



THE HIMALAYAN CLUB

Climbing and Beyond...

E-LETTER

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The Piolets d'Or Award

The Piolets d'Or is an award given to a climb(s) the previous year. An explanation of this award taken from the official website is as follows:

“The purpose of the Piolets d'Or awards is to raise awareness about the year's greatest ascents across the world. They aim to celebrate the taste for adventure, the bravery and sense of exploration that lie behind the art of climbing in the world's great mountain ranges.

The Piolets d'Or draws inspiration from mountaineering's rich history. They are a celebration of a sense of partnership and solidarity, of shared experiences, and reward individual or collective achievement.

In modern mountaineering, questions of style and means of ascent take precedence over reaching the objective itself. It is no longer a matter of employing huge financial and technical resources (bottled oxygen, fixed ropes, high-altitude porters, so-called 'performance-enhancing' substances...) and large numbers of people to reach the top at all costs. The Piolets d'Or throws the spotlight on imaginative and innovative new routes, using a minimum amount of equipment, and building on experience.”

The climb that Mark Richey, Freddie Wilkinson and I did on Saser Kangri II last year was one of six nominated climbs for this award. It was a huge honor for us just to have been nominated.

The organizers choose a jury each year to select the nominees who come to Chamonix for the event. At the event, each of the nominees make a presentation to the jury that then chooses a winner(s). The criteria that the jury uses for selecting the nominees and deciding the winner(s) is:



Award group

“The jury judges these ascents irrespective of a climber’s nationality and against the following criteria, both on a point-by-point basis and as a whole:

- Style of ascent
- Spirit of exploration: original (previously unclimbed) route and/or mountain, creative and innovative approach
- Level of commitment and self-sufficiency
- High level of technical ability required
- Suitability of route in light of objective dangers
- Efficient and sparing use of resources
- Transparency regarding the use of these resources
- Respect for people, climbing partners, members of other teams, porters and local agents
- Respect for the environment
- Respect for future generations of mountaineers by leaving them the possibility of enjoying the same kind of experiences and adventures”

In addition to choosing a winner of the year’s Piolets d’Or, the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement award is also given. On Thursday, the first night of the event, a presentation was made honoring the recipient of this year’s Lifetime Achievement Award, Robert Paragot.

I wasn’t very familiar with Robert’s accomplishments before going to this event. But I learned that his major first ascents between 1955 and 1971 (many of which he led) include: South Face of Aconcagua in Argentina (highest mountain in Western Hemisphere - 6962 m), Mustagh Tower in Pakistan - 7273 m, Jannu in Nepal - 7710 m, North Face of Huascarán in Peru - 6768 m, West Pillar of Makalu in Nepal - 8463 m. He certainly deserved to be recognized and it was a privilege to meet him.

After short video presentations of all six nominated climbs, the jury announced that the ascent of K7 West by the young Slovenian climbers Nejc Marcic and Luka Strazar was the winner. The jury then announced that this year they were giving two awards, with the other for the first ascent of Saser Kangri II by Mark Richey, Freddie Wilkinson, and me.

It was a huge honor to receive this award. All the climbs were worthy and it seemed quite subjective to pick a winner from the six nominated climbs. For me, the most important thing about the event was participating in a great celebration of mountaineering with wonderful people and making some new friends.

Looking back on the Saser Kangri II climb I’ve come to appreciate my partners Mark Richey and Freddie Wilkinson even more. The teamwork we had on the ascent and their tireless efforts to take care of me and organize a rescue after the descent when I got sick are great examples of the true spirit of mountaineering and the meaning behind this award.

(Steve Swenson)

‘The Olympic Games Pledge’

History

In 1922 a British expedition to Mount Everest, led by Brigadier General Charles Bruce, became the first team to attempt to scale the mountain with the specific aim of reaching the summit. Although the team narrowly fell short of the summit itself, they succeeded in smashing the world record for high altitude climbing by reaching 8,230m (just 600m short of the summit itself). This amazing feat was celebrated globally and in 1924 the International Olympic Committee, led by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, announced that the full 1922 British team should receive Olympic Gold Medals for Alpinisme.

The category of Alpinisme had been included in the original reconstitution of the Olympics in the late 1890’s but had never previously been awarded, making the ‘win’ by the British team even more significant.

On the 5th February, 1924, Lt Col Strutt (the second in command of the 1922 Expedition) was invited to the Closing Ceremony of the 1924 Winter Olympics to receive the medals on behalf of the British team. Due to his personal involvement in the inclusion of Alpinisme in the Olympics Baron Pierre de Coubertin personally awarded the Gold Medals to Strutt, and it was during the award of the Olympic Medals that Strutt made his Pledge to Coubertin.



Kenton Cool (left) with one of the 1924 Olympic Gold Medals awarded for Alpinisme.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin complimented Strutt and the British team for their absolute heroism on behalf of all of the nations of the world, and (knowing that the British 1924 Everest expedition had just left England for Nepal) expressed his ardent wish that the team were successful in completing what they had set out to do saying that they honoured not just their country but all humanity. Official record of the VIII Olympiad, 1924.

In Strutt’s return speech, and in the words of Coubertin himself, he said “There was also the moving occasion when, at the foot of Mont Blanc, the medal for mountaineering was awarded to one of the leaders of the famous Mount Everest expedition, a courageous Englishman who, defeated but not discouraged, swore to leave it next time at the top of the highest summit in the Himalayas” OLYMPIC MEMOIRS, by Pierre de Coubertin. The eighth Olympiad (Paris 1924).

The journey to fulfil ‘The Olympic Games Pledge’

In 2010 Richard Robinson rediscovered the long-forgotten Olympic Games Pledge while researching a project for London 2012. Richard and Kenton have known each

other for over a decade and Kenton's first words when he learnt of the Pledge were "I have to do this".

With the decision made Kenton and Richard quickly agreed that two things would be needed. Firstly a very visible means of sharing the moment that Great Britain fulfils The Olympic Games Pledge to honour Coubertin's wish that this be not just for "your country but all humanity", and secondly one of the original 1924 Olympic Medals won by the British team.

Honouring Baron Pierre de Coubertin's wishes

These two goals set off an amazing chain of events, and they started with Kenton summiting Everest in 2011 with the sole objective of proving that 3G existed on the summit. This expedition was made possible through the technology and vision of Samsung, who were the right partners to enable Kenton to achieve his goal, and ensure that when he returned in 2012 he would do this with the full confidence that he would be able to share the moment "with all humanity" .

The 'Samsung 3G Challenge' of 2011 created huge global news in its own right, with Kenton making the first 3G call from the Everest summit and sending the first ever tweet, which is now acknowledged in the 'top 10 most epic tweets' by many commentators.

The real story of 2011 can only be told now, and this is that Kenton, Richard and Samsung knew that the team would be returning in 2012 to fulfil The Olympic Games Pledge. The result is that everyone globally can now participate in Kenton's summit attempt to fulfil The Olympic Games Pledge.

Finding the 1924 Olympic Gold Medals for Alpinisme



After nine months of searching the first medal was located, after eighteen months of searching a further five had been found, with the possible locations of another three thought to be known. The whereabouts of the remaining medals remain unknown.

At this point Kenton Cool took the decision to approach a select group of descendants of the original 1922 Expedition who were known to hold some of the original medals and reveal the story of the Olympic Pledge. Kenton's ardent belief from the first time he heard of The Olympic Games Pledge was that the medal would choose him, as opposed to him choosing the Medal.

Upon hearing of the proposed expedition and the story of The Olympic Games Pledge Charles Wakefield, the grandson of Arthur Wakefield, immediately told Kenton that he

must take Arthur Wakefield's Medal to the summit with the most simple email saying "Arthur Wakefield's Olympic Medal is waiting for you in Toronto wrapped in a flame red silk handkerchief", quickly followed up by an email from Sir Humphrey Wakefield saying "Well done all parties! Give love to Everest and to the Yak and Yeti".

In the first week of March 2012 Kenton flew to Toronto to meet the Wakefield family, exchange climbing stories about the 1920s and the present day, and then flew back to London with Arthur Wakefield's 1924 Olympic Gold Medal to complete its 88 year journey from Lake Chamonix to the summit of Mount Everest in 2012.

The Olympic Games Pledge was fully supported by The Royal Geographical Society, The Alpine Club, The British Mountaineering Council and the Himalayan Club. In addition The Royal Geographical Society has kindly agreed to allow Kenton to use a second 1924 Olympic Medal that they hold for events and discussion in the UK. The medal is believed to be that of Charles Bruce, the legendary expedition leader from 1921 - 1924.

Acclaimed adventurer Kenton Cool undertook a six week expedition to the summit of Everest with an Olympic Gold Medal from 1924. He reached the summit on 25th May 2012, fulfilling a long standing promise made directly to Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founding father of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) nearly 100 years ago.

