

THE HIMALAYAN CLUB E-LETTER



THE HIMALAYAN CLUB

APRIL 2021 ● VOLUME 42

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Climbs, Treks and Explorations

[Rakaposhi Expedition – New Route 2019](#)

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Translated, supplemented and compiled by Tamotsu (Tom) Nakamura



The route

Rakaposhi (Urdu: راکاپوشی) is a mountain in the Karakoram mountain range in the Gilgit- Baltistan region of Pakistan. It is situated in the middle of the Nagar and Bagrote valleys and Danyor, approximately 100 km north of the capital city Gilgit of the semi-autonomous Gilgit-Baltistan. Rakaposhi means “snow covered” in the local language. Rakaposhi is also known as Dumani (“Mother of Mist” or “Mother of Clouds”). It is ranked 27th highest in the world.

The first successful recorded ascent by non-natives was in 1958 by Mike Banks and Tom Patey, members of a British-Pakistani expedition, via the Southwest Spur/Ridge route. Both of them suffered minor frostbite during the ascent to the summit on June 25. Another climber slipped and fell on the descent and died during the night.

Notable features

Rakaposhi is notable for its exceptional rise over local terrain. On the north, it rises 5,900 metres (19,357 ft) in only an 11.2 km horizontal distance from the Hunza-Nagar River. There are views of Rakaposhi from the Karakoram Highway on the route through Nagar. A tourist spot in the town of Ghulmat (located in the Nagar Valley) called “Zero Point of Rakaposhi” is the closest view point of the mountain. Rakaposhi is the only mountain in the world which rises straight from beautifully cultivated fields to the height of 25,550 feet. From many places this wonderful spectacle can be viewed right from the base to the top.

Foreword

Our first objective was Tirich Mir Main 7,708m. However, we waited for climbing permit at Chitral, but they did not grant the permit this year. Then we sought an alternative and changed our course to the south side of Rakaposhi, which is reputed as beautiful peak seen from Hunza. Hunza is second home for Hiraide because of his frequent visits and it is one of his wish to climb the peaks seen from Hunza. Among them Rakaposhi was most outstanding and attractive. Which is the most challenging unclimbed route? The south side remained untouched. The south side was reconnoitered in the past, but nobody could find a feasible route.



At summit

Reconnaissance

During waiting for the permit, we entered the south side for reconnaissance. Danyor valley is close to Gilgit, only 40 minutes to the point where a jeep is assessible. During summer many villagers come for pasturing goats, cows and yaks. It is easy to walk on the pasture. There is less than 20km way from the pasture to the end (as low as 3,660m) of the right bank of Sulgin Glacier. It is likely to be polo ground. Woods are abundant and there is a water stream. We setup BC here as loads ferry by animals become difficult from this point. Projected climbing route can be looked up from the BC, but to draw climbing route on the south side is not encouraging as there are many treacherous seracs in the upper part of the south side. We observed four lines, only one possible route remained. We tentatively returned to Gilgit,

Meanwhile we waited for news on the permit to Tirch Mir for two nights, but there was no progress and to our regret our agent told us that there was an announcement by the authorities that the permit would not be granted this year. We resigned the first objective and headed to Rakaposhi. We called back our guides who were in stand-by in Chitral. With necessary supplies we returned to Rakaposhi on June 16. We lost ten days.

Climbing :

The weather was rather stable while we were waiting in Gilgit. Three days after, rain and snow continued for a week. Not losing a chance, we ascended for acclimatization and reconnoitered for three days. Though the icefall was likely to be a labyrinth, it was not unpassable. But it was not comfortable. We stayed at 4,500m, 5,900m for one night respectively and returned from 6,100m to the BC. We could confirm a route, but acclimatization was not enough yet. We prayed for the good weather.

From the day when we returned to the BC, rain and sleet continued for six days. The next day was fine but the wall glued with snow and avalanches very often sounded here and there. The weather forecast told us that 2~3 days would be cloudy, then bad weather and again it would be fine. We should have passed through the lower part apt to danger of avalanches and availed ourselves of a narrow chance to



The Peak

reach the summit in fine weather.

After one day rest waiting for good weather, we departed in cloudy weather. Though gears for rocks were left but we carried foods and fuels for seven days. They were very heavy on our shoulders. The icefall after one week was full of traces of avalanches and collapse of seracs. We passed through a labyrinth of the glacier, detoured rock wall from the right then reached snow ridge. Cutting out a ridge at a col after following a knife edge we pitched a tent of C1 at 5,200m. As it was the same route for acclimatization, we could move very fast. We gained 1,500m of vertical difference.

On June 28 we passed through side of seracs to snow ridge and snow wall. The previous traces were swept out. We struggled with fresh snow, sometimes with no loads. We managed to gain 1,000m and pitched C2 at 6,200m. On June 29 we at last reached the south-east ridge. We ascended belaying with ice screws on ice wall just beneath the southeast ridge. A panorama of the northeast side suddenly came into sight when we stood on the southeast ridge. Diran and Kunyan Chhis were viewed. The summit was as if just in front of our eyes. But altimeter was honest. Snow on the ridge was not crusted but loose contrary to expectation. We had to struggle with soft snow on the southeast ridge too. We ascended

600m. We dug snow and pitched a tent of C3 on the ridge. It snowed on June 30 and July 1. We stayed in the camp.

As we felt that the good weather would not continue for two days, we decided C3 to be the final camp for the last 1,000m to the summit.

At 04:00am on July 2, we departed under a skyful of stars. There were no difficult pushes to the summit ridge. We silently struggled with snow. We climbed a break of cornices to the ridge. Snow conditions were good because of the winds blowing from the west. We intently progressed. Suddenly Hunza came into sight below sheer-drops of the ridge.

We stood atop at 12:00 noon. We were overwhelmed by a 360°panorama. Shispare that we climbed in the previous year attracted our attention. Magnificent K2 was seen in far distance. We descended the same route of ascent. We stayed overnight at C3 and returned to BC in the following day. There were no much technical difficulty, but vertical height from the BC to the summit was over 4,000m and the weather was unstable.



