



The Himalayan Club
e-Letter



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Climbs, Treks and Explorations

Annapurna III

Interview with Mikhail Fomin: “It’s About Patience”

Angela Benavides



Mikhail Fomin. Photo: Ukrainian Annapurna III team

Ukrainians Viacheslav Polezhaiko, Nikita Balabanov, and Mikhail Fomin solved one of the classic problems in Nepal’s Himalaya: the Southeast Ridge of Annapurna III (7,555m).

Expeditions had attempted the nearly 3,000m-long ridge for the last 40 years without success. The Ukrainians themselves tried in 2019 but had to turn back at 6,300m because of deep, unstable snow. This time, they had better luck. Still, the going was much tougher than they had expected. Each of them lost 12 to 15kg.

The team assumed huge risks. The single push up the mountain lasted 18 days. They had food and fuel for 12 days. Despite optimistic forecasts, high winds pummeled them virtually every day. Once on top, the team started down a different side of the mountain, with no information or maps of the terrain.

Ensued a three-day nightmare in high winds. In the end, they successfully descended to the base of the ridge (5,000m). There, a helicopter took them

to Kathmandu, exhausted and suffering from frostbitten fingers.

On the way home, all Mikhail Fomin could think of was hugging his family again. He spent only a few hours in Kyiv, just long enough to pick up his wife, son, and daughter and whisk them away for a holiday in sunny Turkey. Still, he managed to find time to answer ExplorersWeb's questions.

"Everybody in the mountaineering world knows about the challenge of Annapurna III," Fomin said. "We all had to decide that we were ready for it. For some reason, this usually happens on my birthday, in the kitchen, after all the other guests have gone to sleep."

Big plans and lessons learned

The process was no different this time, when the climbers met in December 2018. "We had several options to choose from, but for all three of us, Annapurna III looked the most attractive and logical next step in our climbing careers," said Fomin. "We all wanted a big challenge and real adventure after several years of failure."

He is referring to their unsuccessful attempt at a new route on Gasherbrum I in 2017 and their merely classic route success on Broad Peak in 2018.

That kitchen confab was the beginning of a long relationship with Annapurna III. The first try was in 2019. Although it didn't go too well because of the



Endurance, technical skills, and loads of patience carried the Ukrainians up Annapurna III: Photo: Ukrainian Annapurna III team

rough conditions, they looked on it as the first round in a long-term quest.

“Annapurna III’s SE Ridge is such a tactically complicated route that any team should consider their first expedition there only a reconnaissance,” Fomin said.

He noted that a huge part of their success this year came because they showed up having learned their lessons. So what did they learn? Fomin listed three key things:

First, we learned how and where to acclimatize. This year, we acclimatized on the slopes of Annapurna IV. We also spent two nights at 6,900m, which allowed us to work effectively at high altitude on Annapurna III for the two weeks that the climb took.

Second, we discovered all the possible routes and conditions on the lower, snowy part of the route. We’re talking about 1,400 vertical metres — up to 6,000m. That whole section is a sort of “snow pillow”, which constitutes the tactical crux of the route.

Finally, we were able to evaluate our speed and how much food and fuel we needed. We also figured out how to optimize our climbing gear and its quantity and weight.



Annapurna III’s SE Ridge. Photo: Ukrainian Annapurna III team

Sticking to the rules of alpine style

In Nepal this fall, the team acclimatized in two laps, one up to 5,750m on the ridge between Annapurna III and Annapurna IV, and a second push up to Annapurna IV, with two nights at 6,900m. Those journeys prepared them for the main climb, which they did in a single, alpine-style push.

“We didn’t make any food or fuel deposits ahead of time on the route,” said Fomin. “And there was no preliminary reconnaissance, except for our 2019 attempt.” They wanted to climb in the “cleanest possible style and the fairest means, as Conrad Anker requested in his article about Annapurna III,” Fomin explained.

The Ukrainians feel that they are a well-balanced team. “We all have pretty comparable experience and skills, so we prefer to make decisions jointly,” said Fomin. “But the really good thing is that our characters complement each other when we need to make decisions.”



The team right after being airlifted back to civilization. Photo: Ukrainian Annapurna III team

Ex-Soviet toughness and “snow feeling”

“For example, Nikita [Balabanov] has a more weighted and conservative approach to decisions. I am more assertive and sometimes even pushy with my opinion. Slava [Polezhaiko] can see both points of view and helps facilitate discussions. And our mutual respect for each other allows us to make strong tactical decisions. I consider that to be one of the strongest aspects of our team.

“Our other core strength is pretty common in former USSR climbers — the ability to suffer silently for a long time. And on that route, this was crucial. We had to stay patient, to fight constantly with uncertainty, to eat little but climb fast, and so on.”

The last strength that Fomin wanted to highlight is Slava Polezhaiko's special "snow feeling".

"I have not seen any other alpinist who has such a fine feeling for different snow conditions that he has," said Fomin. "When he was leading on Annapurna III, he always had an ice ax in one hand and a snow shovel in the other. This was his main tool to progress on all kinds of funky snow terrain — knife-sharp snow ridges, mushrooms, cornices, and other shitty and scary stuff. On that route, what really defines your speed is how quickly and effectively you deal with snow terrain."

The climb

Mikhail Fomin described the climb stage by stage.

The lower snow/ice section – 4,600m to 6,100m

A bit of easy snow climbing at the beginning, followed by a series of snowy chutes and short sections of hard mixed climbing, led to a snow ridge. Here, we had sections of loose rocks covered with snow — hard to place protection, very loose and dangerous climbing. We spent four days here



On the lower, snowy slopes of Annapurna III. Photo: Ukrainian Annapurna III team and mostly climbed at night, for better snow.

This section was in much worse condition than during our 2019 attempt: less snow, much more exposed and steep sections of hard mixed climbing, and the same snow mushrooms in the middle part of the snow ridge.

As I mentioned, this was the tactical crux of the route, because you need more or less good snow conditions. The key is to spend as little effort and time here as possible.