Zemu Gap from South

Zemu Gap (also referred to as the Cloud Gap by Douglas Freshfield) is located deep in Kangchenjunga country and stands out as a sharp V shaped notch when viewed from afar. While there have been several ascents including a complete crossing of the Zemu Gap from the north by Tillman, there remained uncertainty as to whether this cleft on



The line of ascent through the second icefall.

the eastern continuity of Kangchenjunga (before it links up with Simvo) had been effectively ascended from the southern approach. N.A. Tombazi had made a tour of the locality in 1925 (*Alpine Journal* 38 p. 150, *Geographical Journal* 67) and claimed to have made the first ascent to the Zemu Gap from the south. He however provided no photographic evidence against his claimed ascent. In 1926, Captain Boustead declared that he had reached the Zemu Gap from the south (*Geographical Journal* 69, Pp. 344-350). But his terrain description raised suspicions in H.W. Tilman's mind and in 1936 during his attempt from south; HWT suggested Captain Boustead may have

mistaken a col located at the head of Tongshyong glacier as Zemu Gap. Thus, a photo documented passageway to the top of the col from the south seemed to be a very attractive proposition for any quixotic explorer. In recent times, a crack British alpine team, who had planned to cross over to the north onto the Zemu glacier, had undertaken this enterprise in 2008, but had to eventually, abort their attempt. Anindya Mukherjee, an enterprising Himalayan club member from Kolkata, was fascinated by account of his hero, H.W. Tillman's attempt at bridging the Zemu Gap from the south in 1936, inspired him to attempt an alpine style expedition on this col in 2011, that too in the prime of winter.

They reached their goal on 15th December 2011.

(Priyadarshi Gupta)
(Article, *HJ* Vol 68)

Himalayan Club Annual Seminar 2012

Mumbai Section

The Himalayan Club's Annual Seminar 2012 opened on Saturday, February 18 with the Kaivan Mistry Memorial Lecture addressed by the legendary Peter Habeler. Peter, an Austrian and Reinhold Messner climbed Everest, without supplementary oxygen for the first time ever, a feat which was previously thought to be impossible. Habeler set a further record by descending from the summit to the South Col in only one hour.

The lecture, tinged with tongue-in-cheek humour covered Peter's whole alpine life - his path breaking climbs in Europe (together with Reinhold Messner); expeditions to the big mountains in South America, Nepal and Pakistan; Nanga Parbat, and Everest - in a manner that left the audience spellbound.

Peter began climbing with Messner in 1969. Apart from Everest, eight-thousanders that Habeler has summited are Cho Oyu, Nanga Parbat, Kangchenjunga and Hidden Peak. The ascent of Hidden Peak was made Alpine-style in three days, and is seen by some as ushering in a new era of Alpine-style ascents of eight-thousanders, in contrast to the 'siege' tactics which had largely prevailed to this time. It was the



Peter Habeler making a presentation.

first time an eight-thousander had been climbed Alpine-style.

He founded the Peter Habeler Ski and Mountaineering School in his hometown of Mayrhofen, Austria. The school is now run by his son, though Peter still teaches on occasion.

Other lectures that afternoon included a film by Mr. Tapan Pandit on his exploratory trek from Chitkul to Arsomang glacier,

across the Chungsa Khago pass (5560 m) to Dumku at the confluence of Chorgad and Jad ganga. Mr. Pandit is an HC member from West Bengal and has undertaken several exploratory treks in past decade with his wife and a small group of friends. The following day members were regaled with another film on an eight day trek along the Supin river from Jakhol - Vishkhopri thatch, across Khimloga pass (5260 m) by the same group.

The day's programme ended with a short presentation by the intrepid Harish Kapadia on his visit to Nagaland and Lohit valley looking at the areas of the 1962 India-China war as well as a trek in the Lapti valley leading to the Hoot Pass on the Burma border. Harish has been an explorer and climber for almost five decades. He was Hon. Editor of the *Himalayan Journal* for 37 years; he has written a number of books and received many international and national awards. In last decade he has been exploring unknown valleys in Arunachal Pradesh.

On Sunday, February 19th, after Mr. Pandit's film, Pradeep Sahoo, an active climber who flew down from Zimbabwe, where he is now based, especially for the Seminar, made a presentation on a Himalayan Club, Kolkata expedition to Mamostong Kangri in 2010. This expedition retraced the footsteps of the 1984 team along the NE ridge of the mountain, to reach the top and thus celebrate a magnificent Silver Jubilee commemoration of the first ascent of this peak.

His second talk described the Himalayan Club Kolkata team's attempt on Saser Kangri-I, in 2011. Their planned route was the deeply crevassed and corniced west ridge which had been first bridged during the 1987 Indo-British Army expedition. The expedition also gained the summit of Saser Kangri IV 'Cloud Peak', from a common col. Over last two decades, Mr. Sahoo has organised and participated in over 10 Himalayan expeditions including Sri Kailash, Shivling, Kamet, Panch Chuli, Mamostong Kangri and Saser Kangri.

Dr. Raghunath Godbole, the active and enthusiastic Hon. Local Secretary of HC, Pune Section and a Gastrointestinal & Laparoscopic surgeon made an audio visual presentation titled Women on Everest, illustrating the triumphs and tragedies of lady mountaineers on Everest. Recently, his CD book - *Mt. Everest : Geographical & Historical Highlights* was released in Pune to support the forthcoming Giripremi's 'Pune Everest Expedition 2012'

Divyesh Muni described the Himalayan Club sponsored expedition to Lalung valley in Zanskar in August 2011. The five member team explored the valley and studied various peaks for climbing opportunities. The area holds promise for alpine attempts by small groups. Divyesh has been concentrating on East



Audience at the Seminar.

Karakoram and Ladakh regions for the past several years and has participated in and led several joint expeditions. His noted climbs include Kamet, Rangrik Rang, Manirang, Kagbhusand, Sujtilla West, Chong Kumdan I, Bhujang, Khang Shiling.

Cyrus Shroff, who has been climbing in the Himalaya since 1990, considers himself lucky to have made some first ascents. He is active on the climbing and trekking scene in the Sahyadris. On Sunday afternoon, he talked about his climb in Kalla Bank glacier. A small team comprising of two members and two Sherpas managed to have a wonderful climbing experience in this part of the Garhwal Himalaya in May - June 2011. They attempted peak 6504 m, at the head of the glacier. Later, they made a successful ascent on Lampak I (6326 m), via the west face and south ridge.

The 'young' trekking enthusiasts, led by Tanil Kilachand, (average age : 70 +) consisting of Jaisinh Mariwala, Deepak Bhimani and Chetan Desai enjoyed the pristine and stark beauty of Lidderwat valley. It is one the most beautiful treks in Kashmir with very picturesque locations for camp sites. The highlight of this trek is the majestic sight of Kolohoi Glacier and Lake Tarsar. Deepak Bhimani, Hon Treasurer, HC, a prominent industrialist, a seasoned photographer, nature lover and an amateur astronomer made this pretty-as-a-picture presentation.

It was finally time for a hi tech multimedia presentation – movie, stills, graphics, music, live talk all rolled into one by the very dynamic Ashutosh Mishra on his visit to the Girthi Ganga and surrounding mountains. This is an area sandwiched between the northern rim of Nanda Devi Sanctuary and the borders of Western Tibet; an area filled with natural beauty, history, geology and culture.

Ashutosh has been trekking for several years now and is an ardent reader and researcher of the Himalaya, constantly looking out for less frequented trails. He uses modern technology for purposes ranging from team formation to navigation. He forms his teams over Internet forums. Similarly, he uses Google earth data and pictures in his handheld GPS device to supplement navigation through rarely travelled terrains.

The Seminar closed with another spell binding talk by Peter Habeler on his life and climbs after Everest. He shared stories about his life in the beautiful Austrian Alps, which are Peter's homeland. Another successful and fulfilling annual event organised by the Himalayan Club ended with this soul stirring lecture, interspersed with brilliant pictures.

The response to the event was overwhelming – the auditorium overflowed with enthusiastic mountain lovers. HC volunteers had to unfortunately turn away several last minute attendees due to a lack of space. The experiment of selling duplicate books from the HC library was also hugely successful so please donate to the HC any mountain books that you have no use for.

(Nandini Purandare)

Banff Film Festival

On the hottest day of the month hundreds of Mumbai's adventurers thronged Patkar Hall on March 24, 2012 to thrill out with a cool selection from the Banff Mountain Film Festival, which sends films to audiences worldwide. The event was hosted by the Himalayan Club along with the Canadian High Commission. The inauguration was done by chief guest Mr. Daniel Bood, Consul (Political and Economic Affairs), Consulate General of Canada.

An introductory speech on activities of the club was made by Divyesh Muni and after that nine short films were screened.

Showcasing some of the world's most extreme exploits the films are also examples of cutting edge technology and imaginative film making. Both these trademarks were evident in the opening film - *All I Can-The Short Cut* -an 11- minute film where the sheer artistry of the skiers is matched by the film makers with some stunning time-lapse sequences. Another wonderfully zingy film was *Free Ride Mountain Biking - From the Inside Out*.



