



# The Himalayan Club

*The Himalayan Club e-Letter*

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## Contents - Volume 48

Report on the Annual Adventure Festival – The Himalayan Club	.....	02
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### CLIMBS, TREKS AND EXPLORATIONS

Sunderdhunga Col, A Century-Old Barrier Breached from the South	.....	06
---	-------	----

Polish Skier Climbs Everest and Skis Down Without Extra Oxygen	.....	11
--	-------	----

“I Am a Different Person”: Inside the First Ascent of an Unclimbed Himalayan Giant	.....	14
--	-------	----

### SECTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Rock- Climbing Course Organized by The Himalayan Club, Kolkata section	.....	22
--	-------	----

Programmes of Pune section	.....	26
----------------------------	-------	----

Programmes of Bengaluru section	.....	29
---------------------------------	-------	----

### NEWS

Kendal Mountain Festival November 2025 a brief report	.....	30
---	-------	----

### MEMORIUM

Farewell My Friend Bill Aitken	.....	34
--------------------------------	-------	----

Remembering Geeta Harish Kapadia: A Canvas of Memories	.....	37
--	-------	----

Captain M. S. Kohli : The Leader Par Excellence of Indian Mountaineering	.....	40
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## Report on the Annual Adventure Festival – The Himalayan Club



*Dr. Sonam Wangchok delivering The Kaivan Mistry Memorial Talk*

The Himalayan Club successfully hosted its much-anticipated Annual Adventure Festival on 23rd March 2025 in Mumbai. The event, attended by over 100 adventure enthusiasts, mountaineers, and nature lovers from across the country, was a vibrant celebration of the spirit of the outdoors and mountain culture.

The festival kicked off with a lamp lighting ceremony followed by a tribute to our departed member Mr Shailesh Mahadevia who had made significant contributions to The Himalayan Club.

The day was packed with exciting events ensuring a learning experience for both beginners and experienced adventurers.

The Kaivan Mistry Memorial Talks segment included a talk by Dr Sonam Wangchok and Capt. Karthikeyan

The keynote speech was delivered by Dr Sonam Wangchok from Leh, a veteran environmentalist, who emphasized the importance of sustainable adventure tourism and preserving mountain ecosystems.



*Lamp lighting ceremony*

Captain Karthikeyan enthralled the audience by regaling the journey of his young daughter Kaamya as she climbed the Seven summits in all the seven continents to become the youngest Indian to do so.

Phurtemba Lakpa was awarded the Garud Medal for the year 2024 by Mr. Sachin Nanavati.

One of the highlights of the festival was the Jagdish Nanavati Award ceremony. The award for the Best exploratory expedition was not given this year. Instead a token of appreciation was awarded to all the entries received for the Award.

The talks that followed were from the celebrated climbers and explorers who shared their awe-inspiring stories and experiences from expeditions across the Himalayas.

Divyesh Muni spoke on his Thangman Lungpa Expedition

Debashish Bardhan spoke on the Myth of Holmes col.

Rudra Prasad Chakraborty spoke on his Mt Shinkun West and Unnamed peak expedition.

A token of appreciation was awarded also to

Rajesh Gadgil- Rale Expedition

Inayat Ullah Bhatt -Umbrella Peak

Debashish Acharyya - Jamdwar Khal Expedition

The KN Award ceremony was next.

The jury read out their statement. It was a hands down win for our Club President Nandini Purandare and Deepa Balsavar for their book "HEADSTRAP"

Dr. Mrs. Pheroza Godrej handed over the awards to the duo. It was a major



*Divyesh Muni spoke on his Thangman Lungpa Expedition*

feat for them as this was the fourth Award that the book had won. Among the other awards garnered by this book are the Banff Mountain Literature, the Kendall award.

This was followed by a documentary screening, by the award winning duo of Nandini Purandare and Deepa Balsavar showcasing the building up of the literary content of the book over the past 12 years.

There were stalls of trekking equipment and the award winning book “Headstrap”, adding an immersive richness to the event.

The event concluded with an exciting program, featuring the best of the Indian Mountaineering Films 2024, creating a perfect finale to a lively and interesting day.

Participants expressed appreciation for the Himalayan Club’s efforts in promoting outdoor adventure, environmental awareness, and community engagement.

The Himalayan Club’s Adventure Festival 2025 reminded us that adventure is not just about scaling peaks—it’s about discovering new perspectives, pushing personal limits, and cherishing the world we wander.

The Himalayan Adventure Festival 2025 was not only a tribute to the majesty of the mountains but also a reaffirmation of the club’s mission to inspire and connect individuals through a shared love for adventure.



*The jury read out their statement. It was a hands down win for our Club President Nandini Purandare and Deepa Balsavar for their book "HEADSTRAP"*



*Captain Karthikeyan delivering The Kaivan Mistry Memorial Talk*



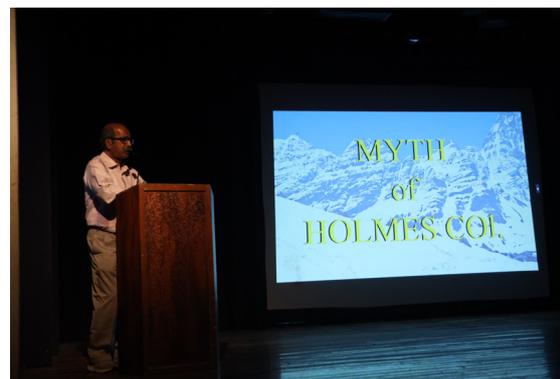
*Rudra Prasad Chakraborty spoke on his Mt Shinkun West and Unnamed peak expedition.*



*A token of appreciation was awarded also to Rajesh Gadgil- Rale Expedition*



*Phurtemba Lakpa was awarded the Garud Medal for the year 2024 by Mr. Sachiin Nanavati*



*Debashish Bardhan spoke on the Myth of Holmes col.*

## **Climbs, Treks and Explorations**

### Sunderdhunga Col, A Century-Old Barrier Breached from the South

*Abhishek Das*



*Marked route*

The pursuit of Nanda Devi's hidden Inner Sanctuary has fascinated mountaineers for more than a century. More than twelve Himalayan peaks above 6,400 metres guard this secluded amphitheatre, their lofty ramparts unbroken by any depression below 5,200 metres. Among these defences lies Sunderdhunga Col, also known as Ruttledge's Col, a deep, snow-bound saddle between Mt. Maiktoli (6,803 m) and Mt. Panwali Dwar (6,663 m).

