



**THE HIMALAYAN CLUB**

*Climbing and Beyond...*

# E-LETTER

**Volume 29 • June 2014**

## CONTENTS

**The Himalayan Club elects President Emeritus and Editor Emeritus ..... 2**

### **Climbs & Explorations**

Kishtwar ..... 4

Nepal ..... 5

### **Events and News**

Death of Sherpas on Everest ..... 9

### **Club Activities**

The Himalayan Club Annual Seminar ..... 17

Report by Shyam Menon ..... 21

### **Obituries**

Aspi Moddie ..... 26

Ian McNaught-Davis ..... 27

Dick Isherwood ..... 27

## **The Himalayan Club Elects President Emeritus and Editor Emeritus**

At the Annual gathering of club members the following two members were awarded the highest honour of the Himalayan Club

### **President Emeritus - Dr. M. S. Gill**



Dr. M. S. Gill, Past President of the Himalayan Club, has long and abiding interest in the Himalaya. He was the Deputy commissioner for the state of Lahaul and Spiti (1961-62) and served a long stint in this remote area. He undertook the Basic Mountaineering course under Tensing at Darjeeling and has continued his keen interest in the range.

Dr. M.S. Gill attended St. George's College in Mussoorie, India. He completed his education from the Cambridge University in the UK with a Ph.D. in Development Studies, (*Honoris Causa*)

Dr. Gill was a member of the Indian Administrative Services and served as the Chief Election Commissioner of India from 1996 to 2001 His major achievement was introduction of Electronic Voting machines which curbed malpractices to a large extent. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan for his work in the year 2000. In April 2008, Dr. Gill was inducted as the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, for two terms and is now two time M.P. of the Rajya Sabha of the Indian Parliament.

He has written the book "*Himalayan Wonderland: Travels in Lahaul – Spiti*", (two editions) and published several professional papers in course of his duty.

He was the President of the Indiana Mountaineering Foundation for six years. Subsequently he was elected as the President of the Himalayan Club for six years. He undertook reforms in both these organisations and used his administrative capabilities to the maximum.

The Himalayan Club owes a great debt to him for his tireless working to raise funds which enabled the Club to buy an Office in Mumbai, first time that the Club has a home in its long history.

It is a fitting tribute by the Club to elect him as the President Emeritus.

## Editor Emeritus - Harish Kapadia



Harish Kapadia has made a unique contribution to our knowledge of the Himalaya: as editor of the *Himalayan Journal*, one of the most authoritative and comprehensive records of exploratory activity in the Himalaya; through his numerous books and as a leader and organiser of expeditions over the years.

He began climbing and trekking around Mumbai as a young man, in the ranges of the Western Ghats. His first visit to the Himalaya was almost 45 years ago. He is still trekking and climbing actively, to explore unknown areas and, in a number of cases, to open up climbing possibilities. He made explorations in the Himalaya, particularly the Siachen glacier and the East Karakoram, and

is now exploring the unknown reaches of Arunachal Pradesh. He has continued his passion despite two serious injuries and a major tragedy when he lost his young son, a soldier and a mountaineer, to terrorism in Kashmir.

Harish Kapadia was elected Honorary Member of the Alpine Clubs of London, America, Japan, Poland, and was awarded the IMF Gold Medal in 1993 and King Albert Gold Medal in Switzerland in 2005. It is most fitting, that in the year 2003, when the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest was celebrated, Harish Kapadia was honoured with the Royal "Patron's Medal", by the Royal Geographical Society 'for contributions to geographical discovery and mountaineering in the Himalaya'. He was the first Indian to receive this award after 125 years. In the same year. The President of India presented him 'The Tensing Norgay National Adventure Award', for Life Time Achievement, the highest adventure award of India. Both these awards he dedicated to his son Lt. Nawang Kapadia.

Harish was Hon. Editor of the *Himalayan Journal* for 37 years bringing the publication to high international standards. He produced the annual *Himalayan Club Newsletters* for 30 years (from 1978 to 2007) when it was converted to E Letter. He has written several books, including two specially for the Himalayan Club: namely. *Exploring the Hidden Himalaya* (with Soli Mehta)-three editions, and *A Passage to Himalaya* (editor).

It is fitting the Himalayan Club honours him as the : "Editor Emeritus of the Club".

## Climbs and Explorations

### Kishtwar (Kashmir)

**Kishtwar Kailash:** first ascent by Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden

In October 2013 British alpinists Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden made the first ascent of Kishtwar Kailash (6,451m), Indian Himalaya.

According to extensive research and far as could be established, Kishtwar Kailash had been attempted only once previously, namely in 1989 by a Scottish expedition, while ensuing acute political troubles resulted in the area being closed to mountaineers from 1994 until last year. The fact that Kishtwar Kailash was a plum objective can be gleaned from the following detail: Fowler first spotted Kishtwar Kailash back in 1993 during his successful expedition to Cerro Kishtwar and a photo he took from the summit revealed a striking peak that, in the right circumstances, would be perfect for exploratory mountaineering. This explains why, at the first opportunity last year, Fowler applied for a permit to attempt the peak.

Supported by Mike Morrison and Rob Smith, Fowler and Ramsden climbed alpine style from 4 - 10 October up a 1500m line along the SW Face, described by Fowler as “a great route, with spectacular situations and varied climbing up to Scottish VI.”

Fowler explained: “There is no easy way up Kishtwar Kailash and Paul and I are extremely happy that we managed to make the first ascent via the dramatic south west face. After acclimatising, we left base camp on 4th October and, following an open bivouac at 6,200m, got to the summit during the morning of 9th. The outcome was in particular doubt on day four, which involved several very hard mixed pitches up a couloir cleaving monolithic walls. The descent was almost entirely by abseil down the line of ascent. We managed to descend a fair way on the summit day and completed the return to base camp by a very long day on 10th.”

Mick Fowler and Paul Ramsden form a formidable, long standing partnership with countless successful expeditions to the Greater Ranges to their name such as the Central Couloir of Mt Siguniang (China, 2002), Manamcho (Tibet, 2007), the North Face of Sulamar (China, 2010) and Mt. Shiva (India, 2012). Both Siguniang and Shiva climbs were awarded the prestigious Piolet d’or.

## Nepal Himalaya

### South Face Direct on Annapurna

Ueli Steck made the first solo ascent, of the South Face Direct on Annapurna. He and Don Bowie had at first planned to make the ascent together, but Bowie felt that the unroped climbing that would be needed for their intended fast ascent was technically too demanding.

Bowie and Steck had previously visited Shishpangma together in 2011, which led to Steck's ultra-fast solo ascent of the mountain. Eighteen days later both of them reached the summit of Cho Oyu.

On this year's expedition the two climbers were accompanied at the base of Annapurna's south face by film-maker Jonah Matthewson, photographers Dan and Janine Patitucci and Nepali climber Tenji. Tenji had climbed Everest with Ueli Steck in 2012.

Steck's route on Annapurna takes a depression between the pillar followed by the original 1970 British route up the South Face to the main summit (8091m), and the pillar to the right taken by the 1981 Japanese route, which finishes on the slightly lower middle summit (8061m). The line is vulnerable to spindrift and avalanches in bad weather, so good timing and a fast ascent are essential.

The team established an advanced base camp near the foot of wall, at around 5000m, at the end of September. After a few days acclimatising, Ueli Steck and Dan Bowie climbed up the bottom part of the wall and pitched a tent (Camp I) on a ledge at about 6100m. They spent two nights there to acclimatise. While there, they noticed considerable rockfall on the face above (the campsite itself was relatively sheltered from rockfall).

"I felt that the extremely mild temperatures would have to drop significantly for the face to solidify into safer condition." - Don Bowie



Annapurna South Face, showing Ueli Steck's route (solid line), 1970 British route to its left, 1981 Japanese route to its right

On the second morning they took the tent down, left a cache of equipment, and went down to base camp to await favourable conditions.

Don Bowie was by this time beginning to feel that the long section from Camp I to the headwall was steeper and more sustained than he was willing to tackle unroped, which their strategy for the climb would require. But he agreed to have "one more look" before reaching a decision.