Daniel Bood inaugurating the Festival

The Freedom Chair, a truly inspirational 15-minute Canadian effort recounts the comeback of 31-year-old aspiring skier and coach Josh Dueck who broke his back and was paralysed in 2004 when he attempted a flip jump. The urge to ski though persists. Dueck cannot stand erect but finds freedom in his amazing chair or the sit-ski which is a moulded seat, mounted on a metal frame, fitted with a single alpine monoski and used in paralympic sports.

Dueck wins a silver in the shalom sit-ski event at the 2010 Winter Paralympics and also fulfils his dream of doing a flip, becoming the first in a sit-ski. The film captures marvellously his infectious spirit which suggests endless possibilities of the human spirit and technological advances that help accommodate them.

The highs and lows of adventure, is also the theme of *Cold*, an American film on dark winter climbing by a small team on Gasherbrum II, Pakistan. Cory Richard's camera functions like a diary recording increasingly plummeting temperatures in mind-numbing cold and howling winds. Sound recordings of heaving, racking coughs and howling winds give the film its raw touch as pain, fear, doubt and isolation are interwoven in the narrative. But it is not all bleak. Wry humour in the form of comments by the team mates indicates there is a crazy, inexplicable need for such exploits.

Reel Rock: Race for the Nose, a 22-minute American film looks at the impact of an increasingly competitive era. The Nose route on the El Capitan in the Yosemite National Park has attracted one-upmanship for over 50 years. Today it takes the form of speed climbing. Like sprinters climbers race up the 3,000 feet of vertical rock to

shave off mere seconds in the bid to set a record time. The film builds up drama in depicting this kind of competitiveness.

Extreme climbing of a very different nature in location and temperament is *Towers of Ennedi*, which recounts exploits of veteran climber Mark Synnott and young stars Alex Honnold and James Pearson who climb spires, towers, arches and other fantastically shaped rock formations in the hot deserts of Chad. The film looks at the urge to explore and to set foot where no man has gone before.

Two short films - *The Trail Collector* and *White Water Grand Prix* are superb examples of how just visuals and music can capture the exhilaration of speed biking and kayaking respectively.

The two concluding films are notable for presenting dynamics of relationships. *Hanuman Airlines*, imaginatively named, recounts breathtaking exploits of paraglider Sanubabu Sunuwar and Lakpa Tshering Sherpa, who after climbing Everest from the classic South Col route, take off from the north side and do a tandem paraglide to Namche bazaar. This was just one leg of an odyssey that included kayaking and voyaging to the sea.

The film captures the warmth, understated approach to climbing of Sherpas. Both men laugh and sing joyfully and even joke about the fact that one of them does not have the oxygen mask during the flight. It is also an indicator of the progression of Sherpas and Nepal's climbers from a supportive role to initiating and setting their own records.

The last film *Reel Rock: Origins_ Obe & Ashima* looks at the dynamics between nine-year-old Ashima Shiraishi and her coach Obe Carrion, a former bouldering star. Ashima is a clear winner on artificial walls but it is on a trip to Hueco Tanks - the mecca for bouldering - that new worlds open up. Ashima learns from Obe, but he too, once jaded from the world of competitive bouldering, now finds meaning in this new role. The



Audience at the Film Festival.

climax has a wonderful bit of role-reversal when the nine-year-old urges and coaxes her coach (older and several kilos heavier) to just go for it on a particular route.

You can watch amazing videos of Ashima's exploits on the rock on youtube.

(Freny Manekshaw)

Exploring Lapti Valley near Burma



Ka Karpo Razi-mountain of Burma seen from Lapti.

In October-November 2011, Dinesh, Nandini and Uttara Purandare, Atul Rawal and myself trekked to the eastern most part of India in the Lapti valley, Arunachal Pradesh. We reached within 5 km of the India-Burma border when heavy snowfall stopped us. The trail is located in the Anjaw District (on Lohit river) and is near the Rima-Kahao border with China. Hawaii is the new District Headquarters. If the sea and local dances grace the well known Hawaii in the Pacific, here at the

Hawaii, mountain scenery matches the beauty of the islands and dances of traditional people are no less attractive.

This area, along with the plateau above Walong, is the 'Burma Hump'. During the World War II several planes crashed on this plateau as old aircrafts could not gain height and malfunctioned at the altitude. Remains of many planes lie scattered but most have been taken away by search parties and locals.

Ours was a beautiful exploratory trek. We turned into the Lati river valley from Hawaii and bifurcated to its tributary, the Lapti from village Kamlat. The trek was strenuous and the route always climbed steeply- and descended steeply on the way back, on wet – slippery ground. But the forest and being on a remote trail to Burma was an inspiration. The autumn colours made camping grounds of Tafam and Kushok a paradise. The trail led us to the foot of Hoot pass which crosses into Burma and in few days would have lead us to Fort Hertz in Myanmar (Burma). F. Kingdon Ward has written about the Lohit valley and the book *The Icy Mountains of Burma*, cover these mountains on the border. We observed a few of these peaks on our way back. We came across two villages that seemed almost a generation behind - what we call 'progress' has not reached them as yet. No trekkers seem to have come here though we heard some rumours of a party trekking here the previous year. Burmese people cross the Hoot Pass (3570 m) into India to collect herbal plants every year. Overall communities across the borders interact peacefully even today.



Crossing on slippery log

On the way back I fell almost 150 feet, on loose wet gravel covered by shrubs/bushes. But that is a different episode.

These areas are wonderful and remote, with some of the finest virgin rain forest, leading to the Alpine forests and pines in the upper reaches. The high altitude lakes are an attraction. It offers a most exhilarating experience and not everyone has to fall!

(Harish Kapadia)

(Note, *HJ* Vol 68)

Himalayan Club Activities

Pune Section

Over the last six months, Pune section organized two indoor and three outdoor programmes.

On 21 August 2011, there were slide illustrated talks: Dr. Suhas Alekar spoke on Vasuki Tal trek in Gangotri region of Garhwal Himalaya and Dr. Raghunath Godbole spoke on Annapurna circuit and Gosaikund treks in Nepal Himalaya - both treks had 16 members from Pune section and were led by Dr. Raghunath Godbole.

On 10 and 11 December 2011, a two day trek – a traverse from Rajgad to Torna forts in Sahyadri was completed by 22 members. Highlights of this trek were experiencing a full moon and total lunar eclipse.

On 12 February 2012, 18 members participated in a day trek to twin forts of Chandan and Vandan near Satara.

On 01 April 2012, Mr Rajesh Patade organized Technical climbing training camp involving jumaring up and rappelling down natural rock faces at his outdoor Training Campsite near Kamshet. This was specially organized for 16 members who are participating in Everest base Camp and Island Peak Expedition in May 2012.



Dr Godbole introducing the speaker.

On 29 April, the 6th Anniversary of Pune section of The Himalayan Club was celebrated at The Indian Medical Association Hall, Tilak Road, Pune. Dr. Suhas Alekar, secretary of IMA Pune Trekking Club spoke on Sahyadri trekking activities and showed a film on waterfall rappelling. Dr. Raghunath Godbole, Hon. Local secretary of HC Pune spoke on 'Women on Everest', illustrating achievements of lady mountaineers on Mt. Everest.

Mr. Rajesh Gadgil, Hon. Editor of The *Himalayan Journal* was chief guest and spoke on Explorations and Climbs in Eastern Karakoram Range of Ladakh. He also flagged off 16 members of Everest Base Camp & Island Peak Expedition led by Dr. Raghunath Godbole in May 2012 in support of Giripremi Pune Everest Expedition.

(Dr. Raghunath Godbole)

Of Journeys and Travels (Kolkata Section)

November 2011

Presentation on trip to Changthang Highlands in Ladakh

In September 2011, Himalayan Club Kolkata members Surajit Biswas, Pratik Mukherjee and Priyadarshi Gupta, had undertaken a circuit of the Changthang Highlands in SE Ladakh, passing through the restricted Chushul area that is located adjacent to the Line of Control with China. This area had been witness to heavy fighting between the Indian and Chinese armies in 1962.

Mr. Surajit Biswas, one of the members of this journey, presented his experience to the Kolkata section membership in a club session on 19 November.

For the complete account, please read 'Echoes from the past' by Priyadarshi Gupta, The Himalayan Journal, Volume 67, 2011.

December 2011

Presentation on Expedition to Trisul-I (7120 m), 2011

Mr. Goutam Ghosh presented a passionate account of the expedition to Trisul-I (7120 m) organized by The Himalayan Club, Kolkata Section, to commemorate the 1951 ascent by Mr Gurdial Singh, the father of Indian Mountaineering at a Club Member's meeting.

The team was flagged off by our Vice President Mr. Vijay K. Puri on 07 August, 2011 and climbed up to Ronti Saddle (c. 5400 m) on 24th August. From there, however, unfavourable weather prevented them from circumnavigating the west ridge.