Camp 2 to Camp 3



Summiters at Base Camp

Camp 2 to Camp 3



Camp 2 to Camp 3



Camp 3



Camp 1 to Camp 2



Camp 1 to Camp 2

Piolets d'Or 2020 Honoured Ascent

[Baljuri 5922m, Kumaon Himalaya:
An Alpine Style Attempt in winter](#)

Anindya Mukherjee



Team at BC after the attempt, 20th December, 2020

During the 2nd and 3rd week of December 2020, a team of 4 climbers (all Himalayan Club Members) made an attempt to climb Mt Baljuri 5922m in Him-Alpine style by the Baljuri col-North ridge route. The expedition did not use the services of any HAP or local guide beyond the traditional base camp of Baljuri and adopted a fast and light 'carry, camp and climb' style. The team reached Dwali (2610m) on 12th December and used two alternate ferry days via Phurkia (3189m) to station themselves at the traditional Base Camp (3600m) site of Baljuri on 16th December. During the approach march, the team encountered fresh new snow from a kilometer below Dwali and half way up to the Zero Point (3750m) the team found the trail covered in 6 inches to 1 feet of snow. On 17th December, 3 climbers (Aniket, Rivu and Anindya) started climbing the spur that leads one to the traditional Camp-1 site of Baljuri. The spur was a mixture of frozen grass, mud and boulders under a thick and



Between Camp 1 and Camp 2 (bivi)

deceptive blanket of soft new snow. The trio reached the traditional Camp-1 (4160m) area after 6 hours of climb. The camp 1 site (4160m) itself was comparatively free of snow as it faces East and gets a lot of early morning sun. On 18th December, the three started pushing higher and very soon they found themselves between knee-deep to waist-deep snow on a gradient that ranged between 35 to 45 degrees. Signs of loose snow avalanches (sluffs- both dry and wet) could be seen in number of places. The going became increasingly slow as a result and finally after 5 hours of trail breaking and route finding through unconsolidated powder, the three could climb only 500 meters. The team decided to make a Bivi (Camp-2) at around 4600m and dug out a platform accordingly on the NE face of point 4800m (located approximately 800m SE of Baljuri col). On 19th December, as the three started climbing further up, to their surprise they found no change or improvement in snow conditions as hoped due to overnight freezing. As the team was getting very close (100m) to reaching a comparatively easier angled N ev e of the Buria glacier, they encountered slab formations big enough to sweep them off the face. It is then the team decided to turn back immediately. The team cleaned the Bivi site and started a long and slow descent to the



On the Spur looking down towards to the moraine ridges of Pindari glacier valley floor. They reached the traditional Base Camp by 5pm that very day and over the next two days hiked back to the road head Kharakiya (2253m). Every protocol related to Covid-19 was maintained while the team traveled through cities, towns and villages en route.

Team: Aniket Mitra, Rivusoumya Das, Ashish Chanda and Anindya Mukherjee. Duration: 7th December, 2020 to 24th December, 2020.



Our Bivi at 4600m

In Memorium

Doug Scott

1941-2020

Stephen Venables



Baffin Island 1971 expedition team. L–R: Steve Smith, Ray Gillies, Dennis Hennek, Guy Lee, Phil Koch, Doug Scott and Rob Wood © Doug Scott Collection

Douglas Keith Scott (29 May 1941 – 7 December 2020)

In a career spanning six decades, Doug Scott was recognised worldwide as one of the greatest mountaineers of the postwar era. The statistics speak for themselves: over forty expeditions to Central Asia, countless first ascents all round the world, the first British ascent of Mt Everest ... but what made Doug special was not the height or difficulty or number of ascents; no – for him what mattered was how you made those ascents.

Like all the best people he was a jumble of paradoxes: tough guy rugby player fascinated by Buddhist mysticism; anarchic hippy with a deep sense of tradition; intensely ambitious one day, laid back the next. He was as egotistic as any climber, but was also demonstrably generous and compassionate, admired universally for his philanthropy. In his Himalayan heyday he resembled a beefed-up version of John

Lennon; in latter years, presiding over his gorgeous Cumbrian garden in moleskins and tweed jacket, he looked more like the country squire.

He grew up in Nottingham, the eldest of three brothers, and started climbing at thirteen, inspired by seeing climbers at Black Rocks when he was out walking with the Scouts. The bug took hold and he developed into a strong rock climber and alpinist. Throughout his life he would staunchly defend the British traditions of free climbing, but he was also fascinated by the aid climbing pioneers of the Eastern Alps and by Californian big wall culture.

By the early seventies he was publishing regular articles in Mountain magazine, and what an inspiration they were, illustrated with his superlative photos. I remember particularly his piece 'On the Profundity Trail' describing an early, and first European, ascent of Salathé Wall with Peter Habeler. There was also an excellent series on the great Dolomite pioneers – research for his first book, 'Big Wall Climbing' – and a wonderful story of climbing sumptuous granite on Baffin Island with Dennis Hennek, Tut Braithwaite and Paul Nunn.

For an impressionable young student, dreaming of great things, this was all inspiring stuff and I lapped it up. But it was only much later, when Ken Wilson published Doug's big autobiographical picture book, 'Himalayan Climber', that I realised quite how much he had done in those early days. As well as Yosemite and Baffin Island, there were big, bold adventures to the Tibesti Mountains of Chad, to Turkey and to Kohe Bandaka, in the Afghan Hindu Kush. And closer to home there was his visionary ascent of the giant overhanging 'Scoop' of Strone Ulladale, on Harris. Now of course there is a free version. Back then, filmed in grainy black and white for television, it was a visionary demonstration of aid-climbing craftsmanship, complete with copperheads and RURPs – the



Doug Scott, summit of Everest 1975 © Doug Scott Collection

art of Yosemite granite transferred to Lewisian Gneiss.

All the while, Doug had been working as a schoolteacher in Nottingham. I have no idea whether he planned all along to give up the day job and go professional, but it was Everest that made that possible. The lucky break came in the spring of 1972, with an invitation from Don Whillans and Hamish MacInnes to join them on Karl Herrligkoffer's European Expedition to the Southwest Face. The expedition failed, but in the autumn Doug was back, this time as part of Chris Bonington's first attempt on the face, defeated by the bitter post-monsoon winds. It was two years later, in India, during the first ascent of Changabang, that a message came through announcing a surprise free slot in the Everest waiting list for the autumn of 1975. With little time to prepare another Everest blockbuster, there was talk at first of a lightweight attempt on



On The Ogre © Doug Scott

the regular South Col route, but Doug was instrumental in persuading Bonington that they should go all out for the Southwest Face. That was the great unclimbed challenge. Why repeat a well-trodden route when you could be exploring the unknown?