On 6 October Ueli Steck and Dan Bowie moved back up to advanced base camp, along with Dan and Janine Patitucci and Jonah Matthewson. On 8 Oct Steck and Bowie set off towards the face, still accompanied by Dan Patitucci and Jonah Matthewson. Bowie made his decision - he was not willing to climb unroped above Camp I and would not attempt the face. So Steck continued alone.

He climbed past the gear cache at Camp I (collecting the tent and stove) and reached the base of the headwall late in the afternoon. By this time the wind had sprung up and spindrift was streaming over the face, visible to the team on the glacier below as well as to Steck.

“I knew that if the winds remained as they were near the summit- perhaps 70-80 km/h or more- there was no way he would be able to reach the top.” - Dan Bowie

Steck found a crevasse, pitched his tent in its shelter, and waited to see whether it would be possible to continue. The sun went down, and the wind stopped - a phenomenon he had noticed from advanced base camp the previous evening. So he concluded that the way to reach the summit was at night. There was a gleaming line of ice and snow runnels up the headwall - probably an exceptional state of affairs - making an ascent of this section in the dark a feasible proposition.

Before night fell, Steck took a photo of the headwall to guide him in the darkness. Spindrift caught him while he was doing this. Grabbing his ice tools, he dropped the camera and one of his down gloves.

About an hour after reaching the bivouac, he set off up the headwall, climbing in undergloves and swapping his one down glove from hand to hand, as required.

“During short passages the ice/firn was quite thin and a couple of times I had to climb in the rock. The steepness was surprisingly not really vertical, only a couple of uplifts were vertical.” - Ueli Steck

Above the headwall, it was just “a beat against the wind.”

“When I reached the summit ridge I could hardly believe it. It was night, the sky full of stars and the ridge going down in front of me. With my altimeter I checked everything very carefully, I followed the ridge and I knew: I was on highest point.” - Ueli Steck

After a few minutes on the summit he set off back down the line he had climbed up, down-climbing with just a few abseils on the headwall. He reached the glacier 28 hours after setting off up the face.

The South Face Direct was first attempted in 1992 by Pierre Béghin and Christophe Lafaille. Having overcome the main difficulties of the route, they were forced by bad weather to descend from the top of the headwall. Béghin fell to his death, taking the rope and much of the climbing gear with him, when an abseil anchor pulled. Lafaille completed an epic descent, suffering a broken arm due to rockfall.

A South Korean team attempted the route in 2010, but turned back at around 6100m due to bad weather. Koreans Park Young-seok, Shin Dong-min and Kang Ki-seok

made another attempt in 2011, but bad weather and rockfall turned them back at about 6400m. The three climbers disappeared during the descent.

Ueli Steck made a solo attempt on the route in 2007, but abandoned his expedition after being being struck by a rock on the lower part of the face. He and Simon Anthamatten made another attempt in 2008, but were turned back by bad weather at about 5900m. Meanwhile, Basque climber Inaki Ochoa de Olza fell ill - apparently with brain\_damage and pulmonary oedema - high on the east ridge of Annapurna. Steck attempted a rescue and reached the Basque camp at 7400m, but in the end Ochoa died. Steck and Anthamatten made no further attempt on the south face that season.

Ueli Steck's smooth ascent this year, besides being an astounding achievement, looks like a hint that for this kind or route, a radical approach may be the right one.

Earlier this year Ueli Steck, along with Simone Moro and Jonathan Griffith, was the the victim of an attack by a large group of Sherpas at a campsite in the Western Cwm of Everest.

### **Kusum Kanguru - southwest face – 2013**

In October 2013 Alexander Ruchkin and Slava Ivanov made the first ascent of the southwest face of Kusum Kanguru, in the Khumbu area of the Nepal Himalaya. They



Kusum Kanguru (6367m)

climbed the route alpine style in 9 days, hampered by very poor weather. At the summit they ran out of food and fuel. The descent took a further 4 days - three of them with nothing to drink - and resulted in the pair becoming lost amongst forest and gorges. They were eventually evacuated by helicopter.

Their ascent route, which they named "Falling into the void", involved a serious climb.

### **Teng Kang Poche - North-East ridge – 2013**

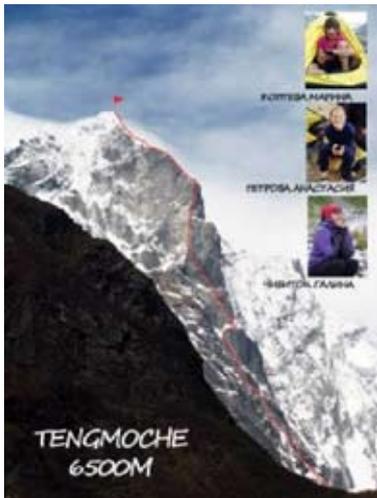


Teng Kang Poche (6500m)  
First ascent of North-East ridge

Marina Kopteva, Galina Chibitok and Anastasia Petrova have made the first ascent of the northeast ridge of Teng Kang Poche (Tengmoche) in the Khumbu area of the Nepal Himalaya.

The new line was called "The Battle for Love"

In a text message from Nepal, the climbers said: "52 hrs from the end of fixed ropes to the top, plus the descent. Without rest and food. 17 days from all 19 on the wall were in extremely bad weather and 10 of them - awful snowfalls! It was the most difficult and scary route ever for us!"



Tengkangpoche, intended line up northeast ridge

Teng Kang Poche (6500m) stands above Thame village. Climbers have previously focussed on alpine-style ascents of the mountain's faces, involving difficult mixed climbing. This year's ascent is the first to take up the obvious challenge of the rocky north-east ridge.

The photo below shows the intended line of ascent. Further details of the climb, including the line actually taken, are awaited.

Marina Kopteva (from Ukraine) and Galina Chibitok (from Russia), climbing with Anna Yasinskaya (from Ukraine) made the first ascent of the route Parallelniy Mir on Great Trango in 2011.

### Kang Nachugo East,

On 21 and 22 October 2013 Santiago Padros and Domen Kastelic made the first ascent of "Monsoon" (1500m /75°) up the SW Face of Kang Nachugo East, Rolwaling valley, Himalaya, Nepal.

Five years after a first attempt by American alpinists Joe Puryear and David Gottlieb, last month Spanish alpinist Santiago Padros and Slovenia's Domen Kastelic carried out the first ascent of the hitherto unclimbed SW Face of Kang Nachugo in Nepal's remote *Rolwaling valley*.

In autumn 2008 Joe Puryear and David Gottlieb travelled to the Rolwaling valley and made the *first ascent of Kang Nachugo (6735m) by climbing the West Ridge alpine style over 5 days*. Prior to this success the two had attempted to forge a *direct line* up the SW Face but were forced to bail from 6400m due to bad weather. In the ensuing years the formidable Puryear – Gottlieb climbing partnership established numerous other fantastic routes such as up the South Face of *Jobo Rinjang* in 2009 and up the



Kang Nachugo East 6735m, Rolwaling Valley, Himalaya, Nepal 1500m / 75°

Santiago Padros, Domen Kastelic 21-22 October 2013

East Face of *Takargo* in 2010. Unfortunately though tragedy struck in October that same year: *Joe Puryear fell to his death on Labuche Kang* while attempting to establish a *new line* together with Gottlieb.

Padros and Kastelic reached Nepal at the end of September for "an exploratory expedition in the *semi-unknown Rolwaling valley*" but the unusually long *monsoon* forced them to choose an objective right at the very *last minute*. With just 5 days at their disposal before returning to Europe, they headed to Kang Nachugo.

On 20 October the two alpinists reached Advanced Base Camp at 5200m and the next day they set off early, climbing non-stop until 18:30 and bivying at 6400m. After a cold, sleepless night they continued on and reached Kang Nachugo East summit, at 6640m, at midday on 22 October. The main summit was in view but the exposed ridge that leads from the East Summit was in dangerous condition, so the two wisely decided to descend; 7 hours and 20 abseils later they returned to ABC, while the village Na was reached the next day. After the 2008 climb by Puryear and Gottlieb, the recent ascent by Padros and Kastelic is only the second route up this mountain.