The members attempted an alternative route by climbing down to Ronti glacier and taking the north or north-east ridge to climb the peak, but even that plan had to be abandoned in face of incessant rain and foul weather.

Team Members – Goutam Ghosh (Leader), Goutam Saha (Dy. Leader), Rudra Prasad Halder, Subrata Chakraborty, Susanta Das, Padmanabha Chakraborty, Saikat Banerjee.



The team

January 2012

8th Sarat Chandra Das Memorial Lecture:

The 8th Sarat Chandra Das Memorial lecture, a yearly event of the Kolkata Section, was held on 21 January, 2012, at the Rotary Sadan. The Memorial lecture was delivered by Brig. M.M.



Felicitation of Saser Kangri IV Expedition Team

Masur, ex-principal of NIM, who spoke very eloquently on NIM Everest expedition organized in 2009. One of our local members Goutam Ghosh had also been on the expedition.

It was followed by an account of the Trishul I expedition undertaken by the Kolkata Section, with a slide show presentation by the expedition leader Mr. Goutam Ghosh. Snippets of video shots

from the Expedition were also shown by the team.

The concluding part of the programme showed a video of the successful climb to Saser Kangri IV by the members of the Kolkata Section, led by Mr. Pradeep Chandra Sahoo, with an introduction on the expedition by Debraj Dutta, the deputy leader. Videography from the summit on a clear morning gave a wonderful panorama of the rarely seen Karakoram giants.

March 2012

Susunia Rock climbing and Poster Display

Rock climbing practice was undertaken at the Susunia hills by the climbing membership in February 2012. As an off-shoot of the Rock Climbing camp, information on the ecology and ethnography of the hills and its neighbouring sites was presented as a Scientific Poster at a State Level Seminar organized by Surendranath College, Kolkata, on March 4 2012.

The title of the poster was 'Need for Proper Restoration and Conservation of Ecosystem and Biodiversity at Susunia Hill Top'. The poster was well received by the visiting environmentalists.

Quest for the Bon Manchi: The Wildman of Sikkim

Mr. Anindya Mukherjee, an avid mountaineer and club member, delivered a lecture on 30 March, 2012, on the intriguing account of his explorations in search of the enigma called 'Bon Manchi' in the remote villages of North Sikkim.

Starting with a historical overview on various attempts in search of the illusive Yeti, Mr Mukherjee mentioned how the stories he heard in Lepcha villages of a hairy, biped animal, whose anatomical description has similarities with the 'Pakistan Wildman' and the 'Orang Pendek' of Sumatra, intrigued him to go in search of 'Bon Manchi' in the Kishong, Tholung and Tosa valleys of Sikkim.

As a part of the very well-researched presentation, he showed us photographs of footsteps he had found in the valley, which do not match that of any Himalayan animal.

April 2012 - Earth Day

The Kolkata Section organized a ceremony, in collaboration with the Earth Day Network, commemorating Earth day on 21st April at Rotary Sadan.

The programme had insightful presentations on earth, environment, sustainability and human life from distinguished speakers.

Mrs. Karuna A. Singh, Country Director, Earth Day Network, India, and her team illustrated how the Earth Day Network platform is enabling people successfully undertake environment friendly initiatives and raise concerns en masse. It was followed by a passionate presentation by Dr. Dipankar Chakraborti, Director, School of Environmental Studies, Jadavpur University, a recount of the shocking state of fresh water scarcity across the world, its effects on us and ways to effectively manage our way out of this crisis.

We were next taken to the lofty heights of Hindukush Himalaya as Dr. Dipankar Dey, Chairman, South Asian Forum for Environment, elaborated his thoughts and activities undertaken over more than a decade to implement sustainable environmental practices in the mountains.

The concluding lecture was by Dr. Archana Banerjee, Head, Dept. Botany, Surendranath College, Kolkata, who depicted how forests and nature have remained an integral part of life of tribals of Chhotanagpur, present dangers being faced, and the road ahead. She interspersed her lectures with snippets of tribal songs in her very mellifluous voice and explained the meaning of the songs. She held the audience spellbound by the novelty of her presentation.

The entire three and a half hour session was a truly enriching and thought-provoking experience.

(Compiled by Soumendra Das Sarma)

Adventures On The Anvil

Upcoming activities in the Kolkata Section

- Pradeep Sahoo, who in recent times has led successful expeditions to Mamostong Kangri and Saser Kangri IV in the Eastern Karakoram, has now trained his sights into the remote NW Sikkim Himalaya. The HC Kolkata Section mountaineering team's objectives for 2012 is the famous Jongsong peak (7642m) that lies in the shadows of the mighty Kangchenjunga. Its summit forms a unique three way boundary between India, China (Tibet) and Nepal. They will follow the route of the first ascent team of 1930, when the International Expedition led by Gunther Dyhrenfurth, on the way back from their unsuccessful Kangchenjunga expedition had scaled it as a secondary objective.
- Anindya Mukherjee, is embarking on a novel adventure in Africa .With the sole company of a tent, a mosquito net, a stove and a cooking pot packed on a through bicycle he will traverse through Africa. The total distance to be covered by him is 4715 km in 75 days during 19 June 2012 - 09 September 2012. He will travel through Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana and Namibia. The starting point of his African safari will be Nanyuki, north of Nairobi on the equator; he will finish at Walvis Bay, south west of Windhoek, Tropic of Capricorn, Namibia.
- Rajeev Kumar Mondal , who in the recent past had undertaken a solo Trans Himalayan Trek from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh wherein he had trekked nearly 5500 km in about a year, is now planning to undertake a Trans Himalaya solo Motor-bike Expedition in May/June 2012 from Guwahati, Assam to Srinagar, J&K, covering over 15000 km in about a hundred days. He will travel through the North Eastern India states, Bhutan, Nepal, the Kumaon and Garhwal hills, Himachal Pradesh and finally J&K.

The Plateau

The high plateau in the north Sikkim is a fascinating place. It contains some of the most forbidding but beautiful peaks. The famed Gurudongmar lake is situated on the lower plateau. It is visited by many to enjoy the stunning view of the lake, Gurudongmar, Kangchenjau and other peaks.



Gurudongmar lake and peak.



Donkhya Ri (peak on left) and famous Donkhya la on extreme right.



Twin peaks of Pauhunri the highest on the Plateau.

To north of this lies the vast plateau which is near to the Chinese border. This was the place sometimes visited by early climbers like T. H. Braham, G. B. Gourley and few others – all members of the Club. Since last five decades the Plateau has not been much visited by trekkers and climbers. It contains the high peaks like Pauhunri, Donkhya Ri and Yulehkhong amongst many others. This is a windswept plateau and to trek and visit is a herculean task.

In May 2012 three members of the Himalayan Club (Harish Kapadia, Atul Rawal and Vijay Kothari) obtained the permission and visited the Plateau. First they trekked to the Borum la, a high and now forgotten pass between Lachung and Lachen valleys to acclimatise. They visited the Plateau twice to reach various features like Chholamo lake, Kerang, Dorji la and Gurudongmar lake. They recorded the various peaks not seen for several decades.

(Harish Kapadia)
(Article, *HJ* Vol. 68)

Coronation Medal

When the coronation of Queen of England was held, exactly 60 years ago, the news of the first ascent of Everest (1953) by the British team was announced. Members and Sherpas who participated in the expedition were awarded the prestigious 'Coronation Medal'. The list contained names of many Himalayan Club members and Sherpas who were recipients of the 'Tiger Badge' awarded by the club.

One such surviving Sherpa is Topgay Sherpa, now in his late eighties is living in Darjeeling. We were able to photograph the Coronation Medal which was awarded to him and is reproduced here as under.



Coronation Medal - Obverse and Reverse

An Appeal

Topgey Sherpa (Guruji) – The only surviving “Tiger” badge awardee of The Himalayan Club, spent most of his life as an instructor at the Mountaineering Schools in India. The Club instituted a fund to support him through his sunset years and we have been sending a small contribution for the past few years. Our Hon. Secretary, Nandini Purandare, visited him last month. He is very ill and needs better medical care, nutrition and dignity. He needs our support. This is an appeal to all to send a contribution to support the “Tiger” who has imparted us knowledge of the outdoor, of mountaineering and of life.

Please make your contribution online at www.himalayanclub.org or send your cheque in favour of The Himalayan Club at the office of the Club. All donations to the Club are eligible for deduction U/s 80G of the Income Tax Act.

We have sent Topgay Sherpa Rs. 15,000/- for immediate assistance and will send Rs. 5000/- every month. Harish Kapadia (Member of the Committee) also visited him along with Lhatoo Dorjee (Hon. Local Secretary, Darjeeling). Topgay is doing better now and has moved in to a spacious room in a new house. Many thanks to all those who contributed.

A Radio Interview on Siachen

The Himalayan Club has been involved in promoting the idea of the Siachen Peace Park which will bring relief to the war-torn glacier. Aamir Ali floated the idea, wrote about it and few other senior members also took it up in our seminars and Journals.

