

80th Anniversary Celebrations of The Himalayan Club at Delhi

The 80th anniversary of the Himalayan Club was celebrated at New Delhi with great enthusiasm and festivities. Organised by the Delhi Section of the Himalayan Club, the celebrations on March 14 & 15 included a formal evening with the screening of a special film on the Himalayan Club, a series of lectures and films by some prominent members, and a celebratory dinner as well as a week-long programme of trekking in the Garhwal Himalaya followed by rafting on the Ganges. The celebrations were attended by members and guests from India as well as Japan, Korea, Nepal, UK, and the US.

Himalayan Club 80th Anniversary Meet at Teen Murti House



L-R: Harish Kapadia, Sir Chris Bonington, Col Ashok Abbey, Gurdial Singh, Vijay Crishna, Tanil Kilachand, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Suman Dubey

The first documents about the formation of the Himalayan Club were signed on 17th February 1928 at the Teen Murti House building in New Delhi, then the office of the Chief of Indian Army. Fittingly, the Club returned to the premises eight decades later to celebrate 80 glorious years since its founding. Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson, United Progressive Alliance was the Chief Guest on this occasion. Decked up with posters of mountain landscapes, the venue provided a superb ambience for the gathering of prominent mountaineers, mountain lovers and enthusiasts.

In her keynote address, Mrs Sonia Gandhi pointed out the active interest and contribution of the Nehru-Gandhi family to mountain sports in India. The following are excerpts from Mrs Gandhi's address:



Mrs. Vidya Pasricha presenting a painting, 'Kangchenjunga Range' by her late husband R. N. Pasricha to Mrs. Sonia Gandhi

'The beauty and power of the Himalaya has moved and inspired our people from the earliest times. ... Our ancient sages didn't scale the summit; they explored their innermost depths in search of wisdom and emancipation. As modern devotees of the high mountains you have added a very welcome contemporary dimension of sporting activity. Mountaineers too need to find resources such as mental strength and resilience, as well as high levels of physical fitness and endurance, to take them to their chosen goals. ... These, after all, engender qualities of character building and help us become better

human beings. We need to encourage them in our youth.

It is reassuring that the Himalayan Club is taking up the challenge of environment protection. This is an area which all of us, whether private or public, need to attend to urgently. ... Problems such as deforestation, the pressure of human populations on fragile eco-systems, waste disposal and the effects of roads and infrastructure building need our urgent and serious attention. ...



Our efforts will be more effective if we are more conscientious as individuals, if we build public-private partnerships, if we all work together. At the same time we must keep in

mind that the mountain regions are in need of sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods. ... in large parts, especially in the remote areas, living conditions are still inadequate, and economic development has yet to make an impact. ...

Once again, I congratulate the Himalayan Club on this important milestone in its journey. You will, I am sure, continue to excel in mountain exploration and climbing. It is also my hope that you will continue to care for the mountain environment and help improve the lives of those who live there.'

In his address, Suman Dubey, President, The Himalayan Club, shared his thoughts on mountaineering in India. Excerpts from his address are given below:

'Today, very little if anything---remains unknown of the Himalaya, the Karakoram, the Hindu Kush and the other ranges that make up the world's highest mountains. All the significant summits have been reached, and while there are scores of unclimbed peaks, climbers have sought new and increasingly more difficult routes up well trodden mountains. ... Leading international climbers are increasingly shifting to alpine style ascents ... Once, we climbed "because it is there"; that attitude has given way to a new "because I can do it" or "because no one's done it before" approach....



L-R: Sir Chris Bonington, Suman Dubey, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Mani Shankar Aiyar

The Himalayan Club has always encouraged its members to go out, climb and explore in a manner befitting their abilities, to enjoy themselves as much as to push the envelope. On the many joint expeditions that Himalayan Club members have organized, Indian climbers have accomplished difficult climbs.

The authorities too need to think afresh. ... in India vast amounts are spent on sending people to climb a mountain that is routinely ascended by complete novices willing to pay to be guided up. That sort of money spent more wisely could far better help our climbers become more skilled. Restraints such as the Inner Line, the absence of maps of the mountains, the ban on photography and filming in some

places are surely obsolete in the age of satellites and Google Earth. On behalf of the international members of the Himalayan Club, I would also like to plead for easier access for foreign expeditions. ...