The rock buttress – 6,100m to 7,100m

Now we entered the technical crux of the route. At 6,250m, there is a legendary chimney that you can clearly see in David Lama's video. It was one of the most rotten technical pitches I have ever climbed. Almost every rock you touched broke off, so you had to be very careful climbing and aiding it.

In general, from 6,100m to 6,500m, the quality of the rock is really bad. Only a couple of pitches have solid rock. Everything else is very loose.

At 6,500m, there is a "knife": a huge, snow-covered ledge, visible even from Pokhara.

This is the highest point previously reached by other climbing parties on that route. We spent a night on the snow mushroom on top of this knife. The next day, we approached the rock buttress above it and continued climbing this terra incognita. It took two days to climb the rock section (about 200m) and another two days to climb a 400m mixed section. Finally, we topped



The bivy on "the Knife". Photo: Ukrainian Annapurna III team

the buttress and reached the ridge leading to the summit.

Until this point, we managed to find decent bivy places where we could build ledges for our tent. All three of us could sleep lying down. But the last night before the ridge was really bad. We had to chop a ledge on a 50° ice slope and build it up using a snow hammock. In the end, we had room only to sit, so the next day, we all felt a bit sleepy. It took us nine days to cover this section.

Snow ridge to the summit – 6,100m to 7,555m

Here, there were no technical difficulties. It was just very cold and windy. The forecast reported winds of 100kph for those days, but we think it was less: about 70kph. Still, it was very hard to move in, so it took us 1.5 days to reach the summit from 7,100m.

Starting around 6,300m (it was Day 7 or so), we realized that we were not moving at our projected speed and we started rationing our supplies. This was the right decision because we were completely out of both food and fuel by the time we descended to the flat glacier below the West Face of Annapurna III, at 5,400m. From there, we just walked down to 5,000m, where the helicopter picked us up.

Reflections

Now back at home in Ukraine, Fomin concludes that the climb took longer than expected mainly because of the complexity and diversity of the terrain.

“Such loose rock required very delicate climbing. Sometimes we were afraid to kill our partners belaying us with the stones that were falling down,” he said.

“In snow terrain, you had to take your shovel to lead, because otherwise, it was so unconsolidated that you did not have solid footholds to progress. And in the mixed terrain, you’re dealing with lots of loose rocks covered by fresh



Loose rock section on Annapurna III: Photo: Ukrainian Annapurna III team

snow, so you have to be creative in finding ways to move forward.

“It felt like each day the mountain was presenting us with new intricate puzzles that we had to solve carefully, one by one,” Fomin said. “Moreover, each fresh puzzle extended your journey by another day. You had to be patient and find the inner resources to move on. So our initial estimate of 12 days round trip turned out to be 18 days.

“We consider patience to be one of the main qualities of an alpinist, and definitely Annapurna III developed this quality to a high degree. So we decided to name the route ‘Patience’.”

It is surprising, given such a professional team, that none of the three Ukrainians are full-time professional athletes. Explains Fomin: “Nikita is a mountain guide and he is supported by Mountain Equipment, Slava does some guiding in the mountains but mainly trains children and adult climbers as head of the mountaineering federation in Cherkasy [central Ukraine], and I work full-time in IT as a business analyst. I’m supported by Fram Equipment [a Ukrainian outdoor company].”

In fact, highly difficult climbs on 6,000’ers and 7,000’ers have usually not been as attractive to sponsors and wider audiences as the 8,000’ers, especially Everest and K2. Yet sectors of the public are increasingly critical of commercialized 8,000m climbing and applauding smaller teams doing slightly smaller, technical mountains in style. Says Fomin:

“As Denis Urubko said, climbing 6b at 8,000m is always harder than climbing 6b at sea level, and is always harder than climbing 6b at 7,000m. So climbing a new technical route on an 8,000’er is always much more challenging than a similar line on a 6,000m or 7,000m peak.

“I put commercial climbs on the other side of the universe. That is not alpinism at all. It is an expensive high-altitude attraction for people who love posting selfies on Instagram. But when somebody climbs a new route on an 8,000m peak alpine style, like Marek Holecek on Gasherbrum I in 2017, that is a real adventure and exploratory alpinism of the highest quality.”

What’s next?

The three climbers are already considering their next goal.

“We always have a list of targets which are potentially interesting for us,



For their next adventure, the Ukrainians have an 8,000m peak in mind. Photo: Ukrainian Annapurna III team

but since we usually do not have sponsors, we never announce our plans before the expedition,” says Fomin. “Instead we go, climb to the top, and only then make the announcement, just like we did on Annapurna III.”

Yet Fomin did leave us with a clue about their next expedition. “There are two candidates, both 8,000m, but we are all leaning toward one of them.”

<https://explorersweb.com/annapurna-iii-interview-with-mikhail-fomin-its-about-patience/>

Date : 23th November 2021

[French Duo Pioneers Spectacular Route Up Chamlang's Virgin North Face](#)

nepalitimes.com



Climbing The North Face

On October 11, French alpinists Charles Dubouloz, 32, and Benjamin Védrières, 29, made the first ascent of the North Face of Chamlang (7,319 meters), summiting after a three-day blitz. The duo christened their 5,250-foot route In the Shadow of Lies (WI5+ M5+ 90° ED).

Védrières, who is based out of Monnetier in the Southern Alps, was last on the mountain in 2019 with Nicolas Jean. At that time, he and Jean ascended the Northeast Couloir but only made it to a foresummit around 7,200 meters before turning around, as the latter was ill and they did not want to bivvy. That same year, Czech alpinists Marek Holeček and Zdeněk Hák received acclaim after tackling a new line on the peak's Northwest Face, but all attempts on Chamlang's North Face remained stymied until now.

Dubouloz, who lives in Annecy, near Chamonix, told Climbing that “the fact that Benjamin had already come [to Chamlang] was an advantage. Before leaving, we knew exactly the route we wanted to climb. Benjamin had precise pictures of the face so we studied where to go. I trusted him on the possibility of reaching the summit by this route,” he said. “We just needed good conditions to climb!”