With the recent mood in Pakistan and India, again, peace has a chance. In this regard, our senior member Harish Kapadia gave an interview to the National Public Radio (USA) on the Siachen Glacier. It was broadcast all over the US. Jerome McDonnell, a famous radio personality interviewed him.

Following is the audio link to that interview: Double click on the link or cut and paste in your web browser to listen

<http://www.wbez.org/worldview/2012-04-16/segment/siachen-glacier-ground-war-22000-feet-98279>

Major Expeditions to the Indian Himalaya 2011

Compiled by Harish Kapadia

A total of 40 foreign expeditions attempted peaks in the Indian Himalaya. 21 of these expeditions were to easy and routine peaks. Of 57 Indian expeditions, about 1/3 were serious attempts that are covered here. Not unexpectedly, no Indian team, except ones from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, climbed in Uttarakhand as the local rules demand payment of fees from Indian teams as well.

The pride of place in the climbing world for 2011 would go to the First ascent of Saser Kangri II, led by Mark Richey of USA. It was bold line and done in fine style. Steven Swenson almost lost his life on this expedition.

After decades, peaks in Kishtwar area were climbed. It was closed for several years due to political reasons. Hopefully this is a new beginning for this area which has vast potential.

Many small expeditions made exploratory forays into new valleys and climbed small but challenging peaks in areas near Kang la, in Pangong range and in the Kullu. Exploratory treks to the Girthi Ganga valley in Uttarakhand were undertaken. In the farthest eastern corner of the range a team explored a route up to the border with Burma.

UTTARAKHAND

Arwa Spire (6193 m)

Team: Swiss

Leader (Members): Roger Schaeli (3)

The team attempted the steep Arwa Spire via the north face in May. All four members reached 5700 m. Due to bad weather they spent much time up to this level but could not proceed further.

Meru (6450 m)

Team: American

Leader (Members): Conrad Anker (2)

A three member American team climbed Meru 'Shark's Fin' in the Gangotri glacier area. They used almost 50 kg of hardware, 30 kg of food on the route. They spent 11 nights in bivouacs on the climb. The leader with James Chin and Renan Ozturk reached the summit on 02 October.

Shivling (6543 m)

Team: British-Australian

Leader (Members): Simon Yates (4)

The team attempted the traditional route on this sharp peak. They reached 6000 m but dangerous avalanches along the route forced them to give up the climb in early October.

Rajrambha (6539 m)

Team: Indo-Tibet Border Police, India

Leader (Members): Vishal Anand (18)

This peak stands near the Panch Chuli group of peaks. After establishing a base and advance base camp they made two more camps. Following the east ridge, 8 members reached the top on 13 June and 10 members on the 14th.

Bhartekhunta (6578 m)

Team: The Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader (Members): Ms Kavita Burathoki (6)

The team proceeded from the Gangotri glacier, Gaumukh to make a base camp at Khada Pathar on left bank of the glacier. The next two camps took them to the foot of the east face of Kirti Stambh.

Starting at midnight on 29 May, they climbed the east slopes of Bhartekhunta. The summit was reached in six hours. Leader, Soni Shah, Shanti Rai, Pooja Jangam, Ribanish Rympei reached the top with guides Chandra Bahadur and Pratham Singh Powar.

Nilkanth (6597 m)

Team: The Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader (Members): Ram Singh Salthia (7)

The peak was attempted from the west face, from the Khirao ganga. They reached 5320 m when heavy snowfall stopped their progress.

Changuch (6322 m)

Team: The Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader (Members): Dhruv Joshi (7)

The team followed the same route as Martin Moran's team during their first ascent. From the Pindari glacier they made Camp 1 at 5380 m, Camp 2 at 5755 m on col with Chhota Changuch. Five members reached summit on 11 June - the leader, Dr. Andan Vaidhya, K. W. Lynddoh, Bharat Bhushan, Takpa Norboo, Chetan Pandey and Harish Kumar. (Article, *HJ* 67)

Nanda Bhannar (6236 m)

Team: The Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader (Members): Dr Anil Gurtoo (3)

The team made a steady progress climbing from the Kafni glacier. Camp 2 was set up at 5800 m in the upper Kafni icefall. At this camp one member developed high altitude sickness and the team had to carry him down 200 m urgently. The climb was abandoned on 22 June due to the rescue.

Kharcha Kund (6632 m)

Team: The Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader (Members): Ashish Kr. Singh (6)

The team attempted the peak in May, rather early in the season. They attempted the north ridge which was too steep and snow bound. A huge avalanche engulfed their camp leading to loss of equipment. Bad weather continued and the climb was given up on 19 May.

Gangotri III (6577 m)

Team: The Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader (Members): Debabrata Mukherjee (3)

Despite some poor weather this team made several attempts to climb the summit. On 16 June the attempt was stopped at about 6370 m, due to bad weather.

Next day, 17 June 2011, the leader with Subid Ali and Himadri Nandi reached about 6560 m on the summit ridge. They stopped there, about 15 m short of the peak as there was a dangerous cornice which looked threatening and about to fall at any time.

Exploring Girthi Ganga

A team led by Ashutosh Mishra made pioneering explorations in the Girthi Ganga valley, Uttarakhand. Girthi is a tributary of Rishi Ganga (draining Nada Devi glaciers) and joins Alaknanda river. Girthi forms a narrow and formidable gorge in middle sections which makes it a hard trek. Moreover it is near the China border so getting permissions is very difficult.

In last few decades Girthi gorge was explored by the Scottish Himalayan expedition in 1950 (Bill Murray and three others) and the route was followed in 1986 by a team from Mumbai (Harish Kapadia). The gorge is fed by several streams and valleys from both sides, each leading to small valleys, containing unknown peaks.

Facing all the administrative and route difficulties the team proceeded slowly to reach head of the valley. It made the head of the valley and visited Unta Dhura pass leading to Milam. Then Jainti dhura pass and Khingar la (both near the border) we reached by them, possibly the first civilians to reach there after restrictions were enforced. This team enjoyed the characteristics and pleasures of the early explorers. (Article, *HJ* 67)

HIMACHAL PRADESH

'Chemma Peak' (6105 m)

Team: Japanese

Leader (Members): Hoshi Kazuo (4)

A team of seniors from Japan made the first ascent of this peak on 09 July 2011. The peak is situated at head of the Karcha nala, Lahaul and on border with Spiti. They established two camps from base and climbed the northeast face. The leader with Tanabe Motoyoshi, Ishui Httoshi, Shinbora Yutaka, Kuze Katsumi and LO D. Gajendra reached the summit,

Deo Tibba (6001 m)

Team: French

Leader: Jerome Guggisberg and L. Rayssac

A two-member team ascended the east face of this peak situated in near Manali, Himachal Pradesh. Konchok Thinless, Sakalzung Rigzin, Eagan Thakur and Virendra Singh reached the summit with the two French climbers on 29 April.

Peaks in Kang la Area

Team: British

Leader (Members): Jonathan Paul Moodie (6)

A strong British team climbed several peaks in valleys east of Kang la and northeast of Kangle in Reru valley.

- a. **'Lama Jimba Kangri' (6276 m)** - This was the highest peak climbed by them via its west face, traversing to east gully. All members namely the leader, Dr Kamal Masania, Dominique Southgate, Jonathan Bull, Virgil Scott, Robin Jones, Joe Prinold and Sgt. Anupam Mukherjee (LO) reached the summit on 06 September.
- b. **Peak 5405 m** via northwest face was climbed on 10t September by four members.
- c. **'Mose Kangri' (5930 m)** - Three members reached the summit on 11 September.
- d. **Peak 5985 m** was climbed via the north face by two members on 15 September.

Peaks 6160 m and 6181 m (Himachal Pradesh), near Parag la, Spiti

Team: Japanese

Leader (members): Kiyoshi Ishii (5)

- a. **Peak 6160 m** was climbed on 07 August via the southwest face. Yudai Satou with Jay Prakash Rai reached the summit.
- b. **Peak 6181 m** was climbed on 09 August by east face by nine members - the leader, Kiyoshi Ishii, Toshihiko Kawamura, Chikako Kimura, Akira Asakura and Yudai Satou (Japanese) and Jay Prakash Rai, Angfuri Lama, Prakash Chanel and Yaduram Sharma (LO) (Indians)

Deo Tibba (6001 m)

Team: Travellers' Guild, West Bengal, India

Leader (Members): Prosenjit Samanta (10)

This dome shaped peak in the Manali area of Kullu Himalaya stands at the head of Jagatsukh nala. The team made two camps and followed the route over the Norbu peak. Five members reached the summit on 09 June.

Devachan (6000 m)

Team: Himalaya's Beckon, Kolkata, India

Leader (Members): Arupam Das (10)

The peak stands on the Tos nala, Kullu Himalaya. This large team made three camps and crossed the col along Papsura. They followed the south ridge to the summit on 03 August. The summit was reached by Dipankar Sen, Sudip Roy and Arupam Das (leader).