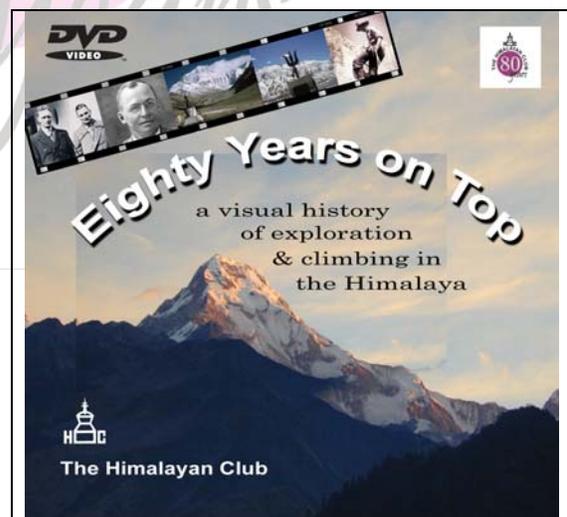
The Himalayan Club would like to address environment issues. Our Club is very small and global warming is a huge problem, but we want to work with institutions and authorities to bring about a change of attitude. ... It is my hope that 20 years from now, when a future President addresses the Himalayan Club Centenary celebrations, he or---preferably she---will have many positive things to say.'

Mani Shankar Aiyar, Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India also spoke on the occasion and congratulated the Himalayan Club for the role it has played over the years. He also mentioned that outdoor activity in any form plays a big role in character building for the youth in general, and mentioned having seen its benefits first-hand at his alma mater, the Doon School, which follows a policy of actively encouraging its students to go outdoors and climb and explore.

Sir Chris Bonington, legendary mountaineer who was representing the international members of the Himalayan Club, also addressed the gathering on this occasion. Sir Chris stated that while the Indian Himalaya offered unlimited opportunities for climbers, if the process of gaining approval to climb peaks was simplified it would encourage even more climbers to venture out into the Indian Himalaya.

Movie on The Himalayan Club

A movie on the Himalayan Club, specially made for this occasion, was also screened. Using archival material, the movie traced the history and growth of the Himalayan Club, from it's founding to the present times, and featured many prominent climbs and personalities who have made the Club into what it is today---a vibrant and growing organisation of like-minded and enthusiastic people bonded by their love for climbing, exploration, and the world of the mountains. Through interviews with some current members of the Club, the movie also probed into the concerns of the Club in the future and the direction the Club should take. The movie has been compiled by noted movie maker and mountain lover Karamjeet Singh.





A special issue of the Himalayan Club Newsletter celebrating 80 glorious years of the Himalayan Club was released.

The commemorative issue, painstakingly put together by the Himalayan Club editorial team led by Harish Kapadia, features memorabilia collected over the years, rare photographs of well-known personalities who have contributed to the Himalayan Club, and articles by prominent members of the Club.

Earlier in the day, Maninder and Shamila Kohli hosted a sumptuous lunch at their residence for visiting and local Himalayan Club members.



The sprawling greens and abundant blooming flowers in the garden setting combined with a perfect spring afternoon provided an ideal setting for a good time to be had by all and set the stage for the events and festivities later on in the evening.

Photo: Percy Fernandes

Celebratory Dinner

A dinner to celebrate 80 years of the existence of the Himalayan Club was held for Club members and their guests at the terrace of the WWF-India building, New Delhi.



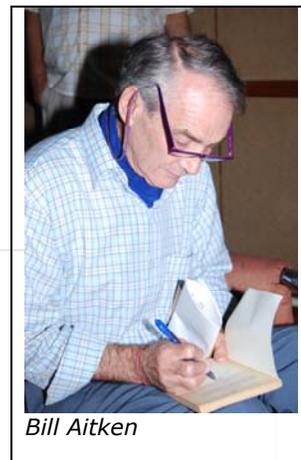
In his speech at Teen Murti Auditorium, Suman Dubey had stated from experience 'that people who like to spend their spare time in the frozen wilderness also tend to look for any excuse to have a party'. And what a party it was, with great conversation, much wine flowing and merriment!! The superb terrace setting, balmy night, and excellent food and drink provided the perfect ambience for a relaxed informal meeting of senior and younger members of the Club alike.

Talks and Films

As part of the 80th anniversary celebrations, the Delhi Section requested some of the prominent visiting members to talk about their experiences in the mountains.

