full-time equivalents were to be calculated, only 25 miners have died between the years of 2000 and 2010. This can be compared to the death rate of 124 commercial fishermen, and 1,332 Mount Everest Sherpas. If this time frame is shifted to 2004-2014, the death rate for Sherpas would be over 4,000 (Ogles).

At what point does leading an egotistical life begin to diminish your overall effect on the world? Some may argue that maintaining an ego initiates a necessary sense of self-worth or pride that can be used as a source of motivation. This means that one's ego allows one to develop an array of standards that direct our decisions in life. As one's confidence has the power to propel our potential and personal success, the world is continually propelled by the commercialization of these human endeavors. But at what point is it acceptable to ask others to risk their lives for the sake of our ego? I'm going to give the answer away: never.

Works Cited

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