Unnamed Peak 6015 m

Team: Mitrapara Youth Mountaineers & Culture Association, W.B., India

Leader (Members): Samir Sengupta (10)

This peak in Lahaul stands near to KR-II (6187 m) and KR-IV (6340 m) which were the original aim of this expedition. However the team could not attempt them. Pk 6015 m was climbed on 04 August by the leader, Sandip Roy and Nirmalaya Ghosh.

CB 12 (6248 m)

Team: Pimpri Chinchwad Mountaineering Association, Pune, India

Leader (Members): Arjun Pethkar (9)

This is the high peak in the Chandra Bhaga group of the Lahaul Himalaya. The area is popular due to easier access. They established an advanced base camp and camp 1. Starting from the last camp at 2 a.m. reached the summit at 6 a.m. Peak was climbed on 06 August by the leader and five members with two Sherpas.

KR-V (6258 m)

Team: Summitter, Kolkata, India

Leader (Members): Alope Kr Das (10)

The Koa Rong nala in Lahaul contains several peaks, including this high peak. The team made a camp on the west of the peak, at 6225 m. On 22 August 6 members and 2 Sherpas reached the summit in 40 minutes. They found a cairn on the summit.

Dawa Kangri (6140 m) and Lagbhorche (6000 m)

Team: Rifle Factory Sports Council, Kolkata, India

Leader (Members): Ashim Ghosh (10)

These peaks stand on the Loser nala, the border between Lahaul and Spiti. It does not receive many teams. After setting up two camps, Lagbhorche was climbed by 4 members with 2 high altitude supporters.

Later, on 27 August, Dawa Kangri was climbed by the leader with Tapas Dey, Radheshyam Halder, Paramesh Chatterjee and 2 high altitude supporters.

LADAKH - ZANSKAR

Mari (6585 m)

Team: Japanese

Leader (Members): Masato Oki (4)

This was a team of seniors from Japan. The leader was 77 years old and other members were between 60 to 69 years. They climbed this high peak situated in the Pangong Range of Ladakh area. They followed the south face to southeast ridge to make the ascent. The summit was reached by K. Ouchi, Norio Katayanagi, Isamu Kezuka and Dawa Sherpa. (Note, *HJ* 67)

Peaks in Ladakh-Kishtwar

Team: Swiss

Leader (Members): Stephan Schaffer (10)

This large team climbed in the Kishtwar area. It is a beautiful area with many peaks but has not been visited for several years due to political trouble. These peaks were climbed in smaller groups and alpine-style:

- a. **Red Apple peak (6070 m)** on 17 August by six members: Leader, Fred Duraz, Gregory Triollet, Jiri Minar, Laurence Marie-Gabrielle Di Florio and Oliver Messerli.
- b. **Gocook peak (6050 m)** Following the northwest ridge, the leader with Marc Roullier and Sebastian Colsonet reached the summit on 21 August
- c. **Unnamed Peak 6050 m** was climbed by the south face along the southeast ridge to the summit. Four persons reached top; Fred Duraz, Oliver Messerli, Passang Lama and Gokal Chontel (cook).

Cerro Kishtwar (6155 m) – White Sapphire (6040 m)

Team: Swiss-Austrian-USA

Leader (Members): Siegrist Stephan (3)

A small experienced team made two first ascents in the Kishtwar area. No bolts were used and both the summits were climbed in alpine-style.

- a. **Cerro Kishtwar. (6155 m)** - the first ascent of its south summit was made by northwest face and south ridge to the main summit. Then they followed the east ridge to the north summit (second ascent). They named this route as 'Yoniverse'. Summit was reached by the leader, David Lama, Denis Burdet and Robert Frost from 25 to 29 September. Route was 1200 m and they made 26 abseils on return.
- b. **'White Sapphire' (6040 m)** - The first ascent of this shapely peak near to Cerro Kishtwar was made by leader and Denis Burdet in a two-day climb on 4-5 October. They climbed the west face to north summit (5080 m) to the main south summit at 6040 m. It was 850 m climb and 11 rappels were made to return. They named the route as 'la viree des Contemporains'.

EAST KARAKORAM

Saser Kangri II (7518 m) and other peaks

Team: Indo-American (11)

Leaders: Mark Richey and Motup Goba

Steve Swenson, Mark Richey, and Freddie Wilkinson made the first ascent of Saser Kangri II, the second-highest unclimbed mountain in the world, 7518 m (24,665 ft). The team began their ascent from an advance base camp at 5800 m on the South Shukpa Kunchang glacier on 21 August and summited on 24 August, returning to ABC the next day. Their five-day, continuous-push ascent and descent of the mountain's southwest face, without pre-established camps or fixed ropes, is one of history's highest first ascents to be accomplished in alpine style.

Although the technical difficulties on the 1700 m face were overcome smoothly, the team confronted with an unexpected medical emergency when a sinus infection suffered by Swenson worsened into a serious respiratory problem just after reaching ABC. Steve's condition was serious as he coughed up large, glue-like clumps of phlegm that would block his airway periodically, preventing him from breathing. The team feared for his life. Using a SAT phone they initiated a rescue effort through Global Rescue, the American Alpine Club, the American Embassy in Delhi, and their agent. Mark Richey's wife Teresa had just arrived in Leh and spent time on the phone tirelessly urging the State Department, the Embassy, and everyone involved to cut through red tape and approve clearance for the Lama helicopters.

The Indian Air Force alone has helicopters capable of landing and taking off at high altitudes. Without this persistence they would have waited another day for the chopper and that may have proved fatal for Steve. Finally at around 4 p.m., as worsening weather threatened to cancel the rescue, clouds lifted and two Lama helicopters, flying low over the mountains, appeared above the glacier. Swenson was evacuated from ABC on 26 August to a hospital in Leh where he recovered quickly in a few days. Richey and Wilkinson remained on the glacier and cleared camp with the Sherpa staff, rejoining Swenson in Leh on 30 August.

Despite the scare, the team is ecstatic about the quality of their adventure.

Other First Ascents

Additionally, the team, which included Emilie Drinkwater, Kirstin Kramer, and Janet Bergman, made the first ascents of four other unclimbed 6000 m mountains in the region.

Tsok Kangri, 6585 m - first ascent, via the north face, 680 m on 31 July by Richey, Swenson, Wilkinson.

Saserling (6100 m) - first ascent, via the south face on 06 August, by Bergman and Wilkinson

Pumo Kangri (6250 m) - first ascent, via west face, 05 August by Drinkwater and Kremer.

Stegasaurus (6660 m) - first ascent, via the south glacier to south ridge on 09 August by Bergman, Drinkwater, Kremer, Richey, and Wilkinson.

Indian team members

Chewang Motup, Co-leader, Raj Kumar, liaison officer, Konchok Thinless, Sirdar Pemba Sherpa (aka King Kong), Dan Singh Harkotia, Jangla Tashi Phunchok, and Tshering Sherpa.

The expedition was awarded the prestigious 2012 Piolet d'Or as the best expedition of 2011.

Mark Richey
(from www.markrichey.com)
(Article, *HJ* 67)

Peak 6130 m (Arganglas valley)

Team: Indian-British

Leaders (members): Skalzang Rigzin (Indian) and Guillaume Francois (French)

A large expedition visited the remote Arganglas valley in the Nubra valley. However due to the weather in July, logistics and illness they could not make much headway and the attempt was given up early.

Peak 6017 m (near Mamostong Kangri)

Team: Indian-Spanish

Leaders (members): Kusang Sherpa (Indian) and Jonas Fernandez Cruces (Spanish)

The team had permission to attempt the high Mamostong Kangri (7516 m). After two camps they reached the Mamostong Col (5807 m) but the weather (in mid- August) was deemed not suitable to attempt the summit.

The team then climbed a nearby peak of 6017 m through a central couloir of the west face. They named the peak as 'Junai Kangri'.

Saser Kangri IV (7416 m)

Team: Indian, The Himalayan Club, Kolkata Section

Leader: P. C. Sahoo (10)

The team travelled to the Nubra valley in Ladakh and established a base camp on the South Phukpoche glacier. After the initial ferries to establish two camps bad weather stopped their progress to attempt Saser Kangri I.

On 06 August, six climbers started moving up from C3, traversing the icefield that led steeply to the col, while a team of Sherpas who had already opened C4, moved up the upper face of SK IV and fixed two coils of rope on it.

On 06 August, Phurba Sherpa reached the summit of SK IV, climbing solo. On 09 August, after setting up C4, Debraj Dutta and Ang Dorjay Sherpa, Meghlal Mahato and Mingma Thendu Sherpa summited Saser IV in two parties.

Members: Pradeep Sahoo, (leader), Debraj Dutta (deputy leader), Meghlal Mahato, Kakali Ghosh, Binita Soren, Sheelarani Mahato, Subrata Dey, Biplab Banerjee, Debabrata Ghosh, and Rajeev Kr Mondal.