In a tribute to Sir Edmund Hillary, the award-winning movie titled 'Beyond Everest: The Ongoing Climb', produced and directed by Michael Dillon, was screened. Winner of several awards, the movie focuses on the legendary work of Sir Edmund Hillary since his first ascent of Everest in 1953. Shot in stunningly beautiful surroundings, it provides a sensitive portrayal of Sir Edmund's efforts for improving the lives of the Sherpa community of Nepal.

Bill Aitken, noted author, mountain lover, and passionate environmentalist, offered his thoughts and views based on his travels through the Himalaya over the years.



Bill Aitken



Based on his several visits to the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, Harish Kapadia, Honorary Editor of the *Himalayan Journal* and an authority on the Himalaya, gave an illustrated talk on the long history of exploration, the details about the sanctuary's current situation, environmental challenges being faced and climbs in the region.

Sir Chris Bonington, the world's leading mountaineer and author delivered an illustrated talk titled 'I Chose to Climb'.

The talk summarised the initial phase of Sir Chris' climbing years, leading up to his historic climb of the South Face of Annapurna in 1970.

Himalayan Club and WWF-India Gesture to the Pasricha Family

Paintings of mountain landscapes by late R. N. Pasricha, noted painter and mountain-lover, were displayed and made available for sale at the venue as a goodwill gesture to his family. The stunning water-colour mountain landscape paintings, arranged tastefully in the entrance foyer of the WWF-India building, gave the feeling that one was actually in the midst of mountains. The exhibition was thronged by members, who admired and took avid interest in the paintings.

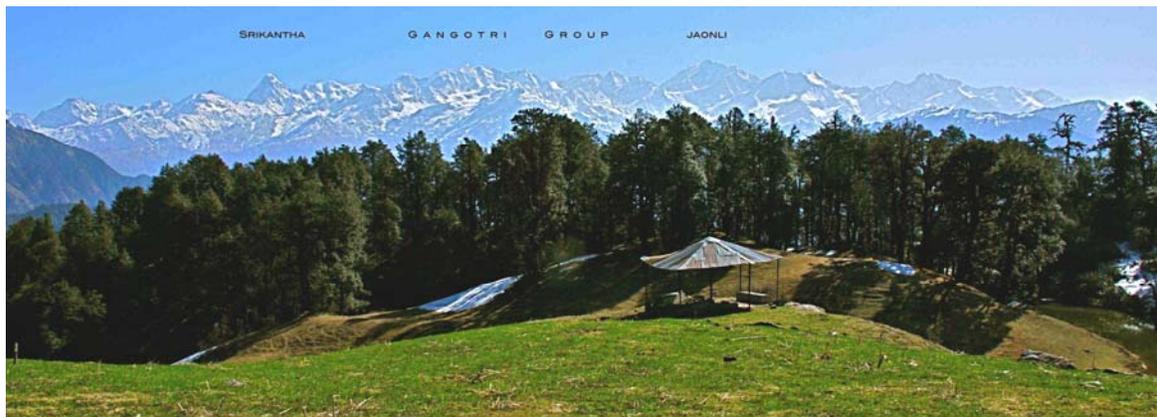


Commemorative Plaque

Also on sale at the venue was a commemorative plaque, especially made for the 80th anniversary of the Club. In keeping with the endeavour of not contributing to any destruction of the environment, the plaque is made of recycled wood sourced from trees grown on plantations. The plaque can be obtained by members at a price of Indian Rupees 300 only from Mandip Sooin at mandipsinghsoin@hotmail.com.



Treks and Rafting in the Himalaya



Srikantha, Gangotri Group and Jaonli viewed from Barnala

Photo: Suman Dubey.

After the festivities, some members proceeded to celebrate the Club's 80th anniversary in the mountains by trekking up to Dayara Bugyal in the Garhwal Himalaya and rafting down the Ganges to Rishikesh. The group consisted of 24 members ranging in age from 37 to 81 years, making for an interesting variety and outlining the membership of the Club cutting across international boundaries.

First stop on the way for the team was the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) at Uttarkashi, which graciously hosted the group. Later in the evening, there were illustrated talks by Don Goodman on his 1983 climb of Peak Communism in the Pamir Range and by Martin Scott on four climbs made by him in Tibet. The Principal of NIM, Col. M. M. Masur, also interacted with the team members and expressed his desire for more activities between NIM and the Himalayan Club.