This col is one of the most formidable gateways to the Nanda Devi Inner Sanctuary. Approached from the south, it presents a daunting 1,800-metre wall of rock, snow,

and ice, an obstacle that had, until recently, turned back every attempt for nearly a hundred years.

#### **Early Attempts**

The first recorded effort to scale Sunderdhunga Col from the south was made in 1932 by Hugh Ruttledge, the British Everest, accompanied by the legendary Italian guide Emile Rey. The team, supported by Sherpas, attempted to force a route up the colossal face in the hope of entering the Inner Sanctuary. Their bid ended in retreat, defeated by the steepness and complexity of the terrain. Ruttledge, writing in the Himalayan Journal in 1933, described the wall as "a sheer barricade of ice and granite, as though

Nature herself had drawn a curtain across the way.”

In 1934, a breakthrough came, but from the opposite direction. Eric Shipton, Bill Tilman, and their Sherpa team, Ang Tharke, Pasang, and Kusang, made their historic traverse of the Nanda Devi Inner Sanctuary, exiting the basin by crossing Sunderdhunga Col from its north. They descended some 1,800 metres on the south side, their route marking the first known crossing of the col. This was an extraordinary feat, however, ascent to the col from the southern side remained unconquered.



*On col.*

The next half-century saw sporadic interest in the south-side ascent. Teams from West Bengal attempted it in the 1980s, and more recently, experienced climbers such as Anindya Mukherjee, accompanied by Phurtenji (Lakpa) Sherpa, came tantalisingly close to success. Yet the combination of unstable ice, rockfall danger, and fickle weather forced them to retreat before reaching the col itself.

### **The 2024 Expedition**

Our own attempt began on 23 October 2024, when I arrived in Haldwani from Kolkata. Next day in the early morning my climbing partner, Thendup Sherpa, arrived, and we set out in a shared vehicle bound for Bharari, pausing in Bageshwar and Kapkot to secure forest permits and provisions. From Bharari we continued to Jaikuni, the last roadhead, arriving at dusk.

### **Approach to Base Camp**

On 25 October, with no porters available at Jaikuni, we hired two horses to carry our loads to Jatoli, a village higher up the valley. There we were joined by two high-altitude friends (HAFs), Harish Singh Danu and Narindar Singh Danu, who agreed to support the expedition. Six porters were also engaged to carry our loads to base camp before returning.

We spent the night at the home of Roop Singh, a respected local moun-



*Camp 1 towards Sunderdhunga Col*

tain guide, who encouraged us a lot for the upcoming journey. On 26 October we trekked to Kathaliya along an old, now seldom-used trail, negotiating landslide-damaged sections. The next day, we followed a river upstream through steep meadows to reach the well-known Maiktoli Base Camp (3827 metres), a broad, glacially-fed valley under the shadow of Mt. Maiktoli.

Here the porters departed, leaving us to set our tents. We decided to use an abandoned shepherd's hut as our make-shift kitchen.

### **Establishing Higher Camps**

On 28 October we ferried load to a site two hours above base camp, across the Burg Glacier moraine, and established Camp-I on a grassy ledge at a height of 4147 metres. The following day we shifted up permanently, taking advantage of our previous reconnaissance.

From Camp-I, the route steepened. On 30 October we ferried gears to Camp-II, a precarious platform reached by climbing grassy slopes, loose rock, and short exposed walls. The following day we moved up for good, pitching our tent at 4859 metres.

A reconnaissance from Camp-II revealed two possible lines: a direct route to the col, and a longer traverse via a higher elevation west of the col, with a descent to the saddle. The direct route looked prone to avalanches and rockfall; we chose the longer but safer option, deciding to set out at 02:00 the next morning, the night of Diwali.

### **The Summit Push**

We left Camp-II under a star-studded sky, the Diwali lights of Jaikuni twinkling far below, an encouraging omen. The climb was immediately steep, a



*Way to camp 1*

mix of rock steps and firm snow patches, the first significant snow we had encountered. The crisp surface allowed steady progress, but the unrelenting gradient taxed our reserves.

After nine hours we finally arrived at the elevation west of the col. From here, a sharp descent over mixed terrain brought us to the broad, wind-scoured expanse of Sunderdhunga Col at 11:30 a.m. My GPS read 5,653 metres.

We performed a small puja, offered our thanks, and photographed the scene. To the north, we saw steep slopes plunging into the Inner Sanctuary. To the west lay another depression, which I believe matches Tilman's description of the 1934 crossing point.

Our decision to avoid the direct route had been vindicated; the steep gully leading straight to the col was clearly loaded with unstable snow and debris.

### **The Long Descent**

With supplies dwindling, we decided to descend all the way to base camp in a single push. We reached Camp II at 3:30 p.m., packed the remaining gear, and continued downward.

Partway into the descent, the weather closed in. Clouds boiled up the valley, visibility collapsed, and soon we were in a total whiteout. Progress slowed to a crawl as we navigated steep, loose slopes in near-zero visibility. It was

close to 11:00 p.m. when we stumbled into base camp , a 21-hour day that tested every ounce of endurance we had.

### **Return to the Roadhead**

The next day, 2 November, we packed and cleaned the site, descending to Kathaliya in the afternoon. On 3 November we returned to Jatoli, where Roop Singh welcomed us warmly and listened with delight to the details of our climb. His own past attempts on the col gave him a special appreciation for the achievement.

We spent the night in Jatoli, then made our way to Jaikuni and down to Haldwani, our journey complete.

### **Significance**

To the best of our knowledge, this was the first successful ascent of Sunderdhunga Col from the south. The achievement closes a chapter that began with Ruttledge's reconnaissance in 1932 and was enriched by the exploits of Shipton and Tilman in 1934.

For decades, the south side of Sunderdhunga Col had loomed as an impregnable bastion. It took a blend of reconnaissance, careful route choice, good weather, and the unwavering support of a small, capable team to finally breach it.



*Baljauri Col*

The col remains one of the most dramatic gateways to the Inner Sanctuary, a stark reminder of the Sanctuary's defences and a testament to the enduring allure of these mountains.

## Polish Skier Climbs Everest and Skis Down Without Extra Oxygen

*Victor Mather*



*Mr. Bargiel climbing to the summit. Bartłomiej Bargiel/Red Bull Content Pool*

A Polish adventure skier has become the first person to climb Mount Everest and then ski down it without using supplemental oxygen, he and his sponsors announced.

The skier, Andrzej Bargiel, 37, completed the feat on Monday, taking four days to ascend from base camp and then two days to ski back down.

In videos taken at the top of the mountain, where oxygen is only one-third that of sea level, Mr. Bargiel breathes heavily, even before he straps on his skis, illustrating the difficulty of doing anything on Everest without an extra source of oxygen. While more than 7,000 people have ascended Everest, which reaches more than 8839 metres above sea level, only about 200 have done so without bottled oxygen.