(Note, HJ 67)

(I am grateful to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, Lindsay Griffin, Rajesh Gadgil and several individual contributors, as mentioned, for the information)

Rebuild Ladakh

A Comprehensive Interim Report

Project Team : Dr. Norboo, Motup Chewang, Divyesh Muni, Rajesh Gadgil

Background

On 5th August 2010, disaster struck. A massive cloud burst followed by flash floods devastated Ladakh. Hundreds of lives were lost, homes destroyed and farm lands rendered useless.

Members Divyesh Muni, Vineeta Muni, Don Goodman, Natala Goodman and Rajesh Gadgil were on an expedition in the Zaskar area of Ladakh at that time. On their return to Leh, they surveyed the extensive damage and discussed the possible role that the Club could play in the rebuilding / rehabilitation process with Motup Chewang, Hon. Local Secretary, Leh and Dr. Norboo, HC member who is involved with many social projects in Ladakh. They submitted observations and recommendations to the managing committee.

Based on their inputs, the Club decided to take up two projects:

- 1) To assist the rebuilding of five damaged houses in villages of Kaya and Skui in the Markha Valley.
- 2) To assist rebuilding of the Children's Hostel in Leh. School Children from the remote villages of Ladakh stay in this hostel during their school terms and they are provided with food, shelter, medical and educational facilities.

Inside the Hemis National Park, the scenic villages of Skui and Kaya form a part of the famed Markha Valley trek. This trail is one of the most frequently visited by trekkers and mountaineers. Situated at an elevation of roughly 3500 m, Kaya and Skui villages are adjacent to each other.

On the 5th night these two villages got badly hit by the cloudbursts. Many trekkers lost their lives in the resultant flash floods. Fortunately there was no report of loss of life in case of local villagers. However the loss of property was immense.

Life in the villages was severely affected. Many houses collapsed and much of the productive land has been buried under mud slides. Irrigation and drinking water channels were completely destroyed. In Kaya, most houses were damaged and few of them needed complete reconstruction. Some of them required major repairs. Similarly in Skui, houses were completely damaged and needed complete reconstruction. The families in these villages were in urgent need of temporary alternate source to stay to survive the winter months.

The hostel housed 63 students from remote regions of Ladakh. They come from economically weaker families and cannot afford their stay, fees, clothes, books etc. Therefore the hostel itself arranges for all their expenses through donations.

As a result of the sudden floods, the hostel building was damaged, with many of its walls collapsed, the entire toilet block washed away, 90% of the compound wall damaged and the entire compound was filled with several feet of mud and silt. The students had been sent back to their homes since it was not possible to house them in these conditions and their education had to be stopped till the hostel could take them in again.

Fund Raising efforts

Circulars and brochures were sent out to appeal for funds.

Website: An exclusive website www.rebuildladakh.org was connected with the main website of the Club www.himalayanclub.org and information of the project with an appeal for donation was put up.

Video Appeal: A short video was prepared by Divyesh Muni, Meenaz Lala with technical assistance from Labyrinth Cinematic Solutions Pvt. Ltd. The video was hosted on Youtube and was screened in several public gatherings and Himalayan Club programmes.

Photo-Exhibition: Vineeta Muni and Divyesh Muni organized an exhibition of their photographs of the Himalaya "Himalayan Mystique" at the NCPA from 11th March 2011 to 20th March 2011 that was sponsored by the Club. Proceeds of sale of photographs were donated by them to the Ladakh fund.

Australian Himalayan Foundation: Our member from Australia, Garry Weare organized for his Foundation to match the total donations made by the audience at a Himalayan Club programme in Mumbai. A donation of \$ 4000 was received from the Australian Himalayan Foundation.

Individual donors also contributed to the effort.

Rehabilitation Efforts

Immediate Assistance

Our Hon. Local Secretary, Ladakh, Motup Chewang and Yangdu, put the entire organizational strength of their Company, Rimo Expeditions to man the effort. They participated in several search and rescue missions in the region and also provided immediate relief to the villagers of Kaya and Skui. The villagers were provided alternative accommodation and food till the time they could fend for themselves and could move back into their own homes. Although the Club had sanctioned a monthly expenditure for providing alternative accommodation and food to the affected villagers, the same was not required to be disbursed since the host villagers refused to accept the compensation.

The Club had also received donation of warm clothes from several donors in Mumbai. The same were sent to Leh and distributed through Motup's office to the villagers.

Reconstruction of houses at Kaya and Skui

Five families were identified for assistance and designs were prepared for reconstruction of the houses. In the meantime, the villagers were given government grants for the reconstruction of their homes. However, the cost of wooden doors, frames, beams etc were not met by the government grant. Motup therefore arranged for supply of the wood frames, doors, windows etc. from a carpenter in Leh at a cost of Rs.38,500/- per house. The items were inspected by Motup before dispatch to the villages and subsequently the houses were also inspected after fitting of the same. Five houses were supported by the Club. A total of Rs. 1, 92,500/- was disbursed to the carpenter for supply of the frames.

The villagers further needed support for painting, plumbing, wiring etc. which would be an additional (approx) Rs. 25000/- per house which the Club has agreed to sanction. This work would be completed this summer (2012) and after inspection the amount will be paid to the suppliers.

The immediate needs of the villagers having been met, the Committee considered long term support measures for the villagers who had lost their source of livelihood due to the destruction of their land by the floods. It was no longer possible for the villagers to continue agriculture on the silted land.

The matter was discussed at length by the Committee and it was decided that the Club would provide assistance to the villagers to build an additional room to the homes which could be used by the villagers to provide home-stay facilities for trekkers which is a popular scheme in the valley due to the large influx of trekkers. Thus this scheme can give affected villagers a steady source of income during the trekking season. The decision of the Committee was conveyed by Motup to the villagers and a proposal is awaited from them for costs involved etc. A list of most deserving families will be sanctioned by the village panchayat. As per our latest communication with the villagers, they will be submitting this list soon and after our approval shall start the work this summer (2012) and according to them it will be completed before the season of 2013 when it can be inspected before disbursement.

Children's hostel, Leh

The hostel has been re-started and presently 56 children are availing of free accommodation, food, and other facilities at the hostel. The managing committee of the hostel had got the silt cleaned up from the hostel compound, repaired the toilet block and shifted the children to the adjoining building. The Club has reimbursed an amount of Rs. 2,68,000/- for the work done so far.

The hostel committee has also requested Club assistance to repair the two vehicles (One ambulance and one utility van for transportation of daily goods such as rations) that were damaged during the floods. An estimated cost of Rs.50,000/- has been sanctioned and shall be disbursed on production of the invoice and receipt for the repair expenses. The Club will continue re-imburement of expenditure incurred by the hostel on repairs to the building and campus as per the progress of the work and on production of supporting documents.

The hostel was also in process of constructing a new Bathroom / Toilet block. They have requested for our financial support for the same. This decision has been deferred until the complete proposal is received from the hostel. This construction is to be completed this summer (2012).

Fund disbursement mechanism

A bank account (no. is 31857208992) has been opened with State Bank of India, Leh for the project in the name of The Himalayan Club. Mr. Motup Chewang, Dr. Norboo, Mr. Deepak Bhimani and Ms. Nandini Purandare are the signatories to the account to be operated by any two jointly. Funds are transferred from the Club account in Mumbai to the Leh account as required. On inspection of the work done and receipt of supporting documents, the funds are disbursed from the Leh account.

Physical Inspection and supervision

Motup, and Dr. Norboo are overseeing the implementation of the project. Rajesh Gadgil visited the villages in August 2011 at his own expense and inspected the work done. Divyesh and he also visited the Children's hostel. They have discussed the project with the managing committee of the hostel and assured the continued support for the further work to be undertaken.

Rajesh Gadgil visit Report

Skui and Kaya Villages Reconstruction:

Rajesh visited Skui and Kaya villages on 31st August - 1st September 2011.

It had already been decided that no cash would be offered to the villagers directly but it would be paid to the suppliers. The villagers themselves would contribute by the way of free labour to reconstruct their own houses. These houses have also received funds to some extent (ranging between Rs 1,00,000 to 1,75,000) by State Government for the basic construction.

The basic construction work of the five houses was in various stages of completion. So far HC has supported each of them with woodwork (Doors, frames, windows, beams etc.) worth Rs. 38,500/- per house. This amount was sanctioned by the managing committee and was transferred to our Leh account for disbursement. Subsequently the amount was paid to the supplier.

However, they further needed support for painting, plumbing, wiring etc. which would be an additional Rs. 25000/- per house approximately, which has been sanctioned. This work will be completed this summer (2012) and after inspection the amount will be disbursed.

Regarding construction of the home stay rooms, this list of the most deserving families is still awaited.

Some of the photos of the undertaken work are attached to give an idea of progress of the project.