Charles Dubouloz high on the North Face. (Benjamin Védrines)

The duo shared a base camp with another French expedition, consisting of Damien Tomasi, Fanny Tomasi, Aurelien Vaissiere, and Symon Welfringer, who were attempting the peak's North Pillar together, but did not succeed. "Chamlang is a coveted mountain. Especially by French people," Dubouloz quipped. He and Védrines acclimatized on Mera Peak (6,476 meters), which he called "the Nepali Mont Blanc" due to its low technical difficulty but comparatively high elevation. "However, it wasn't really a good memory for me because I was sick," he said. "Nausea and headache. The classic for a good acclimatization!"

Camp-to-camp, they completed *In the Shadow of Lies* in four days, with two bivvies on the way up and one on the way down. At 6 a.m. on October 9 they left their camp at 5,400 meters and climbed over half of the face, bedding down just below the route's crux pitches. The next day was much slower, and they climbed with care through the route's sustained vertical cruxes, chopping out a bivy ledge that evening. "It's difficult to be precise on the hours," Dubouloz said, "because we climbed all day long every day." They spent the entire climb without sunlight, in the cold shadow of the North Face, but encountered pristine weather, albeit with strong winds at the summit, which Dubouloz estimated at 25 mph.



*Dubouloz tackles one of several steep ice pitches on the upper mountain.
(Benjamin Védrières)*

He described their route as “very steep, in the shade, long, and continuous. The paradise for an alpine climber!” He also noted many similarities to Grande Jorasses, in the Mont Blanc range, but much longer and higher. “For me, it was the most demanding climb I’ve ever done,” Védrières wrote on Instagram, “both for the nights below the spindrift and for the pitches we had to climb.” Dubouloz told Climbing that he agreed completely. “It was very long and continuous. The first climbing day was much steeper than we imagined, and during our two bivies we didn’t sleep much because of the spindrift. All night [there was] spindrift on the tent.”

He added that the second bivy, at 6,700 meters, was the worst of his entire life. “Snow was coming in the tent onto our sleeping bag constantly. It is a good memory now, but on the 11th of October, it was hard to start the day. In the Alps we’ve climbed harder pitches of ice and mixed,” he admitted, “but on Chamlang it was very continuous. With the elevation, the cold, the tiredness, well, this made it the most demanding climb of [my] life, too.”

Dubouloz wasn’t sure exactly how many pitches they climbed in total but estimated there were at least ten pitches of stout WI5+. “Ice protection was often good,” he said, “but sometimes it was hard to protect and to build a belay. When there wasn’t enough ice, we had to look for good



(Charles Dubouloz)

cracks in the rock, but the rock was really bad. All the right ingredients for a good alpine recipe!”

He described the crux pitch as “a really brittle and touchy snowfield.” Védrines led the way across this avalanche-prone section, “but it was a long left crossing and for me, with the big bag on my back,

it was not a pleasant time,” Dubouloz said. “The second day was the [overall] crux day, on the steeper part of the face. All pitches were steep and intense, sometimes with mixed climbing. But fortunately, the ice conditions were great. If they hadn’t been, we couldn’t have succeeded!”

He said that the name of their route (In The Shadow of Lies) “comes from the fact that climbers sometimes lie about their performance,” particularly on remote, big mountain lines. “Moreover, routes in the Himalayas are not often repeated, so it is really difficult to verify the grade that climbers announce.”

Dubouloz arrived back home the day he spoke with Climbing and said he plans to rest with his family for a few days before returning to the Alps to do more climbing. “Conditions are looking good in the Mont Blanc range,” he said.

[First Ascent of the butterfly peak \(Fyanlabte\)](#)

Rajesh Gadgil



Summit Camp 5800 m. on Fyanlabte peak.

A five member team from The Himalayan Club consisting of Vineeta Muni, Rajesh Gadgil, Rajendra Shinde, Atin Sathe and Divyesh Muni explored a branch of the Kharcha valley in Spiti and made the first ascent of peak (6065 m) in August 2021. The peak is located on the junction of Karcha valley, Gyundi valley and Bara Shigri glacier.

The team had set out to explore the Gyundi nala. However, on an initial reconnaissance of the entrance to the Gyundi nala from Hull village on the Kaza

– Kunzum la road, the team realised that the heavy rain/snowfall of the previous few weeks had resulted in very high water levels in the Gyundi nala making it very difficult for the team to proceed with loads into valley.



On the summit of --Fyanlabte 6065 m. (Butterfly Peak)

The team switched to Plan B, i.e. exploration of the branch of the Kharcha valley that leads to the Bara Shigri glacier, which remained unexplored by them during the last visit by the team in 2018.

Base Camp was established on 8th August 2021 at “Gharelu” (4500 m.) on the junction of the Kharcha nala with the valley leading to the Bara Shigri glacier.



Climbers on the dividing ridge between Kharcha Nala and Bara Shigri Glacier.

Advance Base Camp was established on 11th August at a height of 5000 m. Camp 1 was set up at the turn of the glacier on its true right at a height of 5500 m.

We explored a possible entry to the Gyundi nala from the south of Ache Peak (which we climbed in 2018 from its East). It would be a steep descent to the Gyundi with a lot of loose scree and broken rock. A high snow line would surely make it easier earlier in the year.

A visit to the dividing ridge between Kharcha nala and the Bara Shigri glacier was very rewarding. This ridge formed a divide between the glacier flowing from Lion peak on its south and the glacier flowing from the base of Ache Peak on its North. One could connect to the Bara

Shigri glacier by descending South from the ridge and keeping west of Central peak. The ridge line with the two glaciers on its flanks and a peak at its south eastern end looked like a butterfly. We decided to attempt our peak from a summit camp on the ridge line at around 5800m.

Summit camp was occupied on 24th August. Unfortunately, on 25th, we got news of the demise of Vineeta's father. Divyesh and Vineeta returned to Mumbai. Rajesh, Atin and Rajendra made the first ascent of peak (6065 m) on 26 August 2021 from its north west ridge supported by Lendup Bhutia, Phupu Sherpa and Vipin Sharma. We named the peak Fyanlabte meaning Butterfly in local (Lahauli) language.