“I have never used bottled oxygen in the mountains,” Mr. Bargiel told The New York Times in an email interview on Friday.

In the videos, Mr. Bargiel is then seen peacefully gliding through pristine snow, almost as if he were a recreational skier on a ski resort’s trail, not on

the highest mountain in the world.

But he is also seen navigating tricky and dangerous situations, like narrow ridges, nearly sheer mountain faces and drop-offs.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland commented on the feat, saying on social media: “Sky is the limit? Not for Poles! Andrzej Bargiel just skied down Mount Everest.”

Mr. Bargiel made his ascent in the fall, when the mountain weather is more unpredictable, but the slopes are significantly less crowded than in May, when the bulk of Everest expeditions take place.

“Everest is, of course, the highest mountain in the world, but I wanted to break the cliché of it being just a crowded and commercial place,” he said Friday. “That’s why I chose to go there in autumn — to have the mountain to myself.”

Mr. Bargiel started at Everest’s base camp in Nepal and then rotated among the higher Camps I, II and III to adapt to the altitude.

He began the final climb from Camp IV on Sunday and reached the summit 16 hours later, his sponsors said, which was longer than expected because of fresh snowfall.

He began his descent only minutes later, and within five hours he had skied to Camp II, where he stopped because of darkness. The next morning he skied for another hour and 45 minutes to reach base camp.

The most dangerous part of the journey came near the end, Mr. Bargiel’s team said, at the treacherous Khumbu Icefall, not far above base camp. The team described him “navigating a labyrinth of shifting ice and deep crevasses — without ropes or fixed lines.” He was aided in this part of the journey by a drone piloted by his brother Bartek.

Despite his exertions, Mr. Bargiel reported: “I came back safe and strong. I’m healthy, fit and happy.”

Davo Karnicar of Slovenia is recognized as the first person to ski down Everest, completing the trip from summit to base camp in 4 hours 40 minutes in 2000. The Academy Award-winning 1975 documentary “The Man Who Skied Down Everest” related the story of Yuichiro Miura of Japan, who



*Mr. Bargiel after completing his feat. Bartłomiej Bargiel/Red Bull Content Pool*  
skied a small part of the mountain.

Mr. Bargiel has also climbed and skied down K2, the world's second-highest mountain, and many other prominent peaks.

"I have many plans ahead," he said Friday. "I'd love to travel to Antarctica, to the Andes in Peru. I simply enjoy doing this, and as long as I remain healthy, I will always keep seeking new mountains, no matter the altitude."

*Courtesy: New York Times 26 September, 2025*

## “I Am a Different Person”: Inside the First Ascent of an Unclimbed Himalayan Giant

*Owen Clarke*



Benjamin Védrières says his first ascent of Jannu East (7468 m) with Nicolas Jean is more meaningful than any in his career. For the world's best alpinists, satisfaction in the mountains is often ephemeral. Every success, every new route or summit or record, is a tasty morsel, but one that only temporarily slakes an insatiable hunger. One must forever go bigger, harder, faster, longer.

It's unsurprising. Few climbers become the best by being content with one expedition, one mountain, one route. Few become the best at anything that way. To borrow a phrase from my college-age brother: You gotta have that dog in you.

For most of his career, French alpinist Benjamin Védrières has been no exception. For a decade, the 33-year-old mountain guide has chased long routes on big mountains around the globe, with a particular eye for dazzling linkups, speed records, and paraglider descents. I first connected with him in 2021, after he and Charles Dubouloz made the first ascent of the North Face of Chamlang (7319m). The next year, he blitzed

Broad Peak (8,051m) in seven hours and 28 minutes—a time so fast that at first, some called it a hoax. In 2024, he set the speed record on K2, climbing the 8,611-meter summit in just shy of 11 hours.

But after Védrières and partner Nicolas Jean, 27, made the first ascent of Jannu East (7468m) on October 15, he told me something might have changed.

“When you are an alpinist, you are dreaming constantly,” he said over the phone yesterday. “You have these goals, these routes you are pursuing constantly. You are always chasing. But now, I feel filled. My ego...” He paused. “I feel satisfied. I am a different person than I was one week ago.”



*Jean approaches the summit of Jannu East (7468m). (Photo: Benjamin Védrières)*

### **Returning to the site of tragedy**

Jannu East is the eastern prominence of an eponymous peak (7710m), also known as Kumbhakarna, that was the site of a much lauded Piolet d’Or-winning effort in 2023. Americans Matt Cornell, Jackson Marvell,

and Alan Rousseau made the first alpine-style ascent (Round Trip Ticket [AI5+ M7, 2697m]) of the peak's imposing North Face, one of the tallest and most sustained walls in the Himalaya. Roughly a dozen parties have managed to climb Jannu by various routes, but the summit of Jannu East, just a mile away and 242m lower, remained untrammelled.

For Védrines, Jannu East has been an enduring dream. Though his first attempt was just last year, he first eyed the peak some eight years ago, when he made the second ascent of nearby Pandra (6673m) via a new route with Mathieu Détrie and Pierre Labbre. Védrines recalled that Labbre, in particular, was instantly taken by Jannu East's sprawling North Face. "We saw the face from the top, it was a beautiful day, no wind," he recalled. "It was all just right there in front of us. It was crazy. So impressive. I was shocked to see a face like this at the time, but I was too young to think about attempting it." Two years later, Labbre and partner Max Bonniot were killed on the Aiguille du Plan. Ever since, Védrines has held Jannu East in his mind, hoping to one day realize his late friend's vision.

In the years since, as his alpine career has grown, Védrines has spent hours upon hours poring over the globe on Google Earth, trying to find new objectives. None have matched Jannu East. "It's rare, anywhere in the world, to have a face this long, this steep, at this altitude, and without many objective risks, like seracs," he said. "For those of us who are in love with alpine style, it's quite special to find something like this."

By all accounts, Védrines and Jean's effort is a grand success: an alpine-style summit, moving fast, light, and without supplemental oxygen, on one of the last great unclimbed peaks in the Himalaya. But it's also bittersweet.

In 2024, during Védrines, Jean, and third team member Léo Billon's first attempt on the mountain, another team—Michael Gardner and Sam Hennessey—chipped away at a harder and more direct route up the North Face. It was Gardner and Hennessey's fourth trip to Jannu East, and their third attempt on the North Face.