Existing Projects for which payments are due

As a summary, of the ongoing projects, money will have to be disbursed in the coming summer for the following:

PROJECT	STATUS
Painting, plumbing, wiring etc. in the village houses	(approx) Rs. 25000/- per house to be disbursed when work is done and bills are presented
Extra room for home stay facilities for five deserving houses	List of houses from Panchayat to be received along with estimate of building costs
Leh Hostel vehicle repair	Bills for an estimated cost of Rs.50,000/- to be received
Hostel building repairs	Proposal and Estimates to be received

Financial Statement

Fund Flow:

Total Donations received till date:	Rs.17,25,966/-
Interest on fund (as on 31/3/2011)	Rs. 1,23,908/-

Less:

Paid for wooden frames, doors, windows etc	Rs. 1,92,500/-
Reimbursed to Childrens Hostel for repairs etc.	Rs. 2,68,000/-
Bank charges for transfer of funds	Rs. 900/-

Balance	Rs.13.88.474/-
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Children's Hostel, Leh



Leh hostel compound wall before repairs.



Leh hostel compound wall after repairs.



Library building before repairs.



Library building after repairs.



Ambulance.



Hostel management with Divyesh Muni.



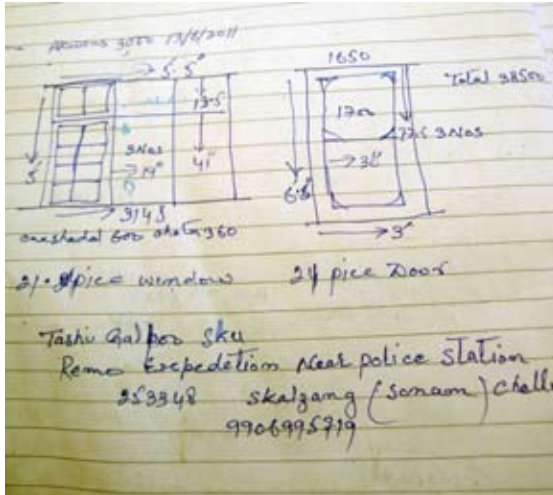
Hostel Kids.

Skui and Kaya

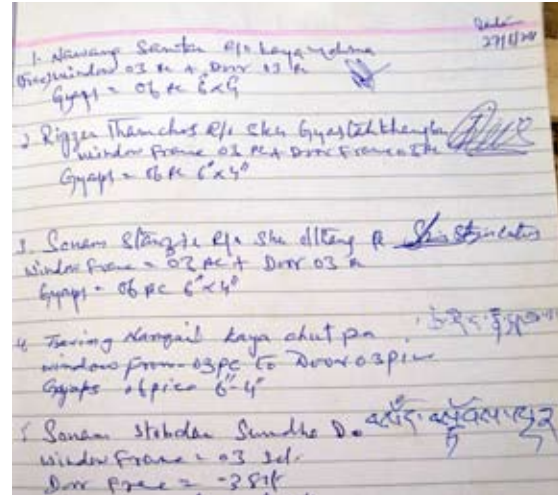
houses before repairs



Work undertaken at Leh for villages



Windows and doors design with estimate.



Distribution records with acknowledgements.



Carpenter in Leh.



Window frames.



Door frames.

Reconstruction work in the villages



House No. 1



House No. 2



House No. 3



House No. 4



House No. 5

ANAND RAM FUND

Background:

In 2007, the Club sponsored a joint Indian American Expedition that climbed Chong Kumdan I. The team was jointly led by Divyesh Muni and Don Goodman and consisted of 10 members. The expedition involved the crossing of Saser La in the East Karakoram range. Unfortunately, one of the Kumaoni support staff, Anand Ram, took ill. He was returning back for medical attention, but collapsed and passed away. He is survived by his wife, three children and mother.

The expedition members decided to take initiative in supporting the family of Anand Ram and accordingly requested the Club to start a fund.

The Club set up a fund in support of Anand Ram's family and Divyesh Muni, Don Goodman and Rajesh Gadgil were appointed executors of the fund.

Fund Raising Efforts:

All the members of the Expedition rallied in raising funds. A general appeal was also sent out to the members of the Club. Donations were received from around the world in support of Anand Ram's family.

The donations received were suitably invested in Fixed Deposits with Banks by the Club.

Beneficiaries:

Indra Devi (Age 30) - Wife - Works as a school assistant in Harkot nursery school on a salary of Rs. 1800/- per month.

Dhanuli Devi (Age 70), - mother, is in good health - takes care of household and looks after the kids.

Laxman Ram, the eldest son, is 11 years old now and he has entered sixth standard in the local school.

Anjali (8 years) studies in second standard in local school.

Saurabh Ram (5 years) accompanies their mother to her workplace every day.

The family stays in village Harkot, a few hours walk from Song on the Almora – Munsiari road in Kumaon.

Support plan:

- a) Monthly financial support - Started @ Rs. 2,000/- per month in 2008 and has increased to Rs. 3,500/-. It is proposed to increase this amount at regular intervals to offset inflation.

- b) Education - It is proposed to support the education of the three children. Accordingly, Laxman Ram, the eldest son has been admitted to a local boarding school 'Vivekanand Vidya Mandir' and his first year's fees and expenses of Rs. 40,000/- disbursed. As each of the children reaches the age for admission to higher education, we propose to support the education expenses.
- c) Ad-hoc expenses: Expenses that may arise for the family like, house repairs, medical expenses etc. will be supported as per availability of funds. Rs. 40,000/- has already been disbursed for house repairs and maintenance.
- d) To keep alive this support mechanism at least for 18 years since 2008 to ensure that the kids' education is completed and they are able to support the family on their own.

Disbursement Mechanism:

An account has been opened in the name of Indra Devi with State Bank of India, Kapkot branch, Uttranchal. All payments are transferred directly to the account.

Personal Visits and project monitoring:

Since 2007, Rajesh Gadgil has visited the village five times. His last visit was in May 2012. He has met the family, their relatives and the village elders and accompanied the family to the Bank, Local school etc. to co-ordinate and assist them in completing formalities, getting admissions etc. Don and Natalia Goodman also visited the family in 2009. Based on their personal visits and telephonic discussions with the family and village elders, Rajesh Gadgil, Don Goodman and Divyesh Muni monitor the fund and plan the course of action. All these visits are made by the volunteers at their own expense.

Rajesh Gadgil's Report on his recent visit:

Indra Devi's father, Mr. Arya (70 yrs and a retired Army soldier) is currently Pradhan (Village Council Head) of his village near Kapkot. Various issues were discussed with him, in particular, the dilapidated roof of the house for which we had sent money for repairs. Unfortunately, Indra Devi and the rest of Anand Ram's family share the bigger joint family house and co-owners are not allowing her to repair the roof as it belongs to all of them. They do not share good relations with each other. So with the help of the first installment of Rs. 40,000/- we sent, she made other small repairs in the house and created one more room by partitioning the bigger drawing room. She also used part of the amount to create a compound wall for the small piece of agricultural land she owns, where they grow vegetables for self consumption and barter.

We also discussed another important issue of the kids' education, in particular, the eldest son, Laxman Ram. As previously discussed, we agreed to enroll him in the boarding school at Kapkot.

We visited local branch of State Bank of India at Kapkot and verified that the second installment of Rs. 40,000/- had also been credited by that time. To inculcate a habit

of saving in the family, we arranged to open a recurring account of Rs. 300/- per month in the kid's name. I have requested Indra Devi to send us a copy of her account statement every six months to ensure timely credit of the amounts in both the accounts.

We visited the local boarding school 'Vivekanand Vidya Mandir' and arranged to admit Laxman Ram in the school and hostel for his continued education of sixth standard. The school and the boarding have all the necessary facilities. We paid Rs. 36,350/- towards the boarding cost for the year (Rs. 30,000/- as boarding expenses + Rs. 3,950 as deposits and other expenses + Rs. 1,000/- as deposit for personal expenses + educational fees Rs. 1400/- for first four months). The second installment of the educational fees is to be paid before end of July 2012 and the amount would be Rs. 1400/- and the third installment of the same amount is to be paid before end November. As our second installment of Rs. 40,000/- was already credited in the bank and which now was free for other expenses as the roof work is not to be done in near future, we withdrew Rs. 40,000/- from the account and deposited Rs. 36,350 /- with the school. Remaining cash amount of Rs. 3,650/- would be spent for Laxman Ram's new uniforms and books.

Recommendations for the future

1. Continue depositing a sum of Rs. 3500/- every month. Taking into consideration the increasing needs and inflation, we could gradually increase the amount every couple of years.
2. Monitor Indra Devi with reference to the reflection of these deposits in her account and her spending the money for only necessary expenses. We also need to monitor the timely credit in the recurring account.
3. Visit the family at least once a year for next five years till education of all kids is settled.
4. Ensure that educational expenses are paid on the stipulated dates.

Edited by

Rajesh Gadgil and Nandini Purandare

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Published for the Himalayan Club

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