The weather turned bad, forcing the team to wind up the expedition. They cleared all the camps and were at Batal, our road head on 01 September 2021.

[Kang Yatse II and Ripono Malai Ri- Expedition](#) [HC Kolkata section](#)

Anindya Mukherjee



High Camp at around 5400m and a red dotted line showing the route of ascent to Kang Yatse II (6140m) summit.

Between 22nd to 31st August, 2021, a small team from The Himalayan Club Kolkata section led by Nilay Chakraborty spent some quality time in the Markha valley of Ladakh Himalaya. During the first two days of their sojourn, the 5 member team conducted two free medical camps in the Markha and Hangkar villages. During the medical camps the team also did a socio-economic survey among a cross section of local netizens. After successfully completing the camps and associated scholarly surveys the team moved up to the Kang Yatse base camp on the 26th August. The team here split in two and focussed their attention in carry-camp and climb style on two different objectives- Reponi Malai Ri (6050m) and Kang Yatse II (6140m). While Dr. Kallol Das and Nilay Chakraborty pushed towards Reponi Malai Ri, Partha Das, Amit Kumar Bal and Anindya Mukherjee busied themselves with the task of climbing Kang Yatse II. Two consecutive bad weather days (28 and 29) eventually forced the two teams to take crucial decisions on their respective summit pushes. Both teams established their ABCs and attempted the respective



Partha Das on the summit of KY II with the HC flag. The connecting ridge between KY I (6400m) and II visible behind the left hand of Partha and the snowy pyramid of Kang Yatse III (6310m) located due south of KY I and the unnamed glacier (marked as 'south glacier' by Mike Ratty in HJ 52)

peaks. While the Reponi Malai Ri team found the complete whiteout conditions pointless in climbing further and returned from a high point



Point reached on Riponi Malai Ri marked with black arrow. (Nilay Chakraborty)

of around 5800m, the Kang Yatse team pushed irrespective of the compromised visibility and incessant snowfall. Finally on 30th August at around 11am, Partha Das and Anindya Mukherjee reached the summit of Kang Yatse II. They had climbed not only in alpine style but also without support from any HAP or Guide or by using fixed rope en route. It was pure alpinism in practice. Right after reaching the summit the weather became a bit kind and the summitteers could capture documentary photos of the surrounding peaks. The next day, 31st August the whole team walked all the way to Chokdo by crossing the Kongmaru la. Thus



Medical camp at Markha village (Nilay Chakraborty)

ended a short, lightweight and socially responsible expedition. Team members: Nilay Chakraborty (leader), Dr. Kallol Das, Amit Kumar Bal, Partha Das and Anindya Mukherjee. Base camp support was provided by Rigzin Chotak of Mero Expeditions.

Article

[The lyrical life of Desmond Doig](#)

nepalitimes.com

The flowers in the Shangrila Hotel garden in Lazimpat were newly planted, and the trees still small and immature. I sensed Desmond Doig arrival without turning in my chair – the air was charged with energy as he swept onto the lawn with a posse of acolytes and armfuls of architectural drawings. Desmond was never one to travel alone. “Hello, Ia. What a glorious day!” he called to me, before issuing instructions with much arm waving to those in his wake.



Desmond Doig

Although his name may no longer be a household word in Kathmandu and Kolkata - “Cal” as he called it - his lyrical influence and ringing enthusiasm still reverberates. Desmond was an editor, writer, painter, designer,

photographer, expeditioner and conservationist – a Renaissance man, although more accurately a Kathmandu everyman. After he retired here in the late 1970s, his passion for the Valley’s magic never failed to inspire us, and he delighted in its vibrant living artistry and people – the “ethnic mosaic” and “crucible of culture” to use his own words.

Born of Anglo Irish parents in India, Desmond studied in Kurseong, served with the Gurkhas in WWII, and made his name as a reporter with *The Statesman*. His weekly *Artist’s Impressions* series captured Calcutta’s fast-vanishing old buildings and monuments before they



Desmond Doig in Boudha circa 1980-81

disappeared forever. As founding editor of *The Junior Statesman*, a cult youth magazine of yesteryear known as just JS, he hired a team of legendary journoes including Jug Suraiya and Dubby Bhagat. He was first to bring the world’s attention to an obscure Albanian nun named Mother Teresa, and with his friend Sir Edmund Hillary pursued a 1963 quest for the yeti in the high Himalaya.

Desmond’s sure taste and design style can still be enjoyed in the oasis gardens of the Malla and Shangrila hotels that he landscaped, and the original concept of the Shangrila Hotel reflects his legacy. His

poetic watercolours and delicate drawings decorate the walls of many Kathmandu homes, including my own, presenting the verdant Valley that he loved so intensely and recalling altogether more innocent times.



Sir Edmund Hillary, Lady June, Liz Hawley and Desmond Doig in Kathmandu

I also have the only known oil that Desmond ever painted, a portrait of me in 1980 adorned with enigmatic griffin imagery.

Once ensconced in the cosy, chaotic Panipokhari house opposite the then-American Embassy, Desmond's myriad talents seemed to blossom in the sparkling air of his beloved "emerald valley". Kakani and Tiger Tops were occasional escapes, but mainly Desmond was hard to extract from his home. His book titles show the whimsical nature of his attachment: *Look Back in Wonder*, *In the Kingdom of the Gods*, and *My Kind of Kathmandu*, the volume that his best friend Dubby Bhagat faithfully produced to honour his memory, and which many moons ago they entrusted me with the grave responsibility of delivering the suitcase of original watercolours to his London publisher.

Desmond's friendships ranged through Himalayan royalty to the most humble of artists and artisans. He was unflinching in his encouragement of the young and talented. Occasionally he would take time out to

commentate a movie or help me with a special event. He persuaded his protégé Yeshe Tshering (now my brother-in-law) to be the Great Khan with Hollywood actor Michael York as Marco Polo for a rather dubious commercial. (“How did you get here, Marco Polo?” “In a way, Great Khan, that you can never imagine. On Cathay Pacific Airlines!”)