The two teams became close, sharing a base camp and swapping weather forecasts and acclimatization tips. Védrines and his companions, the



*Nicolas Jean, 27, leads a pitch on Jannu East. (Photo: Benjamin Védrières)*

newcomers, gave Gardner and Hennessey priority on their route, starting a day later. Their own attempt was aborted at 6706m, after Billon began struggling with altitude sickness.

On their way down, they saw Hennessey, descending alone. “It was strange,” Védrières recalled. “We saw a figure coming from far away and at first thought, ‘Okay, Sam and Mike must be going down, too.’ But it was only one person.” Soon, they learned that Gardner had fallen from high on the face.

For hours, Védrières, Jean, and Billon helped Hennessey scour the glacier for Gardner’s body. “It was exhausting, not just physically but emotionally,” Védrières said. “We found so many [of Mike’s] things scattered

around. We were all so motivated to find him.” They never did. As darkness fell on the mountain, the four gave up the search, returning to their shared base camp together.

Coming back to Jannu East this year, after Gardner’s death, wasn’t necessarily easy, but Védrines never considered not returning. “In the last few years, I’ve lost at least 12 friends in the mountains,” he recalled. “I learned long ago that losing someone or seeing an accident will not stop my passion.”

Still, there were lines he would not cross. For example, “there was no question of trying the same route as Sam and Mike. It would not have felt respectful to Mike’s memory.” Védrines and Jean also felt it important to invite Hennessey to return with them and re-attempt the mountain. He declined.

Respect for Gardner’s memory notwithstanding, Védrines said he never had any intention of attempting a direttissima, like Hennessey and Gardner, anyway. He said that his and Jean’s vision was “way easier than what Mike and Sam wanted to do,” and explained that the decision to angle onto the ridge, instead of staying on the face, allowed them to travel faster and lighter, without a portaledge and the extensive hardware that the upper face would require. “It was an easier route [from a technical perspective], but for us, for the style we wanted, it made logical sense,” he said.

### **“It was a mental game”**

Védrines and Jean left their base camp on October 12, establishing themselves at the base of the North Face around 5090m and fixing the first pitch of their intended route the same day. The following morning, they began their ascent.

The first 396m of the route was marked not by hanging snowfields and deep snow. “It was very complicated to protect yourself here,” explained Védrines. “It was only snow, very hard snow. All we could use were pickets.” (They named their route *Le sommet des pieux* or *The Summit of Pickets*.) Eventually, they angled right, entering a gully and climbing ice up to WI5—and, later, mixed pitches up to M6. These mixed pitches,



*Benjamin Védrines and Nicolas Jean celebrate at the summit of Jannu East.  
(Photo: Benjamin Védrines)*

rife with loose snow, were some of the scariest of the line for Védrines. “They were very, very steep, and the rock was not good.” He laughed. “At this moment, I was looking for help, but no one was up there.”

The pair bivied in a steep snowfield above this section, using a modular shovel to dig out a hole for their tent. The following day they encountered more mixed terrain up to M6, with thin ice and some cracks, and followed by a sparse section that, based on their experience in 2024, they worried might be too dry. “We got very lucky with conditions; there was plenty of snow and ice.”

By this point they’d climbed roughly 1676m, and had angled back left,

cutting across the face to meet the east ridge. They bivied their second night in a cornice on the ridge, some 610 vertical feet below the summit. Conditions were good. Temperatures hovered around 15° without wind-chill, and the wind was mellow by Himalayan North Face standards: just shy of 20 miles per hour.

But the summit was still guarded by tenuous climbing. Though not tech-



*The mixed pitches, rife with loose snow, were some of the scariest of the line for Védrières. (Photo: Benjamin Védrières)*

nical, the ridge was heavily corniced, the snow deep. “I avoided the edge of the ridge,” Védrières said, “It was completely risky, very exposed, no protection.” Instead, he dropped off the edge, traversing more stable ice flutes just below the edge. This section was particularly heinous for Védrières. The men were now above 7010m, and the air was thin. “It was

difficult for me to breathe,” he said. “I’m very well trained, so my legs were good, but my brain was deteriorating. I was exhausted.”

Védrines had reason to be anxious.. During his 2022 K2 attempt—climbing fast, alone, and without oxygen—he fell unconscious around 8321 m, and had to be rescued and given supplemental oxygen by passing climbers. “My condition suddenly deteriorated,” he told Climbing in the aftermath. “Instantly, I no longer had the same energy, nor the same state of consciousness. It’s from there that I don’t remember everything.” He couldn’t afford a repeat of that scenario on Jannu East. One mistake, on these vertiginous ice flutes, would have resulted in a dangerous fall. “I was a bit stressed,” Védrines said. “It wasn’t technical, but it was a mental game.”

By 1 p.m. on October 15, their third day on the wall, they arrived at the top of Jannu East’s “eastern” summit. The pair then traversed for 40 minutes to the western summit—a similar elevation—just to make sure they touched the high point. “When we arrived at the first one, we looked at the other one, and we were like, ‘Oh, shit. I think that one’s a little bit higher.’” It was.

The celebration was brief, the descent fast. That night, they slept at their second bivy. The following day, October 16, some 50 rappels took them down the face. Save for some lingering tinnitus, which bothered him for a few days—“It felt like someone was opening a bag of potato chips inside my head”—Védrines is none the worse for wear, and feels satisfied with his and Jean’s performance. “After most climbs, I am someone who is always looking for something I could have done better,” he said. “Most of the time I can find something I wish I did differently. On this one, no. I am happy.”

I feel satisfied. I feel filled. Maybe Jannu East really has slaked that insatiable hunger.

But, hell, it’s only been a few days.

*Courtesy: [www.climbing.com](http://www.climbing.com)*

## **Sectional Activities**

### **Rock- Climbing Course Organized by The Himalayan Club, Kolkata section**

*Dr. Kallol Das*

The Himalayan Club, Kolkata Section organized Rock-Climbing Training course from 20th to 23rd December 2024, at Matha Buru hill of Dist. Purulia of West Bengal.

This year a team of total 43 members including 23 trainees, 12 instructors and 8 guests & observers participated in the Rock-climbing course. Out of 23 trainees there were five tribal students belonging to BPL category who joined the course free of cost.

The entire course followed a well-designed and time-tested pattern adopted from many years' experiences of the eminent instructors with necessary modifications in keeping with the newer concepts of climbing.

An advance team of four members reached Matha Buru, Dist. Purulia on 19th December 2024 to fix up the camp and negotiate with the support staff regarding kitchen supply & others logistics and to arrange local transport for the whole team from railway station.

The main team boarded the Howrah-Adra-CKP Express train and arrived at Barabhum station in the early morning. They reached the camp site at Matha Buru Forest rest house and moved to their respective tents with their luggage.