## Events and News

### **The worst tragedy on Everest - Death of 16 Sherpas on a single day**

On 18<sup>th</sup> April 2014, 16 brave Sherpas died on Everest in a single avalanche. They were carrying heavy loads to establish camps and prepare the route for western climbers who were to follow when the mountain was in a better condition to climb. The confirmed dead are Dorjee Sherpa, Ang Chiring Sherpa, Mingma Sherpa, Ningma Sherpa, Ang Kaji Sherpa, Pasang Karma Sherpa, Lakpa Tenzing Sherpa, Chiring Wankchu Sherpa, Wangele Sherpa, Khem Dorjee Sherpa, Furwa Temba Sherpa, and Aasamn Tamang Sherpa. Some of the bodies have yet to be identified.

Sherpas are traditionally the backbone of any expedition to Everest. The recent surge of commercial expeditions has put a heavy burden on them, though financially it is rewarding. They prepare the route, take all the risks, do the hard work and when the route is ready, high paying clients start from the base camp to be guided to the summit of Everest. Unlike in earlier times, most climbers play no active role in preparing the route, which is the most dangerous part of the climb.

The Himalayan Club firstly offers its deepest condolences to the families of these Sherpas, their community and strength to the Sherpas who are expecting fair compensations and finally asks questions about the event. President Emeritus of the Himalayan Club, Dr. M. S. Gill, has written an open letter to members of the international mountain community and the Government of Nepal, which is attached.

**This is a letter by President Emeritus Dr. Manohar Singh Gill who has sent an open letter to members of the Himalayan Club and International Climbing community.**

I have read with sorrow and concern, of the tragic death of 16 sherpas on Everest two days ago. Thirteen bodies have been recovered, and three persons are missing, obviously dead. News papers report that as many as 60 Sherpas had been sent out, so early in the season to open the route to the Western Cwm and further to Everest. No expert tour guide, or any climber from the Western World, who all come on this commercial enterprise every year was with the Sherpas. The deaths therefore, are all of these poor hill men, who go on these commercial enterprise every year to earn some money.

This incident raises disturbing questions. The yearly Everest climb by this route, with oxygen, tour guides and every possible assistance, has little of the 19th Century sports endeavour left in it. Those who climb with help of all these aides, the assistance of tour guides and Sherpas, even when some of them are neither trained nor fit, do so for their moment of glory, simply because they can afford the money. Therefore, we have today very large numbers, going up in crowded queues, sometime leading to fatalities, and always environmental damage.

Questions need to be answered on this tragedy. Was it correct so early in the season to push such a large number of Sherpas into the icefall with such heavy loads? Why did the tour guides and the experts stay back? Is the danger element to be faced by “paid mercenaries”, and the glory such as it is, absorbed by those who pay for the adventure? Were the Sherpas insured, if so, for how much? Is the Insurance cover for the Sherpas, the same as for the company owners / tour guides / western rich climbers? If not, Why not? All these and many more questions need to be gone into by an independent inquiry committee, suitable equipped, to find the correct answers. I call upon the Nepal Prime Minister and his Government to hold such an inquiry, immediately, and let the world know, what the answers are.

Dr. Manohar Singh Gill, M.P. (Rajya Sabha, India)  
Past President of the Himalayan Club, Mumbai  
and of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, New Delhi.  
Former Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, India  
Former Chief Election Commission of India

### Death on the Mountain

Page 15 of the Times of India dated April 20, 2014 has a picture on the centre of the page. The caption reads “A *Sherpa* is comforted by a *relative* as she mourns the death of her *father*, one of the *13 Nepalese guides* killed in the avalanche on Mount Everest on Friday” (italics are mine, I will say why a little later). I think to myself, ‘*is this the best a reporter with a photographer can do?*’ I scan the internet over two days, my mailbox fills up with news from the mountain, of this horrible accident – one that has buried three Sherpas forever and of 13 bodies that have been recovered and brought down for elaborate funeral rites. There are descriptions of the rescue, photographs of the rituals, heart rending pictures of family members...

Celebrity Himalayan experts are introspecting, analysing, bringing in their teams to collate statistics on Sherpa deaths on Everest, figuring out ways to compensate, to make the mountain safer, to stand on high moral ground about Everest tourism and so on.

Don't get me wrong – they are justified. They mean well. But the essential attitude of almost every climber / well wisher is paternalistic.

Flashback to 1922 when seven Sherpas died on an Everest expedition led by Mallory - a shock wave ran through the veins of the climbing community of those years who

felt as responsible for their men as the climbing community feels today. Of course the sherpas of today are savvier; they demand their price for doing what they do – which is dancing with death.

However, there has always been a sense of wonder, a sense of guilt that some climbers have about the time that sherpas spend in the danger zone to make the area safe and quick to move through for the clients. In the meantime technology has assured western climbers that they are much safer on the mountain themselves – they shoot themselves with different steroids, acclimatize in artificial conditions

Jon Krakauer says in his blogpost

‘It’s becoming increasingly common for Western guides and members to acclimatize in hypobaric chambers before they arrive in Nepal, or on other, less hazardous Himalayan peaks in advance of their summit assaults, greatly reducing the number of times they must expose themselves to the perils of the Icefall. Some members now make only a single round trip through it, while each of the Sherpas supporting them must still pass through that hazardous terrain between two and three dozen times. Most Western climbers feel more than a little guilty about this, but I know of none who have ever offered to take an extra lap through the Icefall with a heavy load in order to reduce a sherpa’s exposure.’

My argument is not to demand better technology for survival of these men. I am sure there will be ways. I have something much more simple and human to suggest.

### **Recognition of Identity**

As soon as the climbing community starts to recognize these men as individual human beings, not as a collective, the whole approach to the value of their lives may change. Do you know that there is *absolutely no record of the names of all the Sherpas killed in 1922?*

Although our attitudes are not as bad today, it will take a marathon effort for any one of you to find the 16 names of those who have perished on Everest in 2014. Some newspapers have featured one or two of the Sherpas, some have named some who died...

If we immediately stop referring to Dorjee Sherpa, Ang Chiring Sherpa, Mingma Sherpa, Ningma Sherpa, Ang Kaji Sherpa, Pasang Karma Sherpa, Lakpa Tenzing Sherpa, Chiring Wangchu Sherpa, Wangele Sherpa, Khem Dorjee Sherpa, Phurba Temba Sherpa, and Tamang Sherpa among others as ‘13 brave Sherpas died in the most horrible tragedy on Everest’ in a similar tone as ‘12 sturdy mules were washed away by the river in a flash flood’, we might, just might be able to see them as individual humans who deserve separate obituaries by friends, families, fellow climbers in every climbing journal in the world. A name leads to a picture, a picture leads to an association, an association makes another person real and only when one sees that real person for his laughter and his foibles and his weaknesses and strengths that one can grow to feel the pain of his wife or father or sister or mother or friend.

The caption in TOI should have read “*Ang Doma is comforted by Pasang, her brother, as she mourns the death of her father Lakpa Tenzing Sherpa, one of the 13 Nepalese guides killed in the avalanche on Mount Everest on Friday (names are imaginary – please forgive me). The other Sherpas who perished in Friday’s accident were .....*”

We really need to feel the pain of loss if we want to bring about a change in the approach to this mountain.

**(Nandini Purandare & Deepa Balsavar, The Sherpa Project)**

(Nandini Purandare is Hon. Secretary of the Himalayan Club)

### Death and anger on Everest

For many years, the most lucrative commercial guiding operation on Everest has been a company called Himalayan Experience, or Himex, which is owned by a New Zealand mountaineer named Russell Brice. In the spring of 2012, more than a month into the climbing season, he became increasingly worried about a bulge of glacial ice three hundred yards wide that was frozen tenuously to Everest’s West Shoulder, hanging like a massive sword of Damocles directly over the main route up the Nepal side of the mountain. Brice’s clients (“members,” in the parlance of Himalayan mountaineering), Western guides, and Sherpas repeatedly had to climb beneath the threatening ice bulge as they moved up and down the mountain to acclimatize and establish a series of higher camps necessary for their summit assault. One day, Brice timed how long it took his head guide, Adrian Ballinger (“who is incredibly fast,” he wrote in the blog post excerpted below), to climb through the most hazardous terrain:

It took him 22 min from the beginning to the end of the danger zone. For the Sherpas carrying a heavy load it took 30 min and most of our members took between 45 min and one hour to walk underneath this dangerous cliff. In my opinion, this is far too long to be exposed to such a danger and when I see around 50 people moving underneath the cliff at one time, it scares me.