Desmond Doig and the writer with Boris (seated) at his 75th birthday party 4 Oct 1980. The perfumer Jean Paul Guerlain is seated behind

It was Desmond’s idea to arrange the first lamp-lit al fresco dinner in Bhaktapur’s Nyatapola Square to celebrate travel pioneer Lars-Eric Lindblad’s birthday. One of his best stories was taking a group of posh Brits on a sightseeing tour of Kathmandu. As the bus paused in the heart of Durbar Square, a fruity voice rang out disapprovingly from the back seat: “Awful lot of people hanging around doing nothing!”

Desmond’s eclectic dinners usually featured Burmese curries with coconut, peels of laughter, and conversation resounding with tales of historic Himalayan personalities – imitations of Sikkim queen Hope Cook’s voice were a speciality. He loved rural picnics and special occasions, and contributed the “From Ballet to Belly” cake at Boris Lisanevich’s 75th birthday party. The then-British Ambassador was a particular favourite, memorable for his vague demeanour and fondness for gin-and-tonics,

and for the lunch when he mistook a poached egg starter for “lovely fish”. Dubby and I were still laughing about “lovely fish” last time we met.

News and Personalities

[Aberdeen scientists develop ice stupas for Himalayan water crisis](#)

nepalitimes.com

An artificial glacier designed to solve a water crisis in the Himalayas is being developed by University of Aberdeen scientists.

The glaciers - known as ice stupas - were invented in 2013 by engineer Sonam Wangchuk, but are still “in their infancy” according to researchers.

Stupas release meltwater in the spring which is used for growing crops.

They have been built in Ladakh, northern India, which is one of the most arid places in the world.



Aberdeen scientists are developing technology invented by Indian engineer Sonam Wangchuk

in the region to help improve the technology so they can be used more widely.

“Our research has shown that mountain glaciers in Ladakh are retreating at an increasing rate,” said Prof Matteo Spagnolo, from the university team.

Why is there a Himalayan water shortage?

Most villages in the region experience acute water shortage particularly during the months of April and May, according to the ice stupa project.

This is the time when people are competing to water newly planted crops.

By mid-September there are small streams flowing, but by this time they are of little use as farming activity comes to an end.

The problem has worsened as a result of climate change, which is causing natural glaciers to disappear.

World’s glaciers melting at a faster pace

Can ice structures solve a Himalayan water crisis?

In April, a study found that the world’s glaciers were melting at an accelerated rate - having lost almost 270 billion tonnes of ice a year over the last 20 years.

The team from Aberdeen, along with the Jawaharlal Nehru University



In Tangtse village in Ladakh, vast patches of barren land are surrounded by mountains

in New Delhi, has shown that glacier shrinkage in Ladakh has also increased at a dramatic pace.

Frequent and extended droughts have threatened crops and therefore the lives of the people living in the coldest, driest parts of the world.

Prof Spagnolo added: “Glaciers are exceptionally good and reliable indicators of climate change. Put in the simplest terms, as temperatures rise, glaciers shrink and may eventually disappear.

“As well as being photogenic, spectacular emblems of climate change, glaciers are also, for many communities, an irreplaceable source of fresh water.”

How do ice stupas work?

Ice stupas were invented in 2013 by Sonam Wangchuk, a prominent Indian engineer who also co-founded the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives



Pipes are used to create the pyramid-shaped structures that store water

- the organisation is primarily responsible for the development of the technology, alongside the Students’ Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh.

They are used for storing the wasted water as ice during the winter months, which then melts for use during the arid months.

Pipes are initially buried under the ground, below the frost line, before

the final section of the pipe then rises vertically.

Due to the difference in height, temperature, and the gravitational force, pressure builds up in the pipe. The stream water eventually flows up and out from the pipe's raised tip like a fountain.

The sub-zero air freezes the water to gradually form a pyramid-like structure.



The University of Aberdeen is working with the Ice Stupa project in northern India

Ice stupas can release millions of litres of water each year. They are built next to where water is needed most - on the outskirts of villages near fields.

Researchers said their size and shape make them particularly efficient, inexpensive, and easy to maintain.

However they said more work is needed to find a way to stop water freezing in the pipelines and to develop site selection.

They also said there needs to be better understanding of local micro-climates and better distribution of water across multiple users and villages.

Dr Anshuman Bhardwaj, from the research team, said: “We are working closely with our partners in the Ice Stupa project team to help with some of the aspects of the technical and logistical challenges.

“We are also looking to better understand the rate of glacier retreat and how this can inform our strategy going forward.”

[In a first, women patrol Nanda Devi forests at 14,500](#)

Shivani Azad

At 14,500 feet, one can leave nothing to chance. So, for months, Durga Sati, 32, Roshni Negi, 25, and Mamta Kanwasi, 33, had been preparing for the taxing trek. Last week, they became the first women guards to be deployed in the treacherous forests of the country’s second highest mountain, Nanda Devi, over 25,000 feet high.

“We patrol the mountains to protect rare animals — like snow leopards, Himalayan bears and blue sheep — and plants — Himalayan viagra and thousands of medicinal herbs. There is always the threat of poachers, even at these altitudes,” said Mamta. “We also check water sources and see if anything appears amiss from a security point of view. We have to ensure our territory is safe.” And because they had to take a circuitous route this time, stopping for checks along the way, the trek became an arduous 60-km-long one.

Their deployment came about with a chance conversation and initiative on their part. Women forest guards would usually go up to Laata, at 11,150 feet, but would be asked not to go further. “But we thought, if not now, when? We joined this service to serve our country and nature.



So, I decided to do this,” said Roshni, whose father owns a vegetable shop at Joshimath in Uttarakhand. The third of four siblings, she has been in the service for five years.