After freshening up and breakfast the course was inaugurated by the Camp Commandant, Dr. Kallol Das in the presence of other senior members of the club. All basic rules and camp disciplines were narrated for all trainees and guests, which are to be strictly followed during the entire course period. It was ensured that all the trainees will learn the basic skills of Rock climbing and practice with strict safety precautions and close supervision of the senior instructors. Besides Rock-Climbing training and practice there were many theory classes on Climbing rules, Ropes & Knots, Map Reading & Topography study, First Aid etc. in different time slots in morning and evening.



As an integral part of Climbing, following aspects were also emphasized for the development of the proper spirit of this adventure sports.

1. The importance of discipline
2. The value of co-existence with nature and her conservation
3. The value of dignity of local tribes and their culture
4. The importance of safety
5. The importance of team spirit and co-operation with fellow campers

6. The immense importance of the forest and its contribution in our society

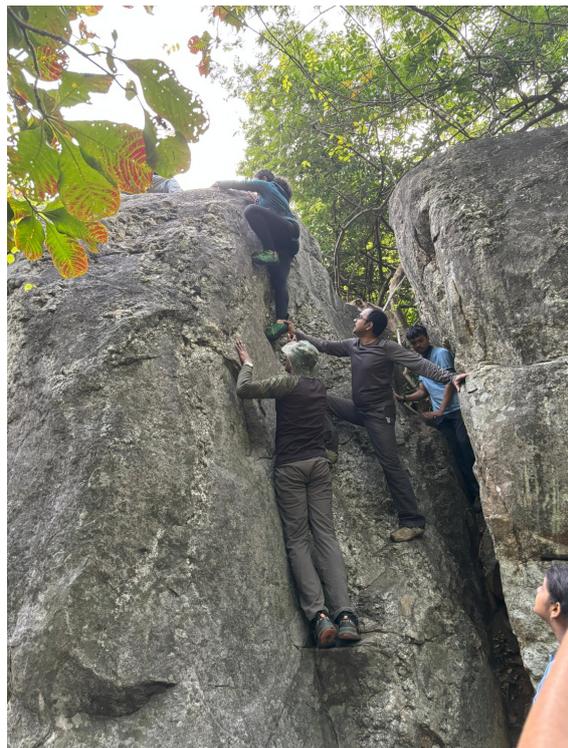
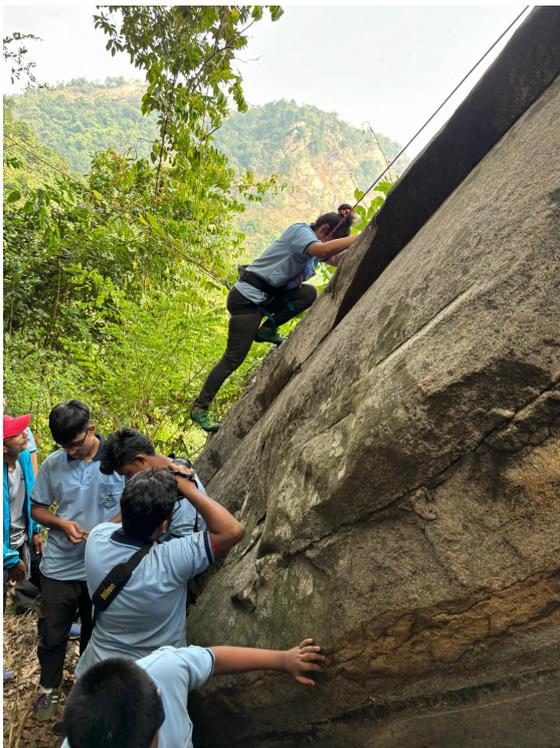
7. Protect the natural environment for future

After 4 days' course all the trainees appear an assessment test from which the best trainee is also selected. At the 3rd night the trainees attend the Grand Camp Fire with variety of their cultural performances that brings a



close bonding & long-lasting relation between the students and teachers.

After camp closure, packing and site cleaning the team moved to Barabhum Station, Dist Purulia and boarded down CKP -Howrah Express to reach Howrah station early in the morning on 24th December.



## Programmes of Pune section

*Dr. Raghunath Godbole*

- 1) Sat. 25th & Sun. 26th January 25 - Overnight camping trek to Indrai Fort near Nasik. 10 members participated.
- 2) Sun 2nd March 25 - Banff Mountain Adventure Film Festival was enjoyed by 200 people - 22 members ( free entry ) and 178 guests ( paid tickets ).

It is observed that the popularity of the Banff Film Festival is progressively decreasing over the last few years while that of the IMF Film festival is increasing in Pune.

Note that the IMF Film festival was organized free of cost by another organization 'Giripremi' in Pune shortly after our Banff Film Festival.

- 3) 20 to 30 April 25 - Druk Path Trek in Bhutan Himalaya - 10 members participated and successfully completed this rare trek led by me.
- 4) Sun 18th May, 5 to 9 pm - Annual Program of the Pune Section in the Conference hall at Deccan Gymkhana Club, Pune was attended by 200 members & guests.

There were 6 AV presentations on various treks done by members in various parts of Himalaya including my 50th Himalayan Trek to Om Parvat, Adi Kailash & Sinla Pass in Kumaun Himalaya.

Renowned climber Ms. Priyanka Mohite, only lady mountaineer in India with 5 Eight thousanders to her credit, delivered Dr. Vrinda Chinchwadkar memorial lecture.



*Priyanka Mohite talk in Annual Program*



*Indrai fort trek*



*Indrai fort trek*



*Audience of Annual Program*



*Indrai fort trek*



*Bhutan trek at starting point*



*Bhutan trek  
at Tiger Nest  
monastery*



*Bhutan trek at  
Jimilangtso Lake*

## Programmes of Bengaluru section

*Kamalesh Venugopal*

### **3rd Aug 2025**

Screening of IMF Mountain Film Festival India Tour 2025 in collaboration with Bangalore International Centre(BIC) at the BIC auditorium

### **14th Sept 2025**

Book Presentation 'The Sherpa Trail' by Nandini Purandhare & Deepa Balsavar in collaboration with Bangalore International Centre(BIC) at the BIC Seminar Hall

### **28th Sept 2025**

Book Presentation 'Across the Himalaya' by Vineta Muni & Screening of BANFF Mountain Film Festival - World Tour 2025 at the Mother Tekla Auditorium

### **2nd Dec 2025**

Mountain Talk ' The Accidental Climber' by Alope Surin at the Indian Heritage Centre auditorium.