The rest, as they say, is history. I can remember the palpable excitement at the end of September 1975 when the news came through that

they had done it. It seemed inevitable that Doug should have been chosen for the first summit push with Dougal Haston. In a team of big personalities, he was the biggest personality of all. Perhaps, like Hillary – who incidentally, had reached the top on Doug's twelfth birthday in 1953 – he wanted the summit more than the others; in Bonington's eyes he clearly had that extra something – that sheer bloody-minded strength, determination and ability to push the boat out.

The BBC stated in its obituary notice this week that Scott and Haston 'got into difficulties' in 1975. Complete piffle. Supremely confident, they made an informed decision to continue right to the summit, even though it was almost dark and the oxygen was nearly finished. On returning to the south summit and seeing how dangerous it would be to continue down in now pitch darkness, they agreed very sensibly to bivouac right there, higher than any other human being had ever previously spent a night, and wait for the morning. It amazes me to this day that Doug was not even wearing a down jacket, yet still managed to avoid frostbite. 'The quality of survival', as he put it, was exemplary.

Success on Everest was achieved on the tip of a beautifully constructed – and by all accounts very happy – British-Nepalese human pyramid. Even its architect, Chris Bonington, seemed at times slightly embarrassed by the sheer scale of the operation. Both he and Doug realised that the way forward lay in scaling things back down. For Doug, surviving a night in the open, without oxygen, at 8750 metres above sea level, opened a huge door of possibility. Ever curious, now he could really find out what humans might achieve at altitude.

To my mind, his finest climb was Kangchenjunga in 1979, with Peter Boardman, Joe Tasker and, initially, Georges Bettembourg. It was only the third ascent of the mountain, and the first from the north. For Doug the historian it was a vindication of prewar predictions that the North Col might be the best way to the top of the mountain. Ropes were fixed judiciously on the lower, technical face. Up above, they cut loose and went alpine style, without oxygen. Messner & Co. had already shown it was possible to climb to the highest altitudes without oxygen, but they had done it on well-known ground with other climbers around should

things go wrong. This was a big step into the unknown and Doug's photos of the summit day are some of most evocative mountain images ever made.

It would take too long to list all the other Himalayan achievements, but it's worth mentioning some themes. What was impressive was the way Doug was always re-thinking expeditions. It was his idea to transfer the concept of the extended alpine summer season to the Himalaya, with loosely connected teams roaming far and wide on multiple objectives, with the family sometimes coming along too. It was he who introduced new young talent to the Himalaya, bringing Greg Child's big wall expertise to the beautiful Lobsang Spire and East Ridge of Shivling, and Stephen Sustad's stamina to the gigantic Southeast Ridge of Makalu. They didn't quite pull off their intended traverse of Makalu with Jean Afanassieff, but, my goodness, what a bold journey it was.

In fact, despite several attempts, Doug never quite summited Makalu, nor Nanga Parbat, nor K2. But that is not the point. He didn't give a damn about summits for their own sake: unless they were attained in an interesting, challenging way, they held little appeal. Or he might just decide that the omens – or the I Ching, or his particular mood that day, or whatever – were not right, as happened in 1980, when he left the slightly exasperated Boardman, Tasker and Renshaw to continue on K2 without him.

When the mood was right there was no stopping him. Amongst all the climbs I would most love to have done (and had the ability to do!), the first ascent of The Ogre in 1977 must be the most enviable: HVS and A1 rock climbing on immaculate granite, 7,000 metres above sea level, at the heart of the world's greatest mountain range – the Karakoram. Less enviable was the epic descent with two broken legs, with Chris Bonington, Mo Anthoine and Clive Rowland. Another visionary climb was the 1982 first ascent of the Southwest Face of Shishapangma, with Alex McIntyre and Roger Baxter-Jones, beautifully executed, with acclimatising first ascents of the neighbouring peaks of Nyanang Ri and Pungpa Ri, in the process scouting out a feasible descent route, before committing to Shishapangma itself, discovering the most elegant direct

route to any 8,000 metre summit.

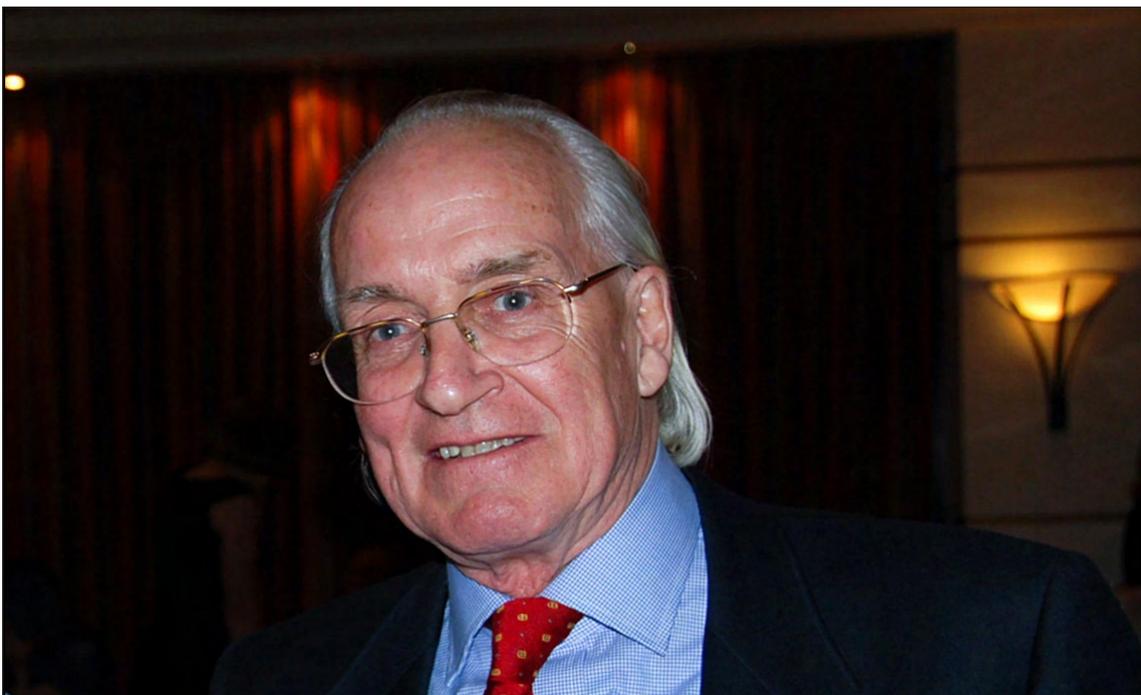
Several of my friends have been on expeditions with Doug and knew him better than I me. I only climbed with him once, when we were both speaking at an Alpine Club symposium at Plas y Brenin. We were not on until the afternoon and it was a beautiful sunny morning – far too good to be shut indoors – so we sneaked off over the Llanberis Pass for a quick jaunt up Cenotaph Corner. Doug said the first time he had done it was on his honeymoon. It was now 1989, so he must have been 48 – middle aged, but definitely still in his prime. He led with powerful ease and then suggested we continue on the upper tier of the Cromlech, up that brutal creation of his old mentor Don Whillans – Grond. In the absence of large cams to protect the initial off-width, he grabbed a large lump of rhyolite, explaining cheerfully, ‘This is how we used to do it, Youth,’ shoved it in the crack, hitched a sling round it and clipped in the rope. As soon as he moved up the chockstone flew out of the crack, narrowly missing my head, but Doug carried on regardless – blithely calm, assured and fluent, supremely at ease with the rock.