HC Strides Forth

photo: Suman Dubey



Ridge Walk

photo: Rajesh Gadgil

The drive to Barsu, the starting point of the trek to Dayara Bugyal, yielded many gasps of amazement as hillsides full of Rhododendron arboretum in full bloom provided a very pretty picture. From Barsu, it was a fairly easy trek up to Barnala (9360 feet). Members trekked up to Dayara Bugyal through some late winter snow, while the more energetic members reached the topmost point of the bugyal (11,660 feet) and took in the beauty of its surroundings despite the

deteriorating weather.

Next day, it seemed as if the Sun God, Surya himself had smiled on the team as the campsite was bathed in the light of the clear early morning sunshine. The team reluctantly headed back from Barnala to Barsu and then on to Netala. There Motup Chewang surprised

the team members by bringing out a huge freshly baked chocolate cake with 'Happy 80th Anniversary to the Himalayan Club' written on it. Next morning, after another healthy dose of chyawanprash, generously supplied by Tanil Kilachand throughout the trip, the team members headed back into the plains.

After the trek to Dayara Bugyal, some members proceeded to Kaudiyala to go rafting down the Ganges to Rishikesh. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed negotiating the rapids and could imagine becoming quite addicted to it. The rafting trip coincided with the festival of Holi, and everybody joined in smearing each other with vibrant colours to celebrate the festival, with some very vivid and unrecognisable appearances resulting!



HC ready to take on the Rapids
Photo: Rama Goyal

Later in the evening, sitting around a bonfire on the Ganges riverside on the full moon night, the team members demonstrated their surprisingly abundant singing talents, with many of them fit to be 'playback singers'!

Relaxing and soaking in the flowing gangajal provided a perfect finale to a fantastic nine days of celebrations packed with walks, talks, films, climbs, rafting, meetings of senior and new members, and much gaiety and laughter.

--Rama Goyal

The Himalayan Club has organized an unusual trek to the Tosh Valley. The detail itinerary is given below.

The Tosh is a feeder valley of the popular Parbati Valley which leads to the Pin Parbati Pass. The Tosh Nallah meets the Parbati river at Pulga coming from the North. The Tosh valley is initially narrow but as you progress higher the valley starts to open up and you cross a several beautiful meadows. At the head of the valley is the Tosh Glacier surrounded by some well known peaks: Papasura (6451m) & White Sail (6446m).

Trek Plan for the Tosh Valley Trek:

Date	Activity	Drive / Trek	Remarks
8th June Sunday	Group assembles at Kasol by 8am and drives to Bursheni 2090m Bursheni 2090m to Tos Village 2400m	1 hour drive Trek of 4km (3 hours)	A dirt road now goes up to Tosh Village but we start walking a bit earlier. The idea to keep things light in the beginning and get warmed up and acclimatize.
9th June Monday	Tosh Village 2400m to Budhaban 3065m	Trek 6 km (4 hours)	First proper stage in the trek mostly through forest.
10th June Tuesday	Budhaban 3065m to Sharam Thach 3500m	Trek 12 km (7 hours)	Now in the middle of the valley and we start hitting the meadows.

11th June Wednesday	Explore the Valley to the East and do a day trip to the Phanjura Losha Thach and return to Sharam Thach 3500m.	Trek 8km (5 hours)	We slow down to acclimatize and also explore a side valley towards the East, which leads to the Phanjura Losha Thach offering fantastic views of Ali Ratni Tibba among other peaks.
12th June Thursday	Sharam Thach 3500m to Shamshi Thach 3800m	5km (4 hours)	Lovely walk moving continuously through meadows.
13th June Friday	Shamshi Thach 3800m to Tosh Glacier 4300m day trip and return. Strong Group heads to Animal Pass 4560m/ Sara Umga Pass and back to Shamshi Thach	4 km (4 hours) 8km (7- 8 hours)	Full teams moves to the head of the valley with some in the team can return after exploring the Tosh glacier and return while others can move up the west ridge and explore the route to Animals Pass.
14th June Saturday	Shamshi Thach 3500 m to Budhaban 3065m	13 km (6 hours)	Double stages return, going downhill.
15th June Sunday	Budhaban 3065m to Bursheni 2090m and further down to Kasol.	6km trek and 4 km drive (3 hours)	Trek closes post-reaching Kasol at noontime.

Members interested to join the trek can contact Maninder Kohli - maninder.kohli@citi.com , Tel- 09810009564

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