## News

### Kendal Mountain Festival November 2025 a brief report

*Nandini Purandare*



*Sir and Lady Bonnington and Fotheringham*

The details are as follows:

#### **Day 1, Thursday 20 November 2025**

Book Launch of *Mountaineering Women*, a new book by Joanna Croston. Joanna made a 20 minute presentation on her book and then invited special guests Lyn Hill, a phenomenal climber from Colorado, USA who is featured in this book and me, as I have written the introduction as the opening chapter of the book on stage for a Q&A.

An audience of over 250 people were in attendance and then we had a book signing event. The grand finale was an opening dinner by patron of the Festival, Sir Chris Bonnington and his wife Lady Loretto Bonnington.

#### **Day 2, Friday 21 November**

As part of the three person Jury (the other two were Rehan Siddiqui and Brian Hall) for The Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature, I was invited for a trustees' meeting where we were asked to report on the pro-



*Audience for Everest Exhausted*

cess of how we decided the winner. The Board also invited suggestions from us. The Chairperson of the Trust is Maria Coffey, an author 13 books. She was Joe Tasker's partner when he died on Everest. Also on the Board are Dr Charlie Clarke, Paul Tasker, Chris Harle and others. The meeting was followed by Lunch.

The same evening were the Awards where each shortlisted author was given about 15 minutes to present their book to audience. The moderator was Helen Mort, a wonderful award-winning author.

Finally, the Chair of the Jury, Rehan Siddiqui made a speech on our behalf and announced the winner. The Corridor by Ian Peters won the award. I will chair the BT Jury for 2026. Brian Hall and Tony Whithome will be my co jurors.

A small group of us including Maria, Rehan, Brian, Chris, Loretto, Charlie and others had dinner together thereafter.

### **Day 3, Saturday 22 November**

I attended a wonderful event titled Everest - The Hard Way which was a celebration of 50 years since the first ascent of Everest via the South West Face in 1975 when Doug Scott and Dougal Haston summited and Mick Burke died. It was led by Sir Chris who was present with surviving members of that epic expedition.

Later on I was a special guest as President of the Himalayan Club at the Annual Sit Down Dinner of the Alpine Club. There were about five special



*The Everest 1975 Greats*

guests in a roomful of a few hundred and a toast was raised to each of us. Here I met good friends Lindsay Griffin, Mick Fowler, Victor Saunders, Jim Fotheringham, Derek Buckle and of course the President, Simon Richardson to whom I presented the HC scarf and a copy of Vineeta's book. I also presented the book to Sir Chris.

**Day 4 Sunday, 23 November 25, 2025**

Today was tough. I was on a panel titled 'Everest Exhausted'. The other panelists were Kenton Cool, 19 or 20 times Everester, Lukas Furtenbach who recently took four climbers for UK to the top of Everest and back in seven days, using xenon gas, another traditional Everest expedition operator Peter something. The discussion was moderated by superstar Channel 4 presenter Keme Nzerem. I was the lone voice speaking on behalf of the mountain. The others were very adamant that all is great and it's a myth that there is crowding and other problems! The 300 – 400 strong audience was totally on my side so that was great.

Later in the afternoon I attended an Alpine Club-Mount Everest Foundation Event, with presentations on expeditions sponsored by them. Victor Saun-



*With the jury Rehan Diddiqui and Brian Hall*

ders and Mick Fowler made an entertaining presentation as well.

Sending a few photos for all of you to get a flavour. Lots to talk about and learn. There were hundreds of people and hundreds of events for these four days at Kendal although it was bitterly cold and rainy.

Some people who will be happy to come for the HC annual event include:

Sir Chris and Lady Loretto

Lyn Hill who will be fabulous

Spencer Gray who recently won the Piolet D'Or.

Victor and Mick who recently climbed Yawash Sar in Karakoram Pakistan.

There are others as well like Leo Houlding who had come earlier. Recently he took a year off to take his family with two young children climbing in different parts of the world.

A highly acclaimed film has been made which we should try and get.

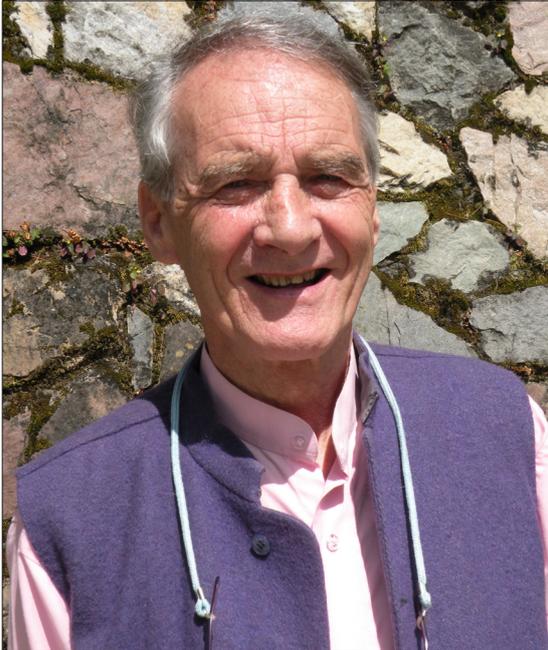


*Signing copies*

## Memorium

### FAREWELL MY FRIEND BILL AITKEN

*Harish Kapadia*



Bill Aitken, the Scottish born writer, traveller and mountaineer who fell in love with India and became an Indian citizen, lived in Mussoorie until he passed away at age of 90 on the 18th of April 2025. Last year, a few of us had gathered to celebrate his 90th birthday. He energetically came down the stairs of our hotel, and even after drinking his favourite whisky, climbed back up with the same energy. He remained fit and agile till his death. He attributed to the pure Himalayan air and walking in the hills. I knew him

for decades, invited him to my home in Mumbai and enjoyed his company and his life partner the Maharani of Jind. We shared the Himalayan trail on several trips or around his home at Mussoorie. He participated in many events organized by different organizations and was always in demand a speaker with his bold views, wit and humour.

Everyone found his company delightful and he always had a story to narrate from his vast experience. He had once trekked to the Nanda Devi Sanctuary and became an ardent devotee of the goddess. His style of trekking was simple and most of the time he stayed with locals or shepherds. He spoke fluent Hindi and had a keen sense of observation. I joined him for few treks in the Himalaya and thoroughly enjoyed his stories and his company. On a trek to Budha Pinath, near Kausani, he was in his elements and was at his best.

The best conversations we enjoyed were while sipping beer together at a pub near his home at the Friends Colony in New Delhi. Once Courtney Ambrose, the West Indian fast bowler, ran through the entire British Test team before we finished. As a Scotsman he had many things to say about

it!

