



**Citation for Shri Harish Kapadia, Life time Achievement: Tensing Norgay National Adventure Award
2003**

The highest Award for Adventure Activities given by The President of India

Shri Harish Kapadia (Born July, 1945) is a renowned mountaineer, climbed 33 peaks of which 21 were first ascents. He was leader of nine joint Indian and foreign expeditions and he crossed many Indian Himalayan passes during his journeys. He trekked extensively in all regions of the Himalaya.

He has been the Honorary Editor of the **Himalyan Journal** for more than 25 years. He has written 15 books on the Indian Himalaya. He was awarded the Indian Mountaineering Foundation 'President's Gold Medal' in 1993 and The 'Patrons (Royal) Medal' of The Royal Geographical Society in 2003. He is also the Honorary Member of the Alpine Club, London. In recognition of his outstanding achievement in the field of land adventure, the Government of India has decided to confer The Tensing Norgay National Adventure Award for the year 2003 on Shri Harish Kapadia.



The award in form of a trophy and a scroll, was conferred to Shri Harish Kapadia by Dr. A. P. J. Kalam, the President of India, on 29th August 2003, the sports day of India, at Ashoka Hall, Rashtrapati Bhavan (Presidential Palace) in presence of more than 500 dignitaries.

Shri Harish Kapadia has dedicated this award to his son, Lt. Nawang Kapadia of 4/3 Gorkha Rifles of the Indian Army who believed that 'It is better to die in valour than a coward'. Lt. Nawang Kapadia would be proud of it.

UTTARKASHI YATRA

In mid November, I agreed to go to Uttarkashi, to celebrate with the Nehru Mountaineering Institute, Nehru's birthday, and their Foundation Day. Based on my Indian and African development experience, I have long held, that there is a direct relationship between the size of states, and their efficient governance. In the Indian condition, the optimum size of states perhaps should be 30-40 million. But for 50 years we continued to have the little ones, and some absolute impossible giants.

The creation of Uttaranchal was a welcome step. Like Himachal Pradesh, it is now a compact hill state in the north. This was my first visit after they come into being. At Haridwar I looked at the hill, which squeezes the ribbon city, between the river and the mountain. The hill has already been falling on to the township, due to a man promoted eco disaster. Now unbelievably, they have built a temple on the top, and taken a ropeway there. Do they have to go on inviting natures and God's wrath? The next few heavy monsoons over Haridwar will enlighten us. Haridwar and Rishikesh are becoming, one big settlement, and of course, oppressing the river with pollution and waste. The teak forests of the British days are also under severe pressure.

I have been all over the Himalaya, but this was the first time up to the famed Bhagirathi Valley. Once I had done a Delhi Tourist flight over this region, to take a close look at Nanda Devi. Down below, I had seen only bare brown hills. No forest. All gone. Now as I travelled up the valley, I saw the landscape more closely. There is little of worthwhile forest, and road cutting of course destabilizes, these mud hills. We wound our way up, passing frequent landslips, and even big slides. Chamba on the ridge was the first big township. The slopes are easy, and the town very much like Mussoorie. I fear, however, that while it will grow rapidly, it is all haphazard and will produce another slum on a hillside.

Tehri was a revolution to me. That whole wide valley, has been devastated, by a million *rakshas*, (devils) in the shape of giant diggers and tipper trucks. Over the decades, whole hills have been churned, up to take away stone and rubble, to the dam site. As we traveled up the valley towards Uttarkashi, I kept questioning my local driver. As the dam fills, it appears 60 – 70 kms. Of this pristine sacred river valley, is to go under water. In the evening light, we passed prospects, each more beautiful than the last. The river in languorous seductive loops, shining in the golden sun; little villages on beautiful terraces, producing natural paintings, by the many pastel shades, used by the owners. I could have cried at the coming disappearance of this beauty forever. The road we were on was to disappear. On both sides of the valley, new roads were being cut at a higher elevation, and they were making the mountains bleed, dust and stones down the slopes. At each roadside tea stall, I saw young and old strolling about. These are such gentle hill people. I thought to myself, soon they will become part, of the disembodied labor force, in some arid town in the plains, and this valley will only be a lost aching memory.

I know, it is all too late, and the dam can only be completed, the lake filled, and the people dispersed. But certainly, we have to think harder, on large dams, which vandalize whole valleys, forever and ever. I also think, that while the millions of kilowatts of electricity, will power some industries somewhere, what will the hills get and gain? We are after all, taking terrible decisions on them and theirs. Economists and Engineers, have souls of steel. They are excited only by growth rates, and the tons of concrete, poured somewhere. They cannot see, the luscious flanks of the mountain, and the Bhagirathi, snaking around them in voluptuous curves.