Adding to Brice’s concern, some of his most experienced Sherpas, ordinarily exceedingly stoical men, approached him to say that the conditions on the mountain made them fear for their lives. One of them actually broke down in tears as he confessed this. So on May 7, 2012, Brice made an announcement that shocked most of the thousand people camped at the base of Everest: he was pulling all his guides, members, and Sherpas off the mountain, packing up their tents and equipment, and heading home. He was widely criticized for this decision in 2012, and not just by clients who were forced to abandon their dreams of climbing the world’s highest mountain without receiving a refund for the forty-three thousand euros they had paid him in advance. Many of the other expedition leaders also thought Brice was wildly overreacting. The reputation of Himex took a major hit.

After what happened last Friday, though, it’s hard to argue with Brice’s call. On April 18th, shortly before 7 A.M. local time, an overhanging wedge of ice the size of a Beverly Hills mansion broke loose from the same ice bulge that had frightened Brice

into leaving Everest in 2012. As it crashed onto the slope below, the ice shattered into truck-size chunks and hurtled toward some fifty climbers laboring slowly upward through the Khumbu Icefall, a jumbled maze of unstable ice towers that looms above the 17,600-foot base camp. The climbers in the line of fire were at approximately nineteen thousand feet when the avalanche struck. Of the twenty-five men hit by the falling ice, sixteen were killed, all of them Nepalis working for guided climbing teams. Three of the bodies were buried beneath the frozen debris and may never be found.

Although many news reports indicated that all the victims were Sherpas, the legendary mountain people who comprise just half of one per cent of the Nepali population, three of the sixteen were members of other, much larger ethnic groups: one was Gurung, one was Tamang, and one was a member of the Hindu Chhetri caste. All, however, were employed as high-altitude climbing Sherpas—an élite profession that deservedly commands respect and admiration from mountaineers around the world.

It was the worst climbing accident in the history of Everest, twice as deadly as the infamous storm in May, 1996, that killed eight people, the subject of my book “Into Thin Air” (four of my teammates accounted for half of that grim tally). But dying on Everest has been an occupational hazard for Sherpas ever since a team led by George Leigh Mallory to attempt the Tibetan side of the peak, in 1922, became the first mountaineers to ascend higher than the lower flanks of the mountain. In the final days of that expedition, seven Sherpas from Darjeeling, India, were swept to their deaths in an avalanche. Sad to say, the job hasn’t gotten any safer for Sherpas with the passage of time. According to a piece by Jonah Ogles posted on [outsideonline.com](http://outsideonline.com), the death rate for climbing Sherpas on Everest from 2004 until now was twelve times higher than the death rate for U.S. military personnel deployed in Iraq from 2003-07.

There is no denying that climbing Everest is a preposterously dangerous undertaking for the members who provide the Sherpas’ income. But running counter to the disturbing trend among Sherpas, climbing Everest has actually grown significantly safer for Western guides and members in recent years, according to the available data. This can be attributed to a number of factors. Western climbers now use bottled oxygen much more liberally than they did in the past; many Western climbers now prophylactically dose themselves with dexamethasone, a powerful steroid, when they ascend above twenty-two thousand feet, which has proven to be an effective strategy for minimizing the risk of contracting high-altitude cerebral edema (HACE) and high-altitude pulmonary oedema (HAPE), potentially fatal ailments that are common on Everest; and weather forecasts are much more accurate than they were eighteen or twenty years ago.

During the seventy-six years from the first attempt on Everest, in 1921, through 1996, when I was guided up Everest, a hundred and forty-four people died and the summit was reached six hundred and thirty times, a ratio of one death for every four successful ascents. Notably, over the eighteen years that have passed since 1996, a hundred and four people have died and the summit has been reached six thousand

two hundred and forty-one times—one death for every sixty ascents. Furthermore, non-Sherpas accounted for only seventy-one of these deaths, which equates to just one death for every eighty-eight ascents.

The reason the risk remains so much greater for Sherpas can be traced to several things. Sherpas aren't provided with nearly as much bottled oxygen, because it is so expensive to buy and to stock on the upper mountain, and they tend to be much better acclimatized than Westerners. Sherpas are almost never given dexamethasone prophylactically, because they don't have personal physicians in their villages who will prescribe the drug on request. And perhaps most significant, Sherpas do all the heavy lifting on Everest, literally and figuratively. The mostly foreign-owned guiding companies assign the most dangerous and physically demanding jobs to their Sherpa staff, thereby mitigating the risk to their Western guides and members, whose backpacks seldom hold much more than a water bottle, a camera, an extra jacket, and lunch. The work Sherpas are paid to do—carrying loads, installing the aluminum ladders, stringing and anchoring thousands of feet of rope—requires them to spend vastly more time on the most dangerous parts of the mountain, particularly in the Khumbu Icefall—the shattered, creaking, ever-shifting expanse of glacier that extends from just above base camp, at seventeen thousand six hundred feet, to the nineteen-thousand-five-hundred-foot elevation. The fact that members and Western guides now suck down a lot more bottled oxygen is wonderful for them, but it means the Sherpas have to carry those additional oxygen bottles through the Icefall for the Westerners to use.

Historically, more Everest climbers have perished from severe weather, HACE, HAPE, exhaustion, falling from steep terrain, or some combination of these hazards than from being crushed or buried in the Khumbu Icefall. This seems to be changing, however. Accurate weather forecasting has reduced the risk of being surprised by a killer storm like the one that struck in 1996. But the pronounced warming of the Himalayan climate in recent years has made the Icefall more unstable than ever, and there is still no way to predict when a serac is going to topple over. And Sherpas spend much, much more time in the Icefall than their Western employers.

In 1996, for example, I made four round trips through the Khumbu Icefall: three circuits as I progressively acclimatized to twenty-four thousand feet during the month of April, and a final round trip on my journey to the 29,035-foot summit and back. I was terrified each of the eight times I moved through the frozen chaos, which usually took more than three hours to ascend, even with my nearly empty backpack, and slightly less than an hour to descend. In contrast, each of the Sherpas supporting my team's ascent was required to make something like thirty trips through the Icefall, often while carrying eighty-pound loads of food, propane, and bottled oxygen.

These days, moreover, members are apt to spend even less time in the Icefall than I did when I was on Everest, eighteen years ago. It's becoming increasingly common for Western guides and members to acclimatize in hypobaric chambers before they arrive in Nepal, or on other, less hazardous Himalayan peaks in advance of their summit assaults, greatly reducing the number of times they must expose themselves

to the perils of the Icefall. Some members now make only a single round trip through it, while each of the Sherpas supporting them must still pass through that hazardous terrain between two and three dozen times. Most Western climbers feel more than a little guilty about this, but I know of none who have ever offered to take an extra lap through the Icefall with a heavy load in order to reduce a Sherpa's exposure.

The statistics suggesting that Everest has become safe for members may, in fact, be giving Westerners a false sense of security, however. The astounding number of climbers who now attempt to reach the summit on the limited number of days when the weather is favorable presents a new kind of hazard. A notorious photo shot by Ralf Dujmovits in May, 2012, showed more than a hundred and fifty people attached to a series of fixed ropes as they ascended the Lhotse Face toward the South Col of Everest, jammed together so tightly that they had to move in lockstep. The static weight of all these people and their gear was well over thirty thousand pounds. If some mishap had occurred that caused more than a handful of the climbers to put their full weight on one of the ropes simultaneously, the shock to the anchors securing the ropes to the ice could easily have caused them to fail, resulting in the climbers falling two thousand or more feet to the base of the Lhotse Face. If such an accident should come to pass in the future (which isn't far-fetched), the death count for both members and Sherpas would be horrific.

In any event, no Western members or guides were killed or injured in last week's avalanche. At the moment, in the immediate aftermath, almost everyone climbing on the Nepal side of Everest has retreated to base camp to try to come to grips with the catastrophe. Most of them, Sherpas and foreign climbers alike, are reeling from the unprecedented loss of life. At least one expedition has already announced that it will abandon the mountain. For the foreign climbers, to go home now will mean forfeiting most or all of the fifty to ninety thousand dollars they have spent to be guided up Everest. For the Sherpas who make the guided ascents possible, however, to quit now, after only a few weeks' wages, will be an even greater economic sacrifice, relatively speaking.