Amongst the many fine books that he wrote, one was on the history of the Indian railways and one on his travels on the Meter Gauge railways in India. As an author of a large number of books, he leaves behind a large collection of works. I had the privilege of recording his life as an Oral History for the Alpine Club. This truly was a rewarding experience. (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEwjxoxYbl> on YouTube).

Unassuming and friendly he met many trekkers and mountaineers,



*With Harish Kapadia and Stephen Alter*

travelling to Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi (where lived for many years). Two great Indian organizations, “The Indian Mountaineering Foundation” and “The Himalayan Club were proud to call him as their Honorary Member. His multifaceted life contains remarkable experiences and insights and are bound to fill volumes.

His mountain books are famous and referred to as classic reference. Some books he wrote on other subjects are lesser known. My favorite amongst these is “Seven Sacred Rivers” about the seven river quoted them at a Hindu marriage when it is solemnized. He also wrote about his motor cycle journeys is “Riding the Ranges”. It covered remote areas like the Northeast states of India. Along with motor cycle stops he mentions about peoples he encountered on the journey. In his book, “Literary Trails” he followed the places visited by great English and Scottish authors, both in their country,

which was the land of his birth, and some in India. He also produced small paperbacks titled "Mountain Delight" and "Touching Upon The Himalaya". His most well known for his best selling book "The Nanda Devi Affair". It covered his trek to the Sanctuary as well as the controversies about the expeditions to set up a nuclear device on the head of the Goddess he worshipped.

Bill had much spiritual incline. He initially stayed at the Mirtola ashram near Almora in the Kumaun. He met Prithwi, Maharani of the State of Jind, there and they remained companions till Prithwi passed away. Swami Krishna Prem, observing his interest in worldly matters, specially writing, suggested that he should move out to serve the world. That brought Bill to New Delhi where he stayed for many years. After Prithwi passed away, last few years of his life he lived in Mussoorie alone in a modest house where his companions, a family of his attendant, looked after him, till he passed away after a fall.

Later in life with Prithwi he became devotee Shri Satya Saibaba and produced a well selling book on him for the devotees.

Once I visited him at Mussoorie. We roamed many places in the bazar searching for the Tibetan dish of momos which we both loved. On return to his residence, he warned me for a shouting by Prithwi. "You writers are insensitive and do not care", she mentioned for both of us. She was angry that I had come unannounced particularly as her small puppy was sick. Bill pointed out a small dog under the bed. But as always, soon she settled down and we were made to sip whisky in the afternoon.

When I asked Bill, when we met next, how is the dog. "The dog died soon after you left, and we both were blamed for it. I am not taking you home today!"

He was fearless speaker. At a gathering of mountaineers in Delhi, in an after dinner speech he bravely mentioned. "Everest is climbed so many times that now only record that remains is to walk backwards to the summit. Only a fool will love a woman simply because she is tall!" Looking at the rush for Everest, it is evident that we have many persons of that genre around.

In his modest dwelling in Mussoorie he had put up a poster. "Oh Lord do not

take away thy servant before he has finished his last bottle of Glenfiddich". Having savored life's final dram, Bill was probably content and happy to depart as happily as he had lived.

## Remembering Geeta Harish Kapadia: A Canvas of Memories

*Paula Mariwala (on behalf of Ravi, Vibhav, Arnav & Mallika)*



It was a wet September evening in Mussoorie. Amorphous, grey clouds were coming up from the valley, covering the snow capped mountains of Uttarakhand. A canvas and a palette of colours were ready to greet and capture the rapturous play of light, clouds and peaks that was unfolding in the colourful canvas of the monsoon sky. As we grumbled about the worsening weather, a figure covered in a traditional but an artistic shawl sat spellbound. A paintbrush in her hand, ready to capture the moods

of the mountains onto her own canvas.

Geetaben, as we all fondly called her, was a woman of many hues – an exceptional artist, an exemplary wife, a loving mother and a motherly figure to host of people, a caring friend, a wonderful hostess, of course an ardent mountain lover... and much more. The canvas of her life reflects the many lives she touched and the abundance of selfless love she shared with so many of us.

For our family, she was very special. Someone who gave us unconditional love, she was also a beacon of simple, robust values that we were fortunate to imbibe into our lives.

I first met Geetaben in 1981, as the wife of the famous and charismatic Harish Kapadia, whom my now husband, Ravi, a young budding trekker at

that time, truly adored. She won me over with her endearing personality and immediately made me feel at home amidst the chaos of what seemed like a military expedition! She was calmly organising food packets, canvas duffle bags, masalas, a myriad other supplies - neatly labelling and counting a million items, while managing to feed a large, demanding crew of young and old mountaineers eager to get onto the long train ride to the foothills for a long summer trek deep into the Himalayas.

I realised that this housewife had the ability to move mountains – and, definitely unsettle mountaineers from their cosy seats. Over the years, she and I became close friends. She shared her love of mountains through her art. As she evolved as an artist, she experimented with many forms of art. With her, I learned to find balance in life – effortlessly caring for causes and people while pursuing passion and purpose in life. We shared a wonderful camaraderie even though we were a generation apart.

Geetaben's family's roots were in Konkan, the coastal region of Western India. Her mother, whom we all called Aiyee, was a legendary figure in her own right who also had a deep impact on our family with her Gandhian values and insatiable zest for life. We were lucky to get to know this inspiring, formidable lady. Geetaben looked after her in her last days with complete dedication and carried on her legacy of sensitive and thoughtful social work.

A mother figure to many, Geetaben poured her love and affection to our children who grew up with her fish curries, colourful stories, and lessons of Marathi. Like a doting aunt, she was there for all their special milestones, with her warm smile that lit up any room. Her Konkani legacy shined through her food, her stories and her love for the local culture.

I admired her for the positivity with which she managed her own grief. After losing her brave son Nawang to a terrorist bullet, she made it a mission to be involved with the young officers of the army. No mother deserves to grieve for her young son's death. She was in immense pain. But diverting all her motherly love, she truly impacted so many youngsters with her unstinted effort over the years. A real inspiration to so many. Her son Sonam and daughter-in-law Charu stood steadfastly by her side, and today continue her legacy of selfless love and dedication in keeping Nawang's memory alive.

She took immense pride in Harishbhai's mountaineering achievements and stood by him in body, mind, and spirit. From countless hikes, treks, and climbs to the many memorable dinners and slide shows she hosted at Vijay Apartments—often graced by renowned mountaineers—her hospitality became legendary. It is little wonder that she earned so many friends and admirers within the mountaineering community. A true partner in every sense, she has been an inspiring role model for us in more ways than one.