There were other meetings, occasionally sharing a lecture platform, once having the unenviable task of having to keep Doug confined to a strict timetable dovetailing with the arrival of the Queen for an Everest anniversary. Conversation, like his lecturing – or indeed his expeditioning – could be enigmatic, discursive, elliptical, often veering off the beaten track into untrodden side valleys, but always with an undercurrent of humour. And never pulling rank: he was a humble, approachable man, happy to talk with anyone. The meeting that made the biggest impression on me was in 1987 in the village of Nyalam, in Tibet. It was the end of an expedition and we had just put a new route up Pungpa Ri, which Doug had climbed five years earlier. Also staying at the Chinese hostel were members of Doug’s current team who had been attempting the Northeast Ridge of Everest.

Doug himself turned up later, just back from a gruelling road journey from Rongbuk, across the border to Nepal, then up to Sola Khumbu, then all the way back across the border to wind up the expedition in Tibet. The reason? A young Sherpa man who had been helping his

expedition had been killed in an avalanche near base camp during a huge storm two weeks earlier. Doug had taken it on himself to travel all the way to the man's family in Nepal, to tell them personally what had happened and to ensure that they received financial compensation.

That empathy with the people of Nepal came to fruition in his remarkable charity, Community Action Nepal. There was a precedent in Ed Hillary's Himalayan Trust, but what I like about CAN is that it does not concentrate its efforts exclusively on the most popular region of Sola Khumbu, but also has projects in other regions such as the Buri Gandaki near Manaslu. Most impressive of all is the way Doug financed it over the last two decades. At an age when most people in his position would be happy to rest on their laurels, perhaps accepting the occasional lucrative guest appearance, Doug travelled the length and breadth of the country on gruelling lecture tours – often only just out of hospital, after yet another operation on the old Ogre injuries that had come back to haunt him – pouring all the proceeds into his charity. Lecture fees were topped up by sales of Nepalese crafts and auctions of Doug's most classic photographs. Doug the auctioneer was a force to behold, as he mesmerised and cajoled audience members into donating ever more astronomical sums for a signed photograph.



Doug Scott at the Climbers' Club dinner in 2009 © Mick Ryan

As if running a charity were not enough, Doug also managed in recent years to complete a fine history of The Ogre, and finally to publish the long-awaited autobiography for which Hodder & Stoughton first paid an advance in 1975. His history of Kangchenjunga will be published next year. For a man who had once been a bit wary of institutions, he made an enthusiastic and much liked Alpine Club President. He also stood for election to the BMC presidency, asking the journalist Steve Goodwin to help with his manifesto. Steve phoned me in despair to say that the opening paragraph was all about Doug's compost heap. Myself, I also have a profound relationship with my compost heap, and I can see exactly where Doug was coming from. But in the shiny corporate world of modern convenience climbing it wasn't going to be a vote winner. Alas, Doug did not get the presidency. A great loss to us all, in my opinion.

He was a man of principle – visionary and adventurous, but in some ways quite conservative, rooted in traditions which he valued. One of those traditions was the notion that if we climbers are going to spend our lives doing something that has no ostensible practical purpose, then it is important how we carry out that pursuit. And for Doug, if I have understood him correctly, paramount in that 'how' were notions of curiosity, personal responsibility, risk and a willingness to embrace – even seek out – uncertainty.

It is always inspiring to see someone happy in their work. Despite the frenetic pace he set himself and his devoted third wife Trish, Doug seemed in recent years to have achieved the kind of contentment that many people only dream of. He had a genuine sense of purpose and an assured legacy. He was a man who seemed at ease with himself and the world. He will be missed hugely here, in Nepal and all round the world, but most of all by Trish and by the five children of his first two marriages. I feel honoured to have known him and glad that if I should ever have grandchildren I will be able to tell them, 'I climbed Cenotaph Corner with Doug Scott'.

Courtesy: www.ukclimbing.com

Col(retd) Narinder “Bull” Kumar- One Of The Most accomplished Adventurer In The Country.

Manik Banerjee



Colonel (retd) Narinder “Bull” Kumar

24th May 1960. Three members of the first summit party of maiden Indian Everest Expedition set out from their last camp to reach the top of world’s highest mountain . But Capt Narinder Kumar, Nowang Gombu and Sonam Gyatso had to abodone their attempt when they were just about seven hundred feet short of their coveted goal because of extreme bad weather.

During a visit to Darjeeling as part of my journalism study tour I met (then) Lt. Col Narinder Kumar, the fourth principal of the prestigious Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI) in Darjeeling for the second time. He invited me to act as honorary instructor at the ensuing Adventure Course and this time I was to interact with him closely during my three weeks stay there. He received me warmly and a bond was established which remained intact until the legendary mountaineer passed away on December 30 at the Army Research & Referral Hospital in New Delhi, bringing an end to an illustrious and impactful career in mountaineering and allied sports spanning more than six decades.

Col Kumar, popularly known as ‘Bull’ Kumar among his friends and in adventure sports circles, was perhaps the first Indian adventurer who excelled in various adventure activities. Besides being a fine climber he proved his organising capacity as the deputy leader of the first successful Indian Everest expedition in 1965 and then leading the first

successful Indian Army Expedition to Kangchenjunga in 1977.

In administration too he showed his mettle as principal of HMI, Darjeeling, and of the Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering (IISM), Gulmarg, and as Commandant of the High Altitude Warfare School (HAWS).