Depending on their talent, experience, foreign-language skills, how many loads they carry up and down the mountain, and how generously they're tipped by their clients, climbing Sherpas generally take home between two and eight thousand dollars at the conclusion of an Everest expedition, which commences for them in late March and typically ends around the first of June. If a climbing Sherpa dies on the job, his family receives a million rupees (approximately ten thousand five hundred dollars) from the insurance his employer is required to provide. By any reasonable measure, neither these wages nor insurance payouts are fair compensation for the risk involved. But in Nepal, where the median annual income is less than six hundred dollars, most of the Sherpas' countrymen would eagerly take similar risks for the opportunity to receive that kind of pay.

Nevertheless, on April 20th, after holding several emotional, contentious meetings at Everest base camp, the climbing Sherpas announced that they would go on strike

unless the Nepali government agreed to meet thirteen demands within a week. The threat of a work stoppage was provoked by the Sherpas' outrage over the Nepali government's offer to provide just forty thousand rupees—slightly more than four hundred dollars—to the families of the Sherpas killed in the avalanche, to defray their funeral expenses. Among the Sherpas' demands are that the government increase this compensation to approximately a thousand dollars per family; provide ten thousand dollars to climbing Sherpas who have been seriously disabled; establish a permanent relief fund for injured Sherpas with a portion of the ten-thousand-dollar permit fee every Western Everest climber is charged by the Nepali government; double the current insurance benefit provided by the guiding companies to twenty-one thousand dollars; require the guiding companies to pay Sherpas their salaries, even if they call off the remainder of the 2014 Everest climbing season; and establish a monument in Kathmandu to memorialize the deceased Sherpas.

The collective anger and resentment expressed by the Sherpas over the past few days is unprecedented. On April 20th, Tim and Becky Rippel, the owners of a guiding company called Peak Freaks, which lost a Sherpa named Mingma Tenzing to a fatal case of HAPE earlier in the month, stated, in a blog post:

As we suggested in a previous post the Sherpa guides are heating up, emotions are running wild and demands are being made to share the wealth with the Sherpa people on the table. Now that there are more Sherpa operators today on Everest, they've come to learn how much the government of Nepal makes in revenues from Everest expeditions and they are asking for a share. This is their time and under very unfortunate circumstances.... In any case things are getting very complicated and there is a lot of tension here and it's growing.... Peak Freaks is in support of the Sherpa people any which way it goes. They are our family, our brothers and sisters and the muscle on Everest. We follow their lead, we are guests here.

Should the government and the Sherpas manage to reach an agreement concerning the terms of the new demands, it will come as no great surprise if most of the Sherpas now grieving intensely for their absent companions resume their dangerous work within the next week or two. Many people believe that this is the most likely outcome.

**By Jon Krakauer**  
(From *The New Yorker*)

## Club Activities

### Annual Seminar 2014

The Himalayan Club held the Annual Seminar on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2014. Leading mountaineers, explorers and writers presented audio-visuals and illustrated talks on various topics.

#### Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2014

##### **Kaivan Mistry Memorial Lecture**

###### **MARKO PREZELJ**

“Based on a true story”

Marko from Slovenia is one of the world’s most renowned alpinists, has climbed many serious routes in the Himalaya and around the world.

##### **KEKOO NAOROJI BOOK AWARD**

The 7th Kekoo Naoroji Book Award for Himalayan Literature was presented to Jim Perrin (UK) for his book ‘Shipton and Tilman’.

The ‘Jagdish Nanavati Award for Excellence in Mountaineering’ and the ‘Garud Medal’ for the year 2013 were presented.

##### **JIM PERRIN**

“Shipton and Tilman”

Jim talked about his award winning book including the conceptualization, research and the process of understanding the unique position of Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman in history of exploration and mountaineering.

##### **ANNUAL DINNER**

The contributory annual dinner was held for all members and guests.

**SUNDAY, 16th February 2014**

**MARKO PREZELJ**

“Do you need to ask why?”

Marko talked about his mentorship program for young alpinists.

**HARISH KAPADIA**

“Go East, Young Trekkers!”

Harish talked about exploring passes on the India- Burma Border in the Eastern Himalaya.

The Chaukan Pass on the Burma border is one of the most difficult and remote pass which was once an elephant trail. His was the first civil party to reach the pass in the Kumon range, crossing the river by constructing several bridges from Namdafa National Park. The team had also crossed the historic Pangsau Pass into Burma on the Stillwell Road from Ledo and looked at the Lake of No Return.

**DAVID BREASHEARS**

“My Experiences in the Himalaya”

David, an American mountaineer and filmmaker, has climbed Everest five times and has made several award winning mountaineering documentaries. He is the founder of Glacier works, a non profit, devoted to saving the fragile ecology of the Himalaya. His audio-visual show about his expeditions, his films and about his project was screened as he could not be present.

**DIVYESH MUNI**

“First Ascent of Chamshen (7017 m)”

The Himalayan Club sponsored an Indian-British Joint expedition to Chamshen peak in August 2013. This was the first ever expedition to this peak. They crossed a high col to the foot of their peak but an accident to a member delayed them. Not deterred by an accident causing serious injury to a British member, the team continued to make the first ascent of this high peak– a rare achievement in face of odds.

**PRADEEP SAHOO**

“First Ascent of the Plateau Peak”

The Himalayan Club sponsored expedition from Kolkata made the first ascent of this high peak, located near Saser Kangri. The peak had defeated several attempts in the past. Pioneering a new route the team reached the summit in daring attempt. Leader Pradeep Sahoo talked about their ascent with pictures.

## Brief Introduction of the Speakers

### **MARKO PREZELJ**

(this is what he writes about himself.....)

(born October 13, 1965, Ljubljana, Slovenia) Trained in University of Ljubljana as a chemical engineer (completed in **1994\***) but at the moment work as a climbing instructor, mountain guide and photographer. Married (**1994\***) with Katja and have two sons – Tim (**1994\***) and Bor (2000). *\*All this happened in one month!*

I started in the “old school” of alpinism, made many mistakes and soon learned that the pursuit is both complex and immeasurable. Curiosity was the impulse that first brought me to alpinism, and it leads me still.

In climbing, style is my first concern. The decision-making process is the challenge. Doubt and uncertainty are the essence; trying to balance them with my choices is the passion. No regrets is the rule. When I know the outcome, the game is different and in the end less fun. The experience is different when I encounter humanity in any form, be it tracks, slings, or pitons.

Alpinism tests the limits of my strength, intuition, personality, character, emotion and creative spirit. Every “test” is different. How will I resolve the logistical puzzle of a particular climb? Will I be able to figure out the route, the moves? Will I be able to adapt to the conditions, the weather and above all to the friends with whom I share the experience? Which compromises will I accept, and at what cost?

It is considered normal to avoid the uncertain, the unexpected and the unknown, but these are the catalysts for human progress and they're my catalysts as well. At the same time I'm aware of the constant influence of commercial interests. Money and publicity can destroy personal ethics in an instant, justifying the means with the end.

What is success? This is the ultimate question, the answer to which I'm still seeking.

Some of his well known ascents are: 1988 New route on the north face of Cho Oyu, 1989 solo ascent of the Kang Ri (6240 m), 1991 Kangchenjunga (8476 m) south ridge new route, first ascent of Boktoh (6142 m), second ascent of Talung (7349 m), 1992 First ascent of Melungtse (7181 m), 1998 New route on Porong Ri East Summit (7284 m) and Yebokangal Ri (7332 m), 1999 First ascent of the north wall of the Gyachung Kang (7952 m), 2000 Second ascent of the “Golden Pillar” of Spantik, 2001 Begguya and Denali (6193 m) in Alaska - “Light Traveller” on the south face, new route, free climbed in a single push style, and Nilkanth west ridge (6596 m), 2004 First ascent of Kapura Peak (6544 m), 2006 Chomolhari (7326 m) northwest pillar, 2007 First ascent of K7 in Karakoram, 2008 New route on West face of Kangchungtse (7678 m), 2009 Baghirathi IV, III and II new route.