She teamed up with Mamta, wife of an army man, and Durga, and approached the range officer of the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, Chetna Kandpal, who agreed and started training them. “It was a special assignment because of the altitude these

brave frontline women were scaling. It was a long tour and they did well,” said Rajeev Bhartari, head of the forest force, Uttarakhand.

On June 1, they started from Laata and trekked to Bhelta (11,800 feet), where they stayed the night. Then, they went to Lata Khark (12,800 feet) and then, onwards to Jhandidhara (13,800 feet). They returned to Lata Khark, from where they went to Dharasi (14,500 feet), their final destination.

“The trek was dangerous. It needed us at our best in terms of physical and mental agility,” Mamta said, also from Joshimath. “One day, of the 8-km trek we had planned, 5.5km was on glaciers. A second’s distraction would have cost us our lives. No one would have even found our bodies.” Durga further said, “We had the constant threat of Himalayan bears and snow leopards on our minds. We had to remain alert all the time while keeping an eye out for poachers.”

Both Durga and Mamta have been forest guards for 12 years. While Mamta has a two-year-old daughter at home, Durga has three kids. “We can’t afford to be afraid. We have to take up challenges and set an example for our kids,” said Mamta. Durga added, “We, as human beings, have exploited our environment the most. Now, it is our duty to come forward and save our forests, however difficult the circumstances.”

[Dr Harshwanti Bisht](#)

Dr Harshwanti Bisht was elected as the President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, on 20th November 2021-- the first lady to hold this post in its 60-year history. She belongs to Kotdwar in Garhwal and now lives in Dehra Dun. She is a Ph.D. and professor at Dehra Dun. She is associated with several government schemes about the Himalayan regions and plays an active role.

Dr Bisht is an accomplished mountaineer. Having completed her Basic and Advance mountaineering training courses at Uttarkashi, she went on to climb peak Gangotri (6672 m). In 1981 she reached the summit of Nanda Devi peak (7816 m) with Rekha Sharma and Chandraprabha Aitwal. These three hold the record for first ladies to climb this high peak. Other members with her were Dorjee Lhatoo, Sonam Paljor and Ratan Singh.



Dr Harshwanti Bisht

Following this she joined the Indian Mountaineering Foundation Everest expedition in 1984, where Backhander Pal reached the summit- a first by an Indian lady.

Her forte is working in the field of Himalayan Ecology, environment and Himalayan People. She became the Deputy Director of Education for the state of Uttarakhand. She is involved for more than 40 years in aspects of ecology conservation. She founded, now well known, “Save Gangotri” project in 1989 which led to conservation of this long

glacier from various human onslaughts and climate vagaries. “My interest in economics is trumped by my passion for ecology”, she writes.

For these pioneering efforts, she received the prestigious “Hillary Medal of Mountain Legacy” at Kathmandu, in 2014.

Professor Harshwanti Bisht is one of the UIAA’s volunteers having joined the Mountain Protection Commission (MPC) in 2020. The MPC with many significant projects, papers and declarations on its agenda to deliver over the coming years will undoubtedly benefit from Professor Bisht’s expertise.

Dr Harshwanti Bisht was honoured with Arjuna Award in 1981, and she is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, London.

[Nain Singh Kishan Singh Life Time Achievement Award](#)

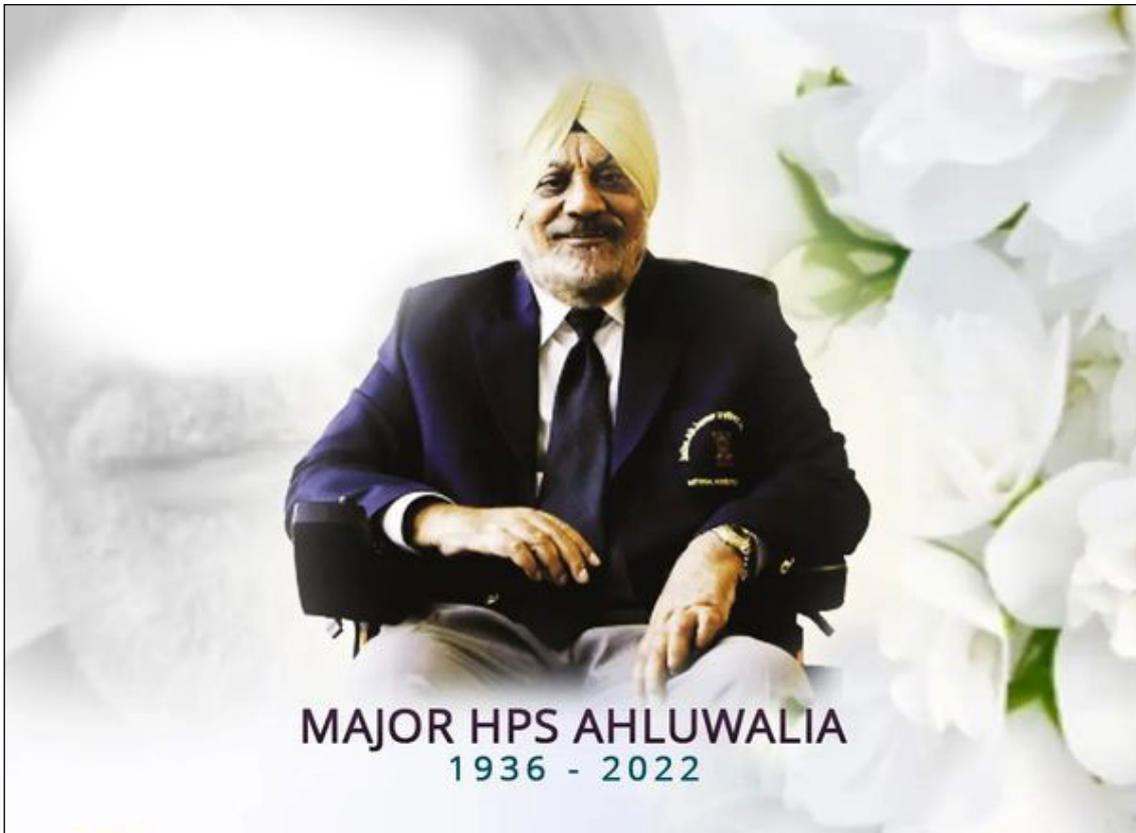


Congratulations to The Himalayan Club member Debabrata Mukherjee for being awarded the Nain Singh-Kishan Singh Lifetime Achievement Award 2021 by Indian mountaineering foundation

Shri Debabrata Mukherjee, a 59 year old distinguished mountaineer from West Bengal began his mountaineering journey at a young age of 23 in 1985.