Uttarkashi sits on a hill, beautifully looped around by the river. The Nehru Institute is high on a slope, heavily forested with pines. The Institute, projects one of Nehru's special love, high mountains, and young people in great adventure. Mountain loving people from all over the country, are taken to the peaks and glaciers, and trained to be new 'Tenzings'. Uttarkashi also is becoming a hill urbanization problem – rapid, erratic, uncontrolled, spread over the beautiful terraces, with the waste and sewage, polluting the sacred river. One day, we went up to Gangotri. Beyond Harsil, we saw the real great Himalayan forest of giant deodars that once were everywhere. The Gangotri temple had closed a day earlier; the summer pilgrims and their pollution were gone, and we had the road and the valley all to ourselves. Early snow, covered the peaks, and the valley was better than any I have seen, in the Himalaya, or in the Alps. Lovely winter sun, and the river at last free of the engineers. It was a sight for the Gods. At Gangotri I ran into the junior *pujaris*. (priests) They were loading a van with the temple office materials they said. I only saw Gas Cylinders and cooling pots. In the courtyards, sadly, the eating vessels were still littered. I asked who was going to clean them. Wasn't it necessary to clean everything, and then disappear downhill? They said, like good Indians, we have a man to do it. The word "Seva" (service) they had never heard off. At Gangotri too, I saw the ugly construction expansion, pushing mercilessly into the river, even at its birth. Will no great holy man, protect the Bhagirathi, from the destruction which rapid expansion of settlements, and tourism is bringing?

The Uttaranchalis have their own State. The burden of its good governance, and worthwhile development, is theirs now. There is no one left to blame. Ministers and Secretaries need to be young, and willing to walk to remote valleys, as we once did in the old Punjab. They have to have a feeling, and a passion for the great mountains and rivers, that are in their trust, for the nation. Their development future is tourism, and not wheat and rice cultivation, as in the Punjab. But like Scotland and Austria, they must guard this beauty, and the crystal clear, green waters, of these ancient rivers. These mountains and streams, have sustained you so far, and they can give you a worthwhile living only if you nurture them, and let them aid your earning.

(Dr. Manohar Singh Gill, President, HC)

A letter from Belgium by Dr. Ing Joseph Turbang

I have been a member of the Himalayan Club and reader of the *Himalayan Journal* for many years. Fortunately my first experience with FAO (UN) was in the field of Watershed Management in the Damodar valley in Bihar (India) where I walked with high level Indian technicians. I was stationed in Hazaribagh where I could live happily far away from the noisy world. Then I was transferred to Nepal while there were no regular flights (late 50's.) I took a memorable DC3 from Indian Airlines out of Patna after we had waited for several days for the weather to clear up. Early sixties I was transferred to FAO regional office in Bangkok with numerous missions to India and the Himalayan areas, where trekking was my favourite. In Nepal we carried out a big watershed project in the Tirsuli valley. Out of Shimla (India) I travelled with my friend Major Singh, Chief Conservator of Forest, later posted in Chandigarh, to the Shipki pass area and several other valleys.

In the seventies I travelled and trekked with my colleague Mr Mullick, Conservator of Forest in Kullu over the Rohtang pass into the Lahaul-Spiti. While staying in the forest bungalow in Manali I met with our friend John Banon. How is he?¹ I well remember a trip with Maj. Singh out of Shimla travelling through a valley north where we visited a wonderful palace all in wood, which I understand was destroyed by fire later on. Could you remember of it?² The flora of the Himalaya was most interesting. But also while there I collected some nuts (Kashmir, Kullu valley.) and as a result, I have in Belgium (the Ardennes) about a dozen walnut trees from India about 15 m high and producing a crop every year. A loving souvenir from this unique mountain range.

Late sixties I was appointed head of the forestry division in the regional office in Bangkok, which I left in early retirement in late eighties, but still continued part time until 1997 in the area. You may understand how much I appreciate receiving regularly the *Himalayan Journal* and also the volume 58 for which I am grateful to you and the Club.

About old memories, I remember still having met Noel Odell for the last time in 1978 in Delhi. Did the HJ publish some report since Mallory's body was found?³ Finally, I may also tell you I have known quite well Peter Aufchneiter who had been associated with FAO in Nepal. I met him last on 12 October 1967 near Jawa lake in Nepal where he stayed with the Swiss Mission.

1 John Banon still lives in Manal, running beautiful hotel.

2 It was 'Wild Flower Hall, made of wood. It is reconstructed and is now a very expensive hotel.

3 Alas no, but there are several books on the subject which HJ reviewed in detail.

SAD NEWS

Paras Mani Das was killed with five others, Sub Inspector, Inder Kumar, Punjab Police, H/C Ms. Nari Dami, Punjab Police, Shri Dawa Sherpa, Mountaineering Institute Instructor, Sonam Gyasto, and a cook, Dawa Wangchuk Sherpa, in an avalanche, leading the Punjab Police Expedition, on peak Chomiomo in North Sikkim on 24th September 2005. P M Das was an IPS officer and was recently promoted as an ADDL DG of Punjab Police, and was Hon. Local Secretary of our club in Chandigarh. His adventures and his photographs inspired many to the adventure of climbing and hiking, His writings in The Himalayan Journal, on his early explorations were original compositions of a true soul of the mountains.