He continues to climb at the highest standard and lecturing about his ascents around the world reaching new summits and gathering new friends.

### **JIM PERRIN**

An English mountaineer, travel and outdoor writer, and in his youth was an accomplished rock-climber. He made many new routes, significant solo ascents and free ascents at high standards.

As a writer, he has made regular contributions to a number of newspapers and climbing magazines. He has won the Boardman-Tasker prize twice, first for *Menlove* (1985), his biography of John Menlove Edwards, and again as a joint winner (alongside Andy Cave's *Learning to Breathe*) for *The Villain* (2005), a biography of Don Whillans. For many years he has contributed mountaineering obituaries for *The Guardian*. His other books include *Mirrors in the Cliffs* (ed.) (1999) and *The Climbing Essays* (2006).

### **HARISH KAPADIA**

A distinguished Himalayan mountaineer/explorer from India. He has written numerous books and articles on the Indian Himalaya.

### **DAVID BREASHEARS**

An American mountaineer and filmmaker. In 1985, he became the first American to reach the summit of Everest twice. He has worked on feature films including *Seven Years in Tibet* and *Cliffhanger*, as well as on the award-winning documentary *Red Flag over Tibet*. In 1983 he transmitted the first live pictures from the summit of Mount Everest. He is the recipient of four Emmy awards for achievement in cinematography. Breashears has made eight expeditions to Everest, reaching the summit five times. He is also known in climbing circles for free climbing some of the most technically challenging rock walls in Colorado as a young man.

In 1996 he co-directed, photographed, and co-produced the acclaimed IMAX film *Everest* and contributed still photos to the bestselling book *Everest: Mountain Without Mercy*. In 1998 he was a director and producer for a Nova television program, *Everest: The Death Zone*, in which he and fellow mountaineer Ed Viesturs climbed Everest while undergoing physical and mental tests to record the effects of altitude on humans. In 2000 he directed the IMAX film *Kilimanjaro: To the Roof of Africa* for the National Geographic Society. He is the author of several books, including an autobiography, *High Exposure: An Enduring Passion for Everest and Unforgiving Places*. In 2007, Breashears founded *GlacierWorks*, a non-profit company that uses science, art, and adventure to raise awareness about climate change in the Greater Himalaya.

### **DIVYESH MUNI**

He is a Chartered Accountant by profession, and has climbed more than 20 Himalayan peaks making several first ascents of difficult peaks. His climbs include a new route on Chong Kumdan I (7071 m), first ascents of Chamshen (7017 m), Rangrik Rang

(6656 m), Bhujang (6560 m), Abale (6560 m), Khhang Shiling (6360 m), ascents of Kagbhusand (5830 m), Kamet (7756 m), Manirang (6696 m), Sujtilla West ( 6273 m), etc. He has been the Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary of the Club and is currently a member of the Managing Committee of the Club.

### **PRADEEP CHANDRA SAHOO**

An engineer presently stationed in Harare, Zimbabwe overseeing the business interest of his company in Southern Africa. After an initial introduction to the Himalaya as a student at University of Roorkee, he completed his Basic and Advanced Mountaineering Courses (1992) and Alpine Style Climbing Course (1993) from HMI, Darjeeling. Over last two decades, he organised and participated in over 10 Himalayan expeditions including Sri Kailash, Shivling, Kamet, Panch Chuli, Mamostong Kangri, Saser Kangri and Plateau Peak.

## **The Himalayan Club Annual Seminar - 2014 (Report)**



Dr. M. S. Gill, President Emeritus receiving memento from Brig. Ashok Abbey, President of the Himalayan Club

The two day seminar started on the evening of 15 February 2014 at Mumbai's Air India auditorium. It was inaugurated by Dr M.S. Gill, Member of Parliament and President Emeritus of the Himalayan Club. The Annual Seminar 2014 was sponsored by JSW group of companies headed by Mr. Sajjan Jindal.

Two things stood out at the Himalayan Club Annual Seminar 2014.

The first was the sight of a well built sharply dressed man, clearly from

the mountains, walking up to receive the Jagdish Nanavati Garud Medal presented every year to a deserving candidate from expedition support staff. In a place filled with several eminent personalities, it was the unassuming Pemba Norbu (a.k.a. King Kong) who got a standing ovation from the audience. The annual Jagdish Nanavati Award for Excellence in Mountaineering went to the Chaukhamba col expedition led by Debabrata Mukherjee.



Debabrata Mukherjee, receiving 'Jagdish Nanavati Award for Excellence in Mountaineering' from Sachin Nanavati

Second, the two guest speakers from overseas – Marko Prezelj and Jim Perrin – gave insightful thought provoking lectures. Jim, who won the Kekoo Naoroji Book Award for his book on Eric Shipton and Bill Tillman, was the quintessential author, at once informal and incisive. His animated and dramatic presentation on the Shipton-Tillman team made the two characters spring to life. It was both, a window into the contrasting personalities of these two great British explorers and how a writer viewed his subject. Anyone aspiring to write would have found something valuable in Jim’s talk.



Pemba Norbu receiving 'Jagdish Nanavati Garud Medal' from Sachin Nanavati

The onus of giving the Kaivan Mistry Memorial Lecture was upon Marko and he rose to the occasion splendidly, providing an overview of his expeditions, accompanied by breath taking photographs. On day two, he covered a different and very motivational area.

A mentor to young climbers in Slovenia, Marko used his experiences to not just talk about mentoring and expeditions cast in that genre but also look into the media filled lives of today’s young people, wondering how much that affected a proper understanding of the outdoors.



Jim Perrin receiving 'Kekoo Naoroji Book Award for Himalayan Literature' from Rishad Naoroji

Other lectures included a talk by veteran mountaineer and explorer, Harish Kapadia, (who was conferred the title of Editor Emeritus, of the Himalayan Club) about the Chaukan Pass on the India-Myanmar border. He mixed the narrative of his recent visit to the pass with its history, including the forgotten story of a fantastic rescue, during the WWII years. During the inauguration, Harish Kapadia, now the Editor Emeritus of the Himalayan Journal was presented with a specially created memento.



Adi Godrej congratulating Jim Perrin for his award winning book 'Shipton and Tilman'

There were two talks on first ascents in the Himalaya - Divyesh Muni from the Mumbai chapter of the Himalayan Club spoke on the first ascent of Chamshen (7017 m), a peak located in the Eastern Karakoram. The ascent involved a

maiden approach from west crossing the Sakang col to North Shukpa Kungchang glacier before the climbers were ready to climb the peak. The expedition faced an accident but the situation was brought under control by air-evacuation of the injured member.

Pradeep Sahoo of the Club's Kolkata chapter described the first ascent of Plateau Peak (7300 m). The peak, located in the famous Saser Kangri group of mountains, was not climbed even after many determined attempts by various expeditions. The Himalayan Club team found a route through the threatening seracs just below the top and reached the summit, thus creating history.

Jerzy Porebski's film on the Polish mountaineer, Jerzy Kukuczka was also screened. The film, a documentary covering interviews of Kukuczka's family and friends was a study of the man, up close, exciting for all those curious about the culture of climbing in the golden age.

American mountaineer and film maker David Breashers, who was expected for the seminar couldn't make it due to last minute travel complications. But he was gracious enough to send two of his films titled 'GlacierWorks' and '2012 Everest Base Camp Exhibit'. These very impacting



Pradeep Sahoo

films focus on the alarming rate at which glacier systems in the Himalaya are receding. Climate change is a critical issue that must be faced as if these glaciers continue to disappear at this rate, the rivers supplying water to our subcontinent will disappear too.

The seminar was well attended by the lovers of the Himalaya.

**Shyam Menon**



Marko Prezelj



Harish Kapadia with Brig Ashok Abbey



Vineeta & Divyesh Muni with Brig Ashok Abbey

## **Jagdish Nanavati Award For Excellence in Mountaineering**

Jagdish Nanavati award for excellence in mountaineering was awarded to Debabrata Mukherjee's Exploration over the sources of Ganga - crossing Chaukhamba col. This exploration of a difficult route was deemed most deserving of recognition. The jury has also expressed that Ashutosh Mishra's Jadung Valley expedition be given special mention as it was the best presented report and should be used as a model for future applicants.