He has participated in various mountaineering expeditions in Indian Himalaya over last 36 years. Some of the notable summits to his credit are Mt Bhagirathi-II, Menthosa.Uja Tirchi, Kalanidi and Bhagirathi. Shri Debabrata Mukherjee has also summited Mt. Everest (NE Ridge Route), Kilimanjaro, Mt Blanc, Aconcagua, Elbrus and Mt. Denali.

[Major Hari Pal Singh Ahluwalia](#)



May you Rest in Peace

Major Hari Pal Singh Ahluwalia

(6 November 1936 – 14 January 2022)

Our Everest 1965 Indian Expedition Hero; Ex President IMF India.

An avid mountaineer and a keen adventure enthusiast, an ultra Achiever in many fields including adventure's, sports, environmental, disability and social work is a Honourable awardee of Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri & Arjuna Award for his contributions.

We pay our heartfelt tribute to the legend and sincere condolences to all family and friends.

In Memorium

KUNJ TRIVEDI (1931- 2021) Patron of The Himalayan Club

By Harish Kapadia (with Shveta Trivedi)



Everest from Pang La by Kunj Trivedi

I met Kunjbhai, as we called him, rather late in his long illustrious life. As they say, it was long enough. I spent wonderful two decades of association with him. He was friendly, generous, and open person to know and introduced many of us to his family and friends.

In 1999 we went to Bhutan together. Two of his brothers accompanied us, elder Jagdish and younger Nalin. Each had different interest but same generosity. Our groups got on well and we travelled to some rare parts of Bhutan, covering it thoroughly. I could see his interest in mountain photography and excellent techniques.

After three years we were travelling across the Tibetan plateau. Starting from Lhasa we cut across the Plateau to the western end, covering it exhaustively. Generally Indians go to Manasarovar and Kailash, which we did, but went much beyond. It was to Guge and Tsaprang where Adi Shankracharyya had built a temple at Tholing Math. Finally to Shinquen (old Ali) for a fantastic view of the Indian mountain ranges of Ladakh and Spiti from the east, from outside the Indian Himalaya. Kunjbhai was at his best photographing these rare places with enthusiasm and techniques he had mastered. His pictures were stuff of legends and were highly appreciated when he held an exhibition.

Two of his pictures I cherish the most. From Darchen at foot of Kailash he photographed the Himalaya which was appearing in right to left

reverse direction as were north of the Himalaya. Due to the curvature of the earth and the distance we were, these high Himalayan peaks looked in miniature! These pictures were a great lesson in beauty as well as geography.

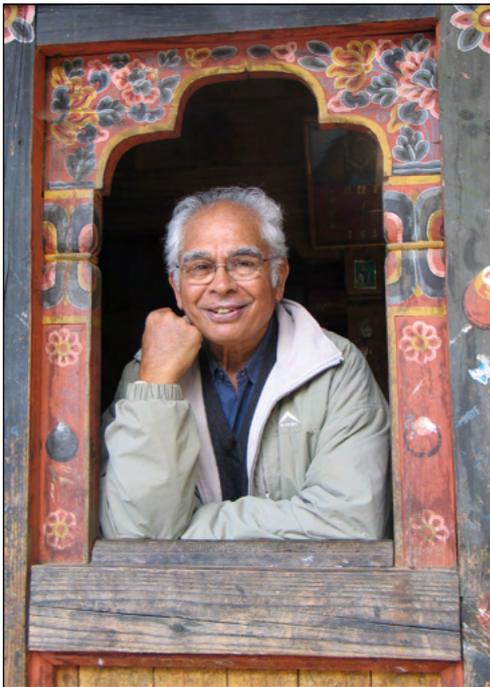
His panorama of Everest from the Pang la ahead on Tingri is the view that all pre-war Everest expedition had. But now in colour, sharp focus and its entirety as photographed by Kunjbhai was view of rare collection. He sent this to the Alpine Club who made it an important part of their exhibition for the 100th Year of Everest. In a rare honour it was displayed with pictures of legendary Vittoria Sela collection and also featured in the exhibition book. This was in 2021 and he was lucky to be alive to enjoy it.

His life story tells how hard he had worked to enjoy the later life as he did. And about his major interest- wildlife photography.

Kunjbihari Kantilal Trivedi was born on 20th May, 1931 in Mwanza, situated on the shores of Lake Victoria in Tanganyika. Both of his parents were teachers who had migrated to Tanganyika in 1929.

He was educated in various places in Tanzania before he came to Baroda in 1946 and graduated in Commerce from M.S. University in 1951. He then came to Mumbai and was articled to Shri G.P.Kapadia, who was then the Founder President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India. He was enrolled as an Associate Member in the year 1954, at which time he migrated to Mombasa, Kenya, to practice his profession as a Chartered Accountant. In 1972 he moved to Hong Kong, invited by his older brother, to join the family business as a co-founder of a finance company. In 1986 the two brothers acquired a controlling interest in The Indian Card Clothing Co. Limited in Pune, India, of which he became the Chairman in 1988.