FIRST INDIANS TO CLIMB SHISHA PANGMA (8012M) TIBET, CHINA-2005

A seven member team of the very prestigious Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) unfurled the “Tri Colour” for the first time on the 8012 m, high Mount Shisha Pangma on 17th May at 0800 hours, which is located in Tibet, China.

Standing majestically and towering above the Tibetan plateau, in solitary splendour, Mt. Shisha Pangma is probably the most beautiful of all 8000 m, mountains of the world. A deeply revered mountain, the peak is also known as GOSAINATHAN. The Chinese call it XIXABANGMA. Mt. Shisha Pangma is one of the fourteen 8000m ‘Giant mountains’ of our planet which was first climbed by a Chinese team in 1964. Other 8000 m peaks include heights such as Everest, K2, Lhotse, Makalu, Kanchenjunga etc. A challenging mountain, this formidable peak was yet to be climbed by an Indian team because of the

extreme unpredictable weather, challenging climb and dangerous snow conditions.

The expedition, was flagged off by Honourable Raksha Mantri and President NIM, Shri. Pranab Mukherjee on 17th March 2005. The team established Base Camp at 5000m and Advance Base Camp at 5600m. Three high camps were established, Camp I at 6300 m, Camp II at 6840 m and Camp III at 7300 m. The mountain was scaled on 17 May from the north ridge, north face.

Colonel Ashok Abbey, AVSM, Principal Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttarkashi, led the expedition. The team comprised of Nb Sub Mohinder Singh, SC, Nb Sub Neel Chand, SC, Nb Sub Rajendra Singh Jalal, Shri Ranveer Singh, Shri Chewang Norbu and Shri Khushal Singh, all NIM Instructors. Dr. Haripaul Singh was the expedition doctor.

The seven member climbing team is the smallest Indian team to climb an 8000 m mountain, which till date has been attempted by large expeditions. In a remarkable display of outstanding leadership and teamwork, the complete climbing team (100% members) reached the summit in a single push. The team has also created history by recording the first Indian ascent of an 8000m mountain, without using supplemental (bottled) oxygen. Established in 1965 at Uttarkashi, the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering is not only India’s and Asia’s premier national mountaineering institute, but also one of the finest of its kind in the world. The expedition commemorates 40 years of existence of this premier national institute in the service of our country.



INTO THE OBRA VALLEY



Obra, as the name suggests lies enclosed in between Harkidun Gad and Supin Gad. The team of 11 members (from 6 to 62 yrs), led by Harish Kapadia trekked into the valley. With the crimson *Cholai* fields, and along side Tons River, the route goes steeply up and down. The thick Deodar Jungle has many other vegetation too, especially the *Bitchu Buti*. In the midst of mist and lashing rain, the valley appeared to be closed. But as Vinay and Maninder went more ahead, near *Devkhira*, it did open into the vast *Buigvals* as promised by the local porters. There are a few good, small technical, virgin peaks, which remains to be climbed at the head.

Five Virgin Eastern Karakoram Peaks Climbed Successfully by HC members!

The Himalayan Club, Mumbai, recently sponsored a mountaineering and exploratory expedition to the Lung Tung glacier near Satti village in the Eastern Karakoram ranges of Ladakh. In the year 2001, the Lung Tung glacier group of peaks was first observed from the adjoining Arganglas glacier, by an Indo British team led by eminent mountaineer Harish Kapadia. This year, fourteen members Indian American team under the heading of 'Karakoram Maitri Expedition 2005', successfully completed the first ascents of five virgin peaks, explored five glacial systems and reached four high cols (passes) in the area. This expedition was lead jointly by Divyesh Muni , our Hon. Secretary and Don Goodman, Hon. Local Secretary, US.

After crossing Khardung la, the highest motor able pass in the world, the team reached Satti village on the banks of Shyok river. After a difficult trek, the base camp was established near a place called Spangchenmo at an altitude of 5150 m. During the expedition, the team established two more high camps at 5540 m and 5920 m respectively. From these camps, Karpo Kangri (6535 m), Gjungma Kangri (6287 m), P. 6082 m, P. 6289 m. and Thongs Ri (5889 m) were climbed between 19th August and 24th August 2005.

The team then returned by the Koyak glacier route to reach the Rongdo valley by crossing the Koyak pass (5840 m). This was the first known crossing of this high glacial pass joining Satti and Rongdo

valleys. The team has achieved extensive coverage of this hitherto unexplored region and is preparing a documentary on their explorations and climbs.

Along with the leaders, Vineeta Muni, Cyrus Shroff, Rajesh Gadgil, Surendra Chavan, Ameya Chandawarkar, Shripad Sapkal, Sally Annis, Don Beavon, Dave Creeden, Marlin Geist, Nataala Goodman and Dan Sjolseth participated in this expedition. The Indian members returned to Mumbai on 4th September after 35 days of successful climbing.



The writing material and warm clothing generously donated by the Himalayan Club members was distributed to the school children and needy people in Leh and Satti.

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