He was the first to organise a successful rafting expedition on the Teesta in Sikkim, the Indus in Ladakh and the Brahmaputra in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh during the 1960s, '70s and later years. He also led the first successful Indian skiing expedition which skied down from the summit of Trisul (7120 m) in 1976.

Perhaps his finest hour was his leadership of the 1977 Indian Army team which made the first Indian ascent of Kangchenjunga (8586 m), climbing by its uncharted northeast spur on the Indian side. For this he was awarded the PVSM, becoming the first Lt Colonel to receive it. He also led an expedition which made the first ascent of Chomolhari, the highest mountain in Bhutan during 1970.

But the country will also remember him most for his pioneering exploration of the Siachen glacier, during which ascents of Teram Kangri II (7407 m) and Sia Kangri (7442 m) were made in the late 1970s and early '80s. It was Col Kumar's exploratory work that helped India secure the strategic Siachen glacier. In recognition, there is a battalion HQ on Siachen Glacier named Kumar Base, a key forward logistics post at 4880 m.

During his tenure at IISM, Gulmarg he, on behalf of IMF, organised the International Mountaineers' Meet Climbing Camp at Lidderwat, Kashmir, in 1973. Top international climbers including Chris Bonington (UK), Jean Coudray and Maurice Jiquel of EMSA, Chamonix, France and others demonstrated the latest advancements in climbing technique and gear.

Early in his mountaineering career, he had several toes amputated due to frostbite during the expedition to Nilkantha which he led in 1961. His subsequent accomplishments took place despite this.

Born on December 8, 1933 in an illustrious family of Rawalpindi in undivided India, the strong and stout Narinder had an affinity for the



Col Kumar (Principal) with Adventure Course students, at HMI
Tenzing Norgay and Chanchal Mitra are also in the picture.

outdoors from a very young age. At 13, as a schoolboy, he went to Paris in 1947 to attend a Boy Scouts Jamboree, representing India.

Following in his elder brother's footsteps, he joined the Joint Services Wing which is now called the National Defence Academy. At Military College, now the Indian Military Academy, he participated in cycle polo and boxing. Here he was given the nickname "Bull" for charging like a raging bull during boxing bouts. He was commissioned in Kumaun Regiment in June 1954.

Col Kumar was conferred the Padma Shri and also the Arjuna Award for the Indian success on Everest in 1965.

He was awarded the Kirti Chakra, Vishisht Seva Medal (VSM) and Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) for distinguished service to the Indian Army.

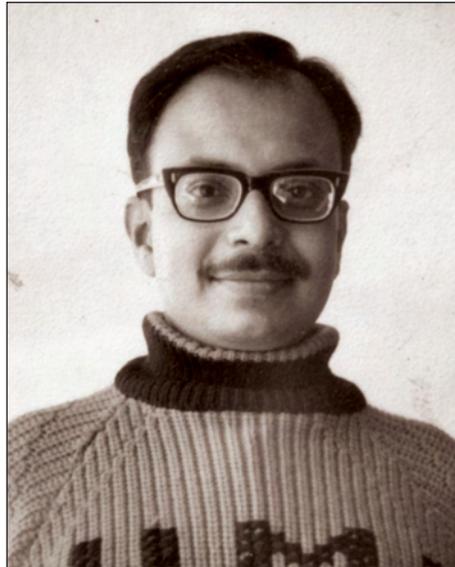
In 2010 he received the MacGregor Medal awarded by the United Services Institution of India for the best military reconnaissance, exploration or survey in remote areas. He also received the Indian Mountaineering Foundation Gold Medal.

He served as IMF vice-president and member of the governing council for several years and headed the Winter Games Federation of India from 1996 to 2006.

Col Kumar is survived by his wife, Mridula, and daughter, Sailaja. Sailaja represented India in the Calgary Winter Olympics in 1988 in alpine skiing — the first Indian woman Winter Olympian. His son, Akshay, a whitewater sports enthusiast and adventure travel professional, died in September 2020.

[Chanchal Kumar Mitra](#)
[\(1934 – 2020\)](#)

Manik Banerjee



Chanchal Mitra

October 9, 1966. The expedition organised by Himalayan Association of Kolkata and led by Chanchal Kumar Mitra made the first ascent of 23,210 feet Tirsuli in Kumaun Himalaya. A day earlier the leader saw the summit party off from camp four after overseeing the spot for camp five and the subsequent route to the summit there after. Instead of joining the summit party, Mitra preferred to go down and organise a second summit team which in case of emergency would be able to act as a support to the first party.

Tirsuli used to be known as a killer mountain and thwarted back three expeditions including one by a Polish team in 1939 and the pre-Everest

expedition organised by Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) and led by Commander M S Kohli in 1964. While two of the Polish members died in an avalanche in 1939, several tents in a higher camp were destroyed, also by an avalanche, during the pre-Everest attempt. Luckily all the members were out of that camp at that time.

Mitra's decision proved to be very correct as one of the members of the first summit team sustained frost bite while returning to the last camp after the ascent of the peak. The second summit party had to forego their attempt but helped bring the frost bitten member safely to the base camp.

Ascent of Tirsuli in 1966 is still considered to be a landmark event in Indian mountaineering as this was the first civilian expedition in



Chanchal Mitra (standing just behind Prime Minister wearing black blazer and along with Tirsuli '66 summiters Shyamal Chakraborty (standing extreme left and Nirapada Mullik (extreme right) with Hon. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during 1967 Republic Day Parade in Delhi.

the country which made the first ascent of a peak of such magnitude. The expedition was very highly acclaimed and its leader Chanchal Kumar Mitra received accolades from various dignitaries including Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, IMF President Harish Chandra Sarin and various mountaineering organisations and clubs in the country for his excellent leadership. Mitra and other members of the expedition were also invited to take part in the 1967 Republic Day Parade in Delhi where IMF put up a tableau.

As a student of class VI he visited Kurseong and Darjeeling in 1944. He was so overwhelmed by the magnificent view of Kangchenjunga that he made three more visits to Darjeeling within next four years. A bond was made between Mitra and the Himalaya which lasted throughout his life.

Mitra, popularly known as Chanchalda by his juniors in mountaineering fraternity, began his trekking in Himalaya during 1958 when he visited Kedarnath, Badrinath and Mana covering a distance of about two hundred miles from Rudraprayag. This was followed by a trek to Yomunotri, Gangotri and Tapovan in 1961. The same year he became a member of Himalayan Association, Kolkata –the pioneer mountaineering club in eastern India and participated in their venture which made the first ascent of Nilgiti Parvat in Garhwal Himalaya in 1962.