His interest in wildlife began during his school years in the forties. His first visit to a Game reserve was to the famous Serengeti National Park in Tanganyika in 1945, as a member of a group from his school in Mwanza. It was an Overland trip in a refurbished surplus World War II military truck;

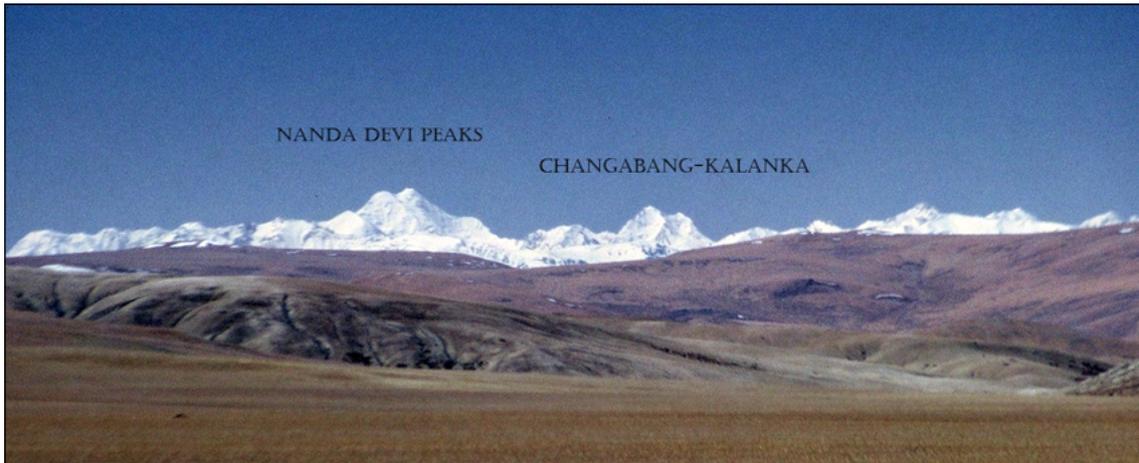


Kunj Trivedi in Bhutan

a one night stay at Seronera, sleeping at the back of the truck listening to deafening Lion roars amidst many other wildlife sounds in the night. That thrilled him. He also remembered reading a book in the early Fifties, “Hunter” by J.A.Hunter, which left a very deep impression on him about the excitement and adventure of nature and wildlife. His father gave him a used Kodak folding Camera with bellows which used 120 film. He recollected bringing this camera with him to India to continue with his experiments in photo technique while at M S University, Baroda.

Whilst back in Kenya, he would regularly visit Tsavo National Park on weekends and holidays. He also remembered visiting Ngorongoro Crater in Tanganyika way back in 1958. This interest in wildlife remained dormant during the time he was in Hongkong and while he was actively engaged in business. However, his passion for Wildlife Photography revived in 1991 when he joined a tour to East Africa, organized by the Financial Times of London. This was the beginning of the second phase in this latent hobby. However, now, with more time and resources on hand, he developed an almost obsessive interest in merging the two hobbies into one; Wildlife and Photography.

After that trip in 1991, he visited many nature reserves within India, Eastern and Southern Africa, parts of Europe and America to photograph wildlife and natural landscapes. His favorites being India and East Africa, he considered himself fortunate to be able to have the resources, time and energy to travel extensively in search of the perfect photograph! Fascinated by the predators mainly the Big Cats – Tigers, Leopards, Cheetah and Lions, in that order, his many trips were to their favoured habitats. He particularly enjoyed photographing them



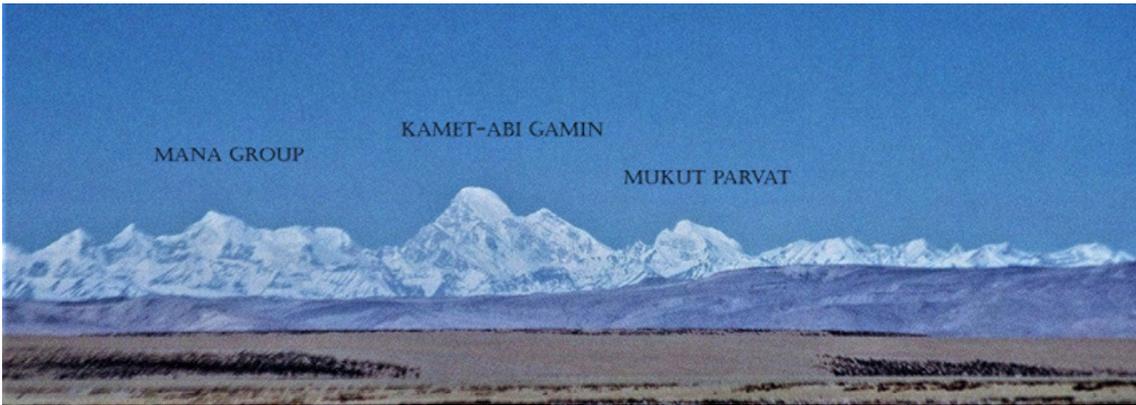
Nanda Devi range from Tibet (Kunj Trivedi)

in action. In addition, he also loved to capture animal behavior amongst Elephants, African Wild Dogs, Polar Bears and Brown Bears. He found bird photography challenging but enticing enough to photograph. He has also perfected Landscape photography travelling to the Canadian Rockies, New Zealand, Antarctica and Namibia.

He ventured into Heritage photography inspired by Kakubhai Kothary whose companionship was a strong foundation for most of his photography trips in the last three decades, be it to a Tiger reserve or a Temple complex.

His interest in conservation was deepened after meeting Dereck and Beverly Joubert in Mombo, in Okavango Delta in Botswana. He was enthralled by the impact their work was having on bringing awareness about the disappearing wildlife and the importance of regenerating natural habitat. His resolve to contribute towards this initiative through his own photography, particularly in India became even stronger.

The question that arises is what kept him going for such a long time, especially because these activities are not for profit, purely voluntary & not free from physical discomfort and effort. He felt his passion for both Wildlife and Photography and over time realised its importance in Conservation. The onset of Digital in the realm of Photography gave him freedom to experiment and considerable control on the final outcome of his effort. It also encouraged him to keep learning especially since this fast developing technology always presented a challenge in keeping abreast



Kamet Range from Tibet (Kunj Trivedi)

of new methods and ideas including in computers, editing software and printing technology. This all-consuming interest in technology and its impact on photography perhaps kept him going until he was 90 years old.

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