The last few years of her life were not easy, as she endured ill health and constant pain. Yet she met those difficult times with remarkable positivity and gratitude. She continued to paint and welcomed visitors with her ever-present smile. Never one to complain, she remained thankful for her loving family, dear friends, well-wishers, devoted caregivers, and doctors—and for a life that was truly rich with memories. Though her body grew frail, her spirit soared high. She was never defeated by illness; instead, she shone with the quiet strength of her character.

There are so many precious memories that we have shared, so many acts of kindness and generosity. Each one laced with her signature grace, compassion, simplicity and humility. She was one of a kind. I was privileged to have been close witness to her life for the last four decades.

Her last outing was to our son Arnav's wedding. Beautifully dressed up by Charu in an artistic Kanjivaram saree, she danced joyfully in the baraat from her wheelchair. She stayed till the ceremony was over and blessed the couple with a big smile, gifting them a painting she had specially done for them, with her shaking hands, from her bedside.

She passed away soon after but she lives on within us, through her art, her love and a collage of poignant memories.

The mountains miss her as much as we do. I see her sitting with a canvas amidst the clouds, finding the right colour palette to capture the spirit that she has left behind...

## Captain M. S. Kohli: The Leader Par Excellence of Indian Mountaineering

*Manik Banerjee*



On the morning of May 30, 1962, the weather on Mount Everest was far from forgiving. Thick clouds hung low, and conditions were anything but ideal for a summit attempt—especially on the world’s highest peak. Yet three undaunted climbers—Instructor Lieutenant Manmohan Singh Kohli, Sonam Gyatso, and Hari Dang—members of the second Indian Everest Expedition led by Major John Dias, pushed on from their summit camp, driven by resolve rather than hope.

Barely 122 m short of the summit, they were forced to abandon their attempt as the weather turned extreme. On the descent, disaster nearly struck. Sonam Gyatso, leading the rope, slipped. Hari Dang, positioned in the middle, could not hold him. Exhausted but alert, Kohli, bringing up the rear, drove his ice axe deep into the slope and arrested the fall—averting what could have been a fatal tragedy.

Though Everest eluded him that year, destiny had other plans. Just three years later, Captain M. S. Kohli would emerge as India’s most successful Everest leader, guiding nine climbers to the summit in 1965—a record that remained unbroken for seventeen years and became a defining moment in Indian mountaineering history.

### A Life Shaped by Mountains

Born on December 11, 1931, in the Hazara district of present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, amid the towering ranges of the Karakoram and Hindu Kush, it seemed inevitable that mountains would shape Kohli’s life. Following Partition, his family migrated to Delhi, but his love for the high places never waned.



*Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru congratulating young instructor Lt M S Kohli after Kohli led and made the first ascent of Annapurna Three in Nepal Himalaya.*

After completing his graduation and a master's degree in mathematics from Delhi University, Kohli joined the Indian Navy. His passion for mountaineering found formal expression in 1955, when he undertook the Basic Mountaineering Course at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI), Darjeeling. A year later, during the Advanced Course, he climbed an unnamed 6401m peak during an expedition to Saser Kangri—a sign of things to come.

In 1959, the Indian Navy launched its first mountaineering expedition to Nanda Kot (6861m) in the Kumaon Himalaya, appointing the young Lt. Kohli as leader. With largely inexperienced teammates, Kohli demonstrated exceptional leadership, making the first Indian ascent of the peak alongside Chief Yeoman K. P. Sharma.

### **Everest, Annapurna and Leadership Tested**

Kohli was selected for India's first Everest expedition in 1960, and again in 1962, serving as Deputy Leader. In 1961, he led another landmark expedition—India's first ascent of Annapurna III, then an unclimbed peak. Along with Sonam Gyatso and Sonam Girme, Kohli summited after a gruelling 14-hour climb, an achievement many consider among India's finest mountaineering feats outside Everest.

The years from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s marked Kohli's golden era—as a climber and, more significantly, as a leader. Following two unsuccessful Everest attempts, the Indian Mountaineering Foundation undertook

meticulous preparation for a third. On August 15, 1964, Kohli was formally appointed leader of the Third Indian Everest Expedition, with Captain Narinder Kumar as his deputy.

In the spring of 1965, Kohli's leadership came into full bloom. With calm authority, strategic clarity and deep faith in teamwork, he guided nine Indian climbers to the summit of Everest, a feat hailed internationally and immortalised in the history of adventure sports in India.

### **Beyond the Summit**

Kohli participated in nearly twenty major expeditions in India and abroad, including Nanda Kot, Saser Kangri, Tirsuli, and the celebrated Indo–New Zealand Ocean to Sky Expedition (1977), jointly led by Sir Edmund Hillary and H. C. Sarin.

Believing deeply in giving back to the mountains, Kohli served the mountaineering community in multiple capacities. He was deputed to HMI as Equipment Officer, guided the Indo-Tibetan Border Police in mountaineering training, and after retiring from the Navy, served Air India for nearly two decades as Manager, Himalayan Tourism—playing a pivotal role in promoting adventure tourism in India.

As President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (1989–1993), Kohli expanded its national footprint, championed women's mountaineering—including the historic Indo–Nepal Women's Everest Expedition (1993)—introduced sport climbing infrastructure, and helped bring international forums such as the UIAA General Assembly to India.

### **A Legacy Etched in Stone and Spirit**

Captain Kohli authored several books, most notably “Nine Atop Everest”, his memoir of the 1965 expedition, along with “Last of the Annapurnas” and “Trekking in the Himalaya”, which inspired generations of climbers and trekkers.

In later years, deeply concerned about the fragile Himalayan ecology, he founded the Himalayan Environment Trust (HET), with patrons and members including Sir Edmund Hillary, Reinhold Messner, Junko Tabei, and others. The Trust spearheaded conservation initiatives such as the Gangotri Conservation Project and promoted the Himalayan Code of

Conduct worldwide.

Captain Kohli passed away on June 23, 2025, after a life lived fully and fearlessly. He is survived by his wife Pushpa, a constant source of strength, and his sons Maninder and Ravinder, with Maninder now serving as Managing Trustee of HET.

Though he excelled as a climber, organiser, author and conservationist, Captain Manmohan Singh Kohli will be remembered above all as the leader of India's first successful Everest expedition—a man whose vision, humility and courage opened a new chapter in the country's adventure sports.

As Prime Minister Indira Gandhi once wrote of his achievement:

“The record of Commander Kohli's expedition will find special mention in history. It was a masterpiece of planning, organisation, teamwork, individual effort and leadership.”

That verdict stands tall—like the mountains he loved.

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