## **Garud Medal**

Pemba Norboo Sherpa fondly known as King Kong was awarded the Garud Medal for exemplary service in the mountains.

## **Arun Samant Memorial Lecture Series**

Arun Samant Memorial Lecture series is held every year in memory of Late Arun Samant – a leading mountaineer and an active Himalayan Club Member. Exploration of unknown was very close to Arun's heart. This year, the Arun Samant Memorial Lecture was held on January 12, 2014 in Mumbai.

### **Explorations and Climbs in Rongdo Valley by Group Captain V. K. Sashindran**

Rongdo valley lies in the eastern Karakoram and though easily accessible was not explored till recent times. An Indian Air Force team led by Group Captain Sashindran thoroughly explored the valley and climbed many peaks; most of them were first ascents.

### **Climbing Kuchela Dhura by Dhruv Joshi**

Kuchela Dhura (6294 m) is located in the Kumaun Himalaya and has defied mountaineers for many years. In the year 2013, Indian Mountaineering Foundation organised an expedition to this unclimbed mountain under the leadership of Dhruv Joshi and the team successfully completed the first ascent.

### **Jadung Valley Exploration by Ashutosh Mishra**

Jadung valley of the Nelang watershed of the Garhwal Himalaya had never ever been documented, even by the early explorers- a rare and hidden treasure of untouched and pristine beauty. In June 2013, a team sponsored by the Himalayan Club and led by Ashutosh Mishra successfully explored this valley and experienced glimpses of its romantic history.

### **First Crossing of the Chaukhamba Col by Partha Sarathi Moulik**

This high col located on the shoulder of the Chaukhamba massif was attempted by many explorers but very few were successful in reaching it. In May 2013 a team led by Debabrata Mukherjee created history by successfully crossing this 6053 m high col and thus linking Bhagirath Kharak glacier with Gangotri glacier by a most direct route.

### **Bara Bangahal and Chhota Bangahal by Dr. Manoj Kamdar and Harish Kapadia**

These two adjoining valleys form the ancient kingdom of Bangahal which was once ruled by rulers of Kullu. The area is well known for the spectacular views and remotely located villages, not much connected to the outer world and thus preserving old culture and life styles. Dr. Manoj Kamdar and Harish Kapadia spoke about their respective visits to this area in 2013.

## About the Speakers

**Group Captain V. K. Sashindran:** a doctor by profession in Indian Air Force and currently based in Kanpur AF base. During his stint in AFMC, Pune as an instructor, he started trekking and outdoor activities with his students and colleagues and then onwards gravitated to Himalayan trekking and exploration. He has done several explorations in Arunachal Pradesh, Eastern Karakorams, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

**Dhruv Joshi:** Dhruv has been climbing mountains for more than a decade and is based in Almora, Uttarakhand. He has completed various courses such as Basic, Advance, Method of Instruction, search and rescue and NOLS leadership. He has been member and leader of several expeditions to the Himalaya and has climbed many peaks.

**Ashutosh Mishra:** In June 2013, a team led by Ashutosh Mishra successfully explored Jadung valley and experienced glimpses of its romantic history. Ashutosh Mishra has been trekking more than two decades and is an ardent reader and researcher of the Himalayas. Ashutosh is an avid explorer of the Himalaya for the last two decades. He prefers to choose routes that are unusual or less frequented. With a degree in Electrical Engineering and a Masters in Business Administration, he runs a Management Consulting firm, tours around the globe advising clients on devising strategies and improving efficiencies. He is based in Delhi.

**Partha Sarathi Moulik:** He has been trekking in Himalayas for more than two decades. Under the guidance of Debabrata Mukherjee, he started his foray in serious Mounataineering. In 2009, they succeeded in finding a route from Kedar to Badri via Gondharpongi valley and they were the first to descend from Panpatia glacier to Satopanth bamak glacier thru Badri col. The success of this expedition propelled them to find a route from Kedarnath to Badrinath via Chowkhamba col & Gangotro col. The team was led by Debabrata Mukherjee and consisted of 4 members. Importantly, the crossing was done without any Sherpa.

**Harish Kapadia:** Harish Kapadia has been associated with the Himalayan Club for many decades.

**Dr Manoj Kamdar:** He is a leading medical doctor working in Mumbai.

**Banff Film Festival was held in March 2014 to a packed house of almost 500 persons.**

## Deaths & Obituaries

### **Aspi Moddie**

(1921 – 2014)

Aspi Moddie lived several lives in his long life of 93 years. He was part of the British army and fought in the Arakan mountains in Burma. Being injured he returned to civil life soon. Starting as an IAS officer in independent India he was posted at the India-Nepal border. Nepal was closed to outsiders then, but using his proximity to powers he managed to get permission to reach the base camp of Everest a rare achievement then.

On return from Nepal he joined the Himalayan Club in 1949 and devoted many years to help the Club later. His most enjoyable visit to the Himalaya was in 1959 when, with Gurdial Singh, he trekked around the outer wall of the Nada Devi Sanctuary. During his several trips he met famous mountaineers like Eric Shipton and Sir Edmund Hillary. Trying to talk on a different subject, Aspi once asked Sir Hillary if he could suggest a good book of Maori poems from New Zealand. Sir Hillary replied : “I am a bloody farmer”, thus declaring his ignorance about literature!

Aspi became Vice President of the Himalayan Club (1972-74) and later President of the Club for nine long years (1975-1985). As the President he introduced many changes that rejuvenated the old spirit of the Club. During his tenure the Club shifted its main office from Kolkata to Mumbai. He used his administrative acumen to benefit the Club, to promote membership beyond static 600 then, made five year financial forecast, raised membership fees to a realistic level and developed closer international relations with other Mountaineering Clubs world over. He was elected as a Honorary Member of the Club.

His interest in various aspects of mountains was evident. He accompanied the Basic Course of training at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering to introduce mountain poems to the students. Many of these poems were written by him. He had a vast collection of maps and books at his residence. I have fond memories of spending many hours looking at his rare collection of maps, artefacts and books, at his Mumbai residence.

In later years he developed an active interest in the Himalayan environment, and with three international colleagues promoted a movement to protect the environment. It took them eight years to give their vision concrete shape and in 1983 ICIMOD (‘International Centre for Integrated Mountain Developments’) was formed at Kathmandu. This centre flourishes today as tribute to likes of Aspi.

In later years, old war injuries began to trouble his movements and the loss of his son also caused great sadness. However whenever we met, he would enthusiastically talk about the Himalaya and Himalayan art with my wife Geeta and myself. We will cherish those days.

For the last couple of years he moved to Pune to be near his daughter. He passed away on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014 after a long illness. The Himalayan Club has lost a pioneer and supporter, who was member of the Club for 65 years!

**(Harish Kapadia)**

## **Ian McNaught-Davis**

(1929 – 2014)

Ian McNaught-Davis, Mac to his friends, was an Honorary Member of the Himalayan Club. He had a long association with the club, participating in the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Club. He released the book by K N Naoroji; *Himalayan Vignettes*. He was a regular visitor to India. We undertook a few visits to the lower Himalaya with his wife Loreto. He was an captivating story-teller and one can spend hours listening to him about his vast experience.

He started as a leading rock climber and till old age he was climbing at good standards. His greatest achievement in climbing was to make the first ascent of Muztagh Tower [7,276 m] with Joe Brown, John Hartog and Tom Patey in 1956. Mac became well known to the British public as presenter on the televised climb of the Old Man of Hoy and later when climbing for television up the Eiffel Tower with Lionel Terray. He was a superb raconteur entertaining audiences and guests at climbing events and dinners.

Mac entered the world stage when he became President of the UIAA [International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation] from 1995-2004. It was during these years that some of us from the Himalayan Club came to associate with him as we met at several meetings and where he stood his ground but at the same time was ready to accommodate the views of the Asian world, where most of the higher ranges are situated.

Suffering illness for past three years, he passed away peacefully at his London home on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

Rest In Peace.

**(Harish Kapadia)**

## **Dick Isherwood, Anthology**

An Anthology compiled by John Ashburner

Dick Isherwood learnt his craft in the 1960s in the competitive melee of the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club. His enthusiasm meant he took every opportunity to gain more experience on steep rock – dry, grotty or wet – but by 1964 he was already looking to wider horizons and joined Henry Day's "*Cambridge Chitral Expedition*".