He completed his basic and advance mountaineering training from HMI, Darjeeling in 1964. He then took part in Himalayan Association's first attempt on Tirsuli led by K P Sharma in 1965. The venture made a valiant attempt but was turned back by extreme bad weather. Earlier in the year Mitra was one of the main organisers for holding the first Rock climbing training course at Sushunia Hills under Bankura district of West Bengal. He also acted as one of the instructors there. Then came Himalayan Association's second attempt on Tirsuli with Mitra as the leader. His unique success on Tirsuli not only proved his mettle as a fine leader, it also propelled West Bengal at the forefront of Indian mountaineering.

After Tirsuli, Mitra led a couple of more expeditions - both in Kumaon Himalaya. One was to Hardeol which was the first attempt on the

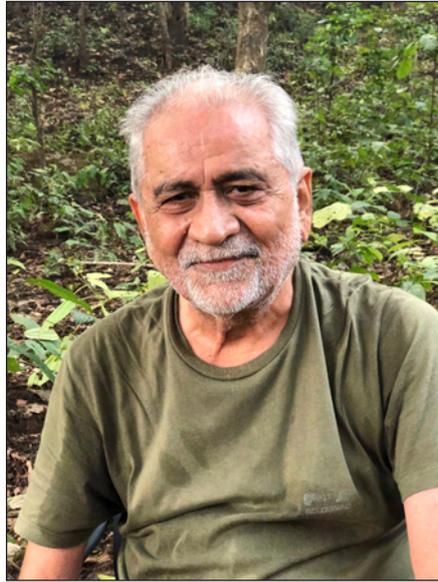
23,460 feet high peak. The other one was to Panchachulli I and II through Darma Valley in 1970 which was the first NCC (National Cadet Corps) expedition in the country. Shri Mitra, beside being a college professor, was a NCC officer with a rank of Captain. In 1974 he joined Himalayan Association venture on Nital Thaur in Kumaun which was the maiden attempt on this mountain. During 1975 Mitra along NIM instructor Harsh Muni Nautiyal made the first ascent of a 20480 feet high unnamed peak in Kalindi Khal area of Garhwal Himalaya. The team which also included two other members Anil Deb Roy and Ashish Roy Chowdhury then reached Badrinath after crossing Kalindi Khal. Thereafter Mitra mostly concentrated on trekking in different parts of Himalaya including Green Lake in Sikkim. After about three decades he again participated in a venture in Himalaya as a member of the West Sikkim The Himalayan Exploration organised by Kolkata section of The Himalayan Club during 2003.

I had the opportunity to be with him during four of the expeditions including Tirsuli '66. His planning of the expeditions used to be immaculate. As a leader he could generate team spirit and comradeship among the members. He was a very good photographer and took fine photos of the expeditions and trekkings he participated. His reports on his different ventures were accurate and informative which proved to be very helpful for the others. Mitra had a vast knowledge on mountaineering literature and had edited first two volumes of Himalayan Association Journal.

Chanchalda was born in 1934 and belonged to noted Mitra family of north Kolkata but shifted home to south Kolkata in latter part of his life. He remained a bachelor but was close to his cousins, nephews and nieces. For the last few years he was not keeping well. Since October 2019 he was staying with his nephew Shri Shivaji Dam. Even during February 2020 he attended the Himalayan Club AGM. I met him during that time. But little did I know that it would be our last meeting as the doyen of West Bengal mountaineering left for his heavenly abode on December 4, 2020 leaving a big void amidst mountaineering fraternity.

Ashwin Popat

Harish Kapadia



(1943-2021)

Ashwin Popat was a Life Member of The Himalayan Club. In a close-knit trekking community loss of a companion is always sad. He was my long-standing trekking friend, though ailing for a while, still till the end he was thinking of hills. Weakened by medical treatment, looking almost a skeleton, first thing he did was to climb a hill near his house. The hill may be small but the spirit he showed was high.

We first met on a trek in the local hills and we got on fabulously, went for treks into remote areas, climbed many hill forts in a span of almost four decades. Those were the fun-days when we simply packed rucksack with some food and branched off to a fort of Shivaji in the hills near Mumbai, walked through villages, climbing steep trails in sun and sleep in a cave. There were no other groups and the entire fort just belonged to us. There were chats about mountains, family, business and life between our close group of friends.

Ashwin was a different person. He was a successful architect who developed many high buildings. It was a high-pressure job though he was very creative. Ultimately tired of the world of finance and buildings, which was never straight forward, he decided to wind up his business and devote more time to life in nature and travelling. With his family he

travelled to the Arctic, Antarctic, Amazon Forest, Northern Lights, Tibet and Nepal; thoroughly enjoying various aspects of nature. During all this while his love for the Himalaya remained supreme. He made trips to the forest of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal, Uttarakhand and several areas with different companions. He was a romantic at heart, joking with friends, loved good food and enjoyed a walk every morning to a hill near to his house.

Likes of him are nowadays rare who would give up many material things for nature and concentrate on enjoying life. He will be sorely missed by all of us. His daughters Urmi and Jasmine are very capable and looked after the entire family during his sickness. He enjoyed with his grandson Arrav. Our condolences to them and his wife Shankuntala whose loss is the greatest.

I'm sure his heart would be living in hills wherever he is.

News and Personalities

Pakistan's Ali Sadpara: The climber who never came back from K2

By M Ilyas Khan, BBC News, Islamabad ,15th Feb,2021

Missing climber Mohammad Ali Sadpara and two others who went missing earlier this month while attempting to scale the world's second-highest mountain have been officially declared dead.

But Sadpara will be remembered as a versatile climber by the international community of mountaineers, and a hero in his native Pakistan.

He is the only Pakistani to have climbed eight of the world's 14 highest mountains, and he made the first ever winter ascent of the world's ninth highest peak, Nanga Parbat.

On Friday 5 February, he went missing along with two others - Iceland's John Snorri and Chile's Juan Pablo Mohr - while trying to climb K2, the world's second highest peak at 8,611m (28,251 ft) and also reputedly the deadliest.

His son Sajid was also a member of the team and the idea was for the father-and-son duo to summit K2 without oxygen, a feat never

done before in winter. But Sajid had to turn back from a spot called the Bottleneck - also known as the “death zone”, some 300 metres from the top - after he felt sick.

Afterwards, he helped military-led rescue teams scour the mountain for signs of his father and the other two men.

On Thursday, the search was officially called off - and all three climbers declared dead.

“K2 has embosomed my father forever,” Sajid told reporters at a press conference, according to a report by the Express Tribune.

“Pakistan has lost a brave and celebrate climber, while our family has lost a loving and caring head.”

How did Mohammad Ali Sadpara start climbing?

Mohammad Ali Sadpara was born in 1976 in Sadpara, a village in one of the river valleys of the Himalayan Baltistan region in Pakistan’s extreme north.

Livestock farming is the main source of livelihood in the region, and the area’s youth also work as porters with Western mountaineers and adventure tourists who frequent the region each year.

Sadpara finished middle school in the village and his father, a low-grade government employee, later moved the family to Skardu town, where Sadpara studied up to higher secondary school before moving onto climbing.

Nisar Abbas, a local journalist and relative and friend of Sadpara from their village days, describes him as being extraordinary right from his childhood.

“He had the physique and the habits of an athlete, and was also good in studies. He never failed a class. Since his elder brother never did well in school, his father was keen to get him a good education and that’s why he moved him to Skardu.”

Given the family’s financial constraints, he moved to climbing in around 2003 or 2004.

“He was an instant success with tour operators because the expeditions

he led were mostly successful. He earned worldwide fame in 2016 when a three-man team he was a member of became the first to summit Nanga Parbat in winter.

Hamid Hussain, a Karachi-based tour operator from Skardu who has known Sadpara since 2012, has similar memories.

Left out to freeze on K2

K2 climber aborts solo winter ascent

Irish climbers conquer peak within 24 hours of each other



Hamid Hussein

“He was brave, and pleasant and very friendly,” he says. “And he was so physically fit. We trekked together on many occasions, and while there were times when we would run out of breath and collapse, he would still jog up the steep slopes and then shout back at us, asking us to be quick.”

On one occasion in the winter of 2016, during a trek from Sadpara valley to the Alpine planes of Deosai, when freezing winds caught them in a snow-filled gorge and sent shivers down their spines, they saw him climb smoothly up the slope and start dancing over the ridge.

Ali Sadpara had been in tight spots before, and he knew the risks.

“I have lost 12 of my 14 colleagues in the mountaineering business. Two of us remain,” he said in a 2019 interview. “So my friends now often ask me, Ali, when are you going to die?”

Why summit K2 without oxygen?

One theory is that he was working as a high-altitude porter for John Snorri and had to comply with the agreement he had signed with him.

But that was just a ruse, Nisar Abbas says. Weeks earlier, Sadpara had openly expressed his keenness to make the attempt after a 10-member Nepalese team led by the famous Nirmal Purja became the first-ever to



Ali Sadpara playing drums on a jerry can with a Dutch group during a K2 trek in 2012 summit K2 in winter.

And in order to set a new record, Sadpara wanted to do it too - but without oxygen. And he also wanted his son to be there when it happened.

Sajid, his son, told the media that they had started out with some 25 to 30 climbers, local and foreign, but all of them turned back before hitting the 8,000-metre point.

Sajid's own condition worsened when they hit the Bottleneck.

"We had carried an oxygen cylinder in our emergency gear. My father told me to take it out and use some. It will make me feel better."

But while Sajid was setting up the cylinder, its mask regulator sprang a leak.

Meanwhile, his father and the two foreigners continued to scale the Bottleneck. His father then looked back and shouted to Sajid to keep climbing.

"I shouted that the cylinder had leaked. He said, 'don't worry, keep climbing, you'll feel better'. But I couldn't gather the strength to do it, and decided to turn back. It was around noon on Friday. That was the last I saw of them."

When asked why Sadpara insisted that he keep going, Sajid said: "The

Nepalese had done it weeks earlier, and he wanted to do it too, because K2 is our mountain.”

What could have happened?

Sajid says he saw the three men climb over the bottleneck at the top, which means that they probably did make it to the summit.

Experts say most accidents happen while descending, as even a slight loss of balance can send one crashing down into an abyss.

Those who knew Sadpara doubt he would have made such an error.

People in his village still recall more than one occasion when a goat Sadpara was tending in the mountains got injured, and instead of slitting its throat, as others would, he'd haul it over his shoulders and walk all the way down to take it to the village vet.

They suspect that he probably failed to make it back because one or both of his partners met with an accident and he stayed on trying to find a way to save them.

We will probably never know.

People in the area had been awaiting a miracle.

But given the hostile environment, low oxygen and winter temperatures dipping to as low as -80C, there's little chance the men could have survived a week at over 8,000m, his son had said.

“This hasn't happened in climbing history, so we can only hope for a miracle,” Sajid Sadpara had earlier told the BBC.

On Thursday, after his father's death was officially declared, Sajid vowed to continue following in his footsteps.

“To all the climbers... who look up to him. I promise I will carry on his dreams and mission and continue to walk in his footsteps.”

Courtesy BBC News

Nepali climbers make history with winter summit of K2 mountain

By M Ilyas Khan, BBC News, Islamabad, 16th Jan, 2021



The Nepali climbers are the first to summit K2 during its dangerous winter season

A team of 10 Nepali climbers has set a new world record by becoming the first to reach the summit of K2, the world's second highest mountain, in winter.

Mountaineer Nimsdai Purja, a member of the group, said they reached the peak at 17:00 local time (12:00 GMT).

Dozens of climbers have been on the 8,611m (28,251ft) mountain this winter hoping to achieve the same feat.

But one Spanish mountaineer has died after suffering a fall this weekend while descending.

K2, which is only 200m shorter than Everest, is part of the Karakoram Range that straddles the Pakistan-China border.

One of only 14 mountains higher than 8,000m, it is widely considered the most demanding of all in winter.

It has long been referred to as "the savage mountain", a name that stuck after US mountaineer George Bell said of his own attempt in 1953: "It is a savage mountain that tries to kill you."