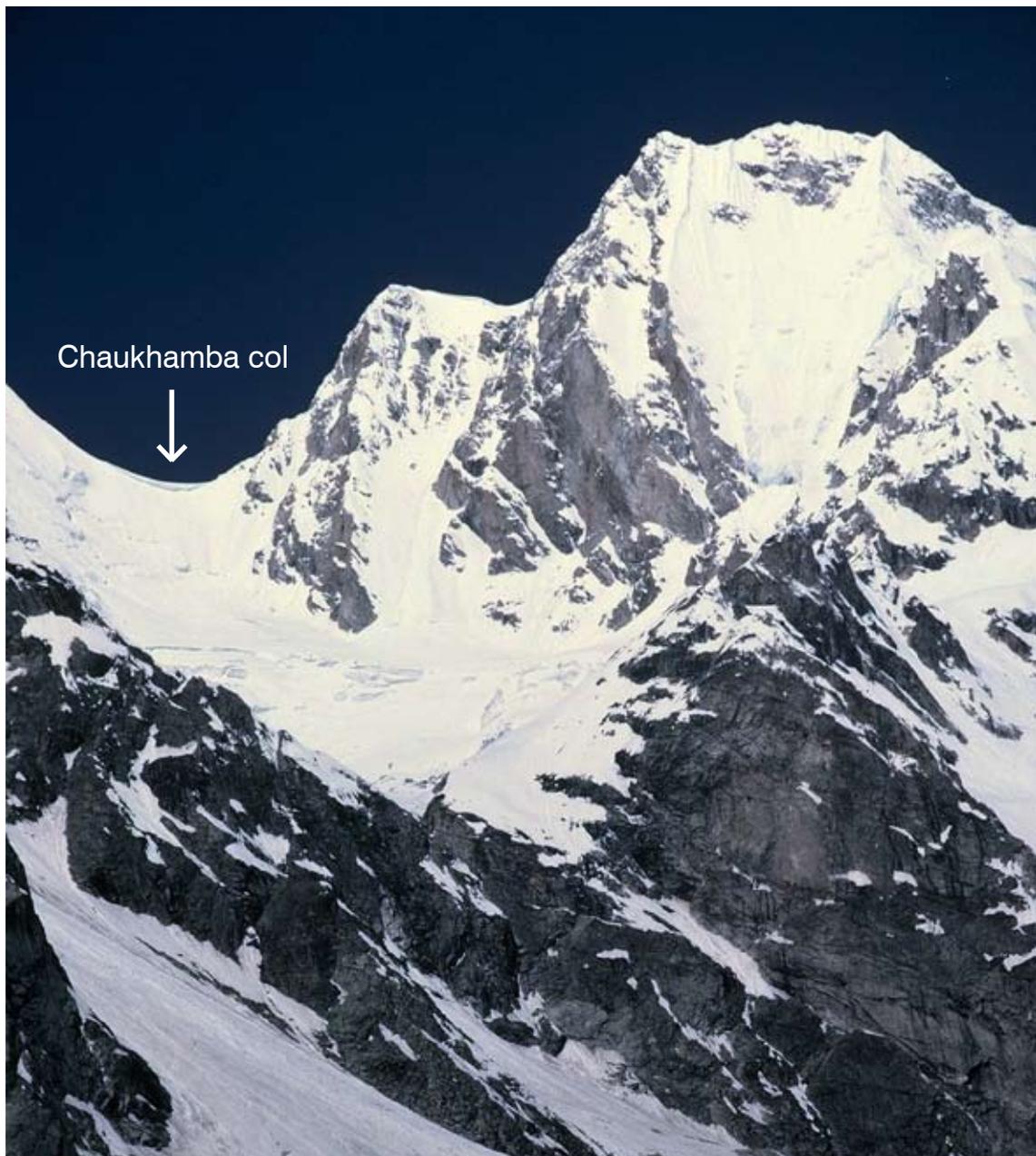
By 1969 he had become one of the top rock climbers in the UK, repeating many of the hardest routes and putting up a few new ones in North Wales, the Lakes and Scotland.

A job move to the Far East then enabled him to concentrate on his passion for small alpine type expeditions, much in the style of Shipton and Tilman. One example was his audacious two-man attempt on Annapurna II (7937m).

But not all trips were to the Himalaya – he climbed the Cartenze Pyramide (4884m) in New Guinea – one of the “Seven Summits” – by a new route and rounded off the trip with an epic solo ascent of Sunday Peak.

He finally “settled down” in 1999 in Port Townsend, Washington and whilst still mountaineering, became an accomplished sailor, frequently taking himself off on long solo trips in his sea kayak or sailing boat around the north Pacific coast.

A blogger recently wrote “*Everyone had a Dick Isherwood story*”. This anthology tells many as described in his writings and those of his friends. They illustrate some of his extraordinary adventures over more than 50 years.



## Office bearers of the Himalayan Club for the year 2014 elected at the AGM held on 15th February 2014

### OFFICERS

**President**

Brigadier Ashok Abbey

**Vice Presidents**

Mr. Tanil Kilachand

Mr. Ravi Singh

Mr. Pradeep Sahoo

**Hon. Secretary**

Ms. Nandini Purandare

**Hon. Treasurer**

Mr. Deepak Bhimani

**Members of the Committee**

Mr. Priyadarshi Gupta

Mr. Shailesh Mahadevia

Mr. Rajendra Wani

Dr. Ravi Mariwala

Dr. Raghunath Godbole

Mr. Motup Chewang

Mr. Divyesh Muni

Mr. Rajesh Gadgil

Mr. Vijay Puri

Mr. Rishad Naoroji

**Additional Members of Balloting Committee**

Mr. Monesh Devjani

Mr. Manik Banerjee

Mr. Ravindra Apte

Gp. Capt. V. K. Sashidaran

**Hon. Local Secretaries**

**India**

Almora

Himanshu Pandey

Bangalore

Kamlesh Venugopal

Darjeeling

Dorjee Lhatoo

Delhi

Maninder Kohli

Jammu & Kashmir

Sat Paul Sahni

Kolkata

Dr. Rupamanjari Biswas

Leh

Motup Chewang

Manali

Mahavir Thakur

Mussoorie

Krishnan Kutty

Mumbai

Rajendra Wani

Pune

Dr. Raghunath Godbole

Shimla

Deepak Sanan

**Overseas**

Australia  
France  
Japan  
Korea  
Nepal  
New Zealand  
Pakistan  
Spain  
South Africa  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
U.K  
U.S.A.

Garry Weare  
Claude Gardien  
Yoshio Ogata  
Bae Seung Youl  
Elizabeth Hawley  
John Nankervis  
Nazir Sabir  
Jose Paytubi  
Dr. S. A Craven  
Ake Nilsson  
Eric Bernhardt  
-----

Donald Goodman  
Nicholas Clinch  
Paddy Iyer

**Hon. Editor**

Rajesh Gadgil

**Hon. Associate Editor**

Nandini Purandare

**Hon. Librarian**

Group Capt V K Sashindran

**Hon. Asst. Librarians**

Mumbai Rajeev Das  
Rajesh Gadgil  
Kolkata Debraj Dutta

**Hon. Equipment Officer**

Mallikarjun Singh

**Hon. Asst. Equipment Officer**

Kolkata Subhashis Roy

**Hon. Asst. Treasurer**

Kolkata Debraj Dutta

**Web Master**

Rajan Rikame

**E-Letter Editor**

Ravi Mariwala

**E-Group Moderator**

Cdr. K. B. Singh  
Divyesh Muni

**Edited by  
Ravi Mariwala**

**Published for the Himalayan Club**

Himalayan Club Centre, 314, Turf Estate, Shakti Mills Lane, off Dr. E. Moses Road,  
Mahalaxmi [West], Mumbai 400011, India.

Phone: [91-22] 2491 2829.

Website: [www.himalayanclub.org](http://www.himalayanclub.org)

If you do not wish to receive the e-letter please let us know at [info@himalayanclub.org](mailto:info@himalayanclub.org)  
(For private circulation only)