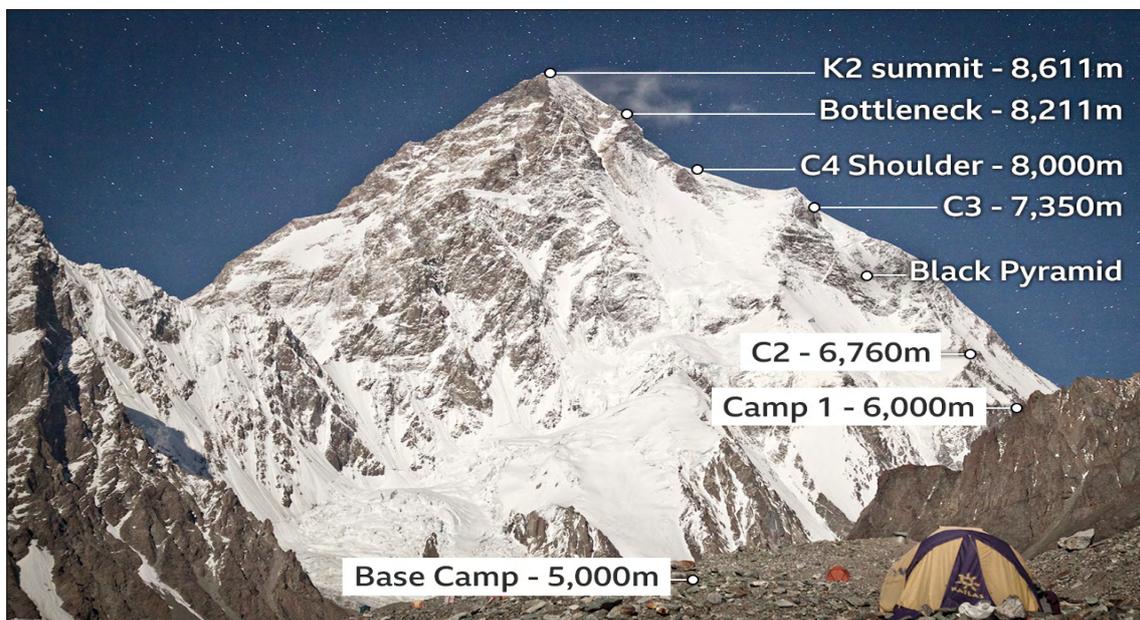
Among the most treacherous sections is the notorious “bottleneck”, a couloir liable to icefalls. Eleven climbers were killed there in an avalanche in 2008.

Left out to freeze on K2

K2 climber aborts solo winter ascent

Irish climbers conquer peak within 24 hours of each other

The Nepali climbers were initially spread across three of four competing teams - in all, totalling 60 people. But the 10 Nepalis later formed into a



Source : Alex Gavan

single group to claim the historic achievement in Nepal’s name.

Mountaineer Nirmal Purja - a former member of the UK’s Special Boat Service - shared an image of the group celebrating their achievement, which was confirmed by expedition organiser Seven Summit Treks.

“We are proud to have been a part of history for humankind and to show that collaboration, teamwork and a positive mental attitude can push limits to what we feel might be possible,” said Mr Purja.

Since the first attempt in 1987-1988, just a handful of winter expeditions have been attempted on K2. Until now, none has reached higher than 7,650 metres.

Nepali guides, usually ethnic Sherpas, are considered the backbone of

the climbing industry around the Himalayas, and regularly help foreign mountaineers on expeditions.

News of the group's success on Saturday has been praised on social media and sparked joy within the Nepalese climbing community - often left out of the spotlight.

"For decades, Nepalis have assisted foreigners to reach the summits of the Himalayas, but we've not been getting the recognition we deserve," said Kami Rita, speaking to AFP.

"It is wonderful that today on K2 10 Nepalis have made history and shown our bravery and strength," added Mr Rita, who has climbed Everest a record 24 times.

As news of their success broke, it was also confirmed that another climber, Spaniard Sergi Mingote, died after experiencing a severe fall.

Mr Mingote, 49, was based with another team and had been descending to K2's base camp when he slipped and fell.

An experienced mountaineer, Mr Mingote had previously climbed seven of the world's so-called "8000ers", including Everest.

He had been attempting to summit K2 without oxygen but became severely fatigued, forcing him to abandon the expedition.

Courtesy BBC News

High-altitude birds evolved thicker ‘jackets’

Victoria Gill, Science correspondent, BBC News



The Smithsonian has one of the world’s largest bird collections, with specimens dating back to the 1860s

A study of 250 species of Himalayan songbirds has revealed how their feathers evolved for higher altitudes.

The birds in colder, more elevated environments had feathers with more fluffy down - providing them with thicker “jackets”.

The insight reveals how feathers provide the tiniest birds with such efficient protection from extreme cold.

It also provides clues about which species are most at risk from climate change, the scientists say.

Traffic noise impairs songbirds’ abilities

Ivory from shipwreck reveals elephants’ decline

How the blackest fish in the sea ‘disappear’

The study, in the journal *Ecography*, was inspired by a tiny bird lead researcher Dr Sahas Barve saw during an icy day of fieldwork in the

Himalayas, in 2014.

“It was -10C,” said the researcher from the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, in Washington DC.

“And there was this little bird, a Goldcrest, which weighs about the same as a teaspoon of sugar.

“It was just zipping around catching bugs.”

Dr Barve’s fingers went numb as he tried to take notes.

But he remembers being “blown away by the little Goldcrest”.

“To survive, this bird has to keep its heart at about 40C,” he said.

“So it has to maintain a difference of 50C in that little space.



Victoria Gill

“I was like, ‘OK, I really need to understand how feathers work.’”

Fortunately, Dr Barve’s home institution has one of the largest bird collections in the world.

Examining the feathers of nearly 2,000 individual birds, in microscopic detail, he noticed a pattern linked their structure to their habitat.

Each feather has an outer part and a hidden downy portion.

And Dr Barve’s measurements revealed those living at higher elevations had more of the lower fluffy down.

“They had fluffier jackets,” he said.

Smaller birds, which lose heat faster, also tend to have longer feathers in proportion to their body size, revealing the little goldcrest’s secret.

Dr Carla Dove, who runs the museum’s Feather Identification Lab and contributed to the study, said she was excited to use the Smithsonian’s collections in a new way.

“Having them all in one place, as opposed to having to go to the Himalayas and study these birds in the wild, obviously makes a big difference,” she said.



Aditya Chavan

Dr Barve said: “It would take me a decade to go out, find the birds and study their feathers.

“We’ve been using down jackets for a long time.

“But we haven’t understood how those feathers work on a bird.

“We don’t know what discoveries our specimens will be used for down the line.

“That’s why we have to maintain them and keep enhancing them.

“These specimens from the past can be used to predict the future.”

Courtesy BBC News

Himalayan Tit Bit

There are many reminiscent and memoir of Sir Francis Younghusband on the trail of his famous British expedition to Tibet in 1904. One such is a board beside the Kupup Lake on the Jelep La trail, which is given below.



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Published for The Himalayan Club

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