

Apex

Indian Mountaineering Foundation
Newsletter * Volume 2 * October 2015

Golden Jubilee Special Edition



**Celebrating 50 years of
the First Indian Ascent of Everest**



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Golden Jubilee Special Edition

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of India's first climb of Mt Everest, sponsored by the IMF, is most nostalgic feeling for all of us in the IMF. While the IMF was formed in 1957, it was the historic and record breaking climb of Mt Everest in 1965, which not only energized the nation but also encouraged the youth to take to mountaineering in a huge way. We are indeed indebted to all the Members of 1965 Everest Team who continued to promote mountaineering in India in their respective capacities.

We are delighted at the enthusiastic response from all quarters while planning the 50th anniversary functions. On May 19, the Hon'ble Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports had graced the IMF Everest Golden Jubilee inaugural function at the IMF Complex, New Delhi. Next day on May 20, Hon'ble President of India hosted Golden Jubilee function at Rashtrapati Bhavan and on the same day Hon'ble Prime Minister of India invited the 1965 Everest Team Members and the next of kin of those deceased at his residence for personal interaction. In addition public functions were organised in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Darjeeling by the respective Zones/ Mountaineering Clubs and attended by adventure enthusiasts in large numbers.

Over the years the IMF has continued to promote mountaineering and allied sports. Over a 120 expeditions, both Indian and International, take place annually and we are encouraged seeing an increasing number of youngsters participating in mountaineering courses and demonstrating enthusiasm for the adventure sport.

We at the IMF are also delighted to observe that the IMF is increasingly being used as a knowledge centre by various Government Bodies, in a number of areas like Skill Building for Employment Generation, Disaster Preparedness/Management and Curriculum Development with regard to adventure sports for education institutions.

I do hope you enjoy going through Volume 2 of Apex, the IMF Newsletter. I would also urge those not connected as yet to the IMF, to take Affiliate Membership and play an active role in spreading the spirit of adventure and lure of the Himalaya all across India.

With best regards,

Col. H.S. Chauhan
President
Indian Mountaineering Foundation



From left to right : G S Bhangu, Sonam Wangyal, Col. N Kumar, Capt. M S. Kohli, C P Vohra, Brig. Mulk Raj, Gurdial Singh, Lala Telang,

Sitiing in front : Maj H P S Ahluwalia

During the Golden Jubilee Celebrations what gave immense pleasure to all of us was that all the nine living members of the 1965 team despite several personal problems managed to reach Delhi on the 19th of May, 2015 and attended all the functions lined up for the 20th and 21st May. I was particularly pleased that after months of efforts I had succeeded in finding out the addresses and contact numbers of almost all close relations of our colleagues who are no more in this world. With the exception of Sherpa Da Puti, daughter of late Sherpa Phu Dorji, who was affected by the recent earthquake in Nepal, all others were able to join us.

Some of us, who were able to travel around India, were thrilled to meet hundreds of our mountaineer friends and adventure lovers in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Darjeeling and Srinagar. Each one of us enjoyed recounting golden moments of our days on Everest. In Kolkata we were thrilled to see daughter of late Colonel Chakravarty singing the theme song of 1965 expedition "Hey kancha, mala sunn ko tara kasai deo nan" while on the Ganga cruise.

Apart from discussing several issues of concern to the present generation of mountaineers, our talks and meetings throughout the celebrations, focused on re-stressing the point that the most important single reason of our spectacular success on Everest was the outstanding team spirit among our members, and our 1965 team will forever remain the role model in the annals of mountaineering and sports in India.

To conclude, on behalf of the living members of our team, I express our sincere gratitude to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation for superbly organizing the Golden Jubilee.

Captain M.S. Kohli
Leader, Indian Everest Expedition, 1965



The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, inaugurated the Golden Jubilee celebrations on May 20, 2015, at a special ceremony organised by the IMF at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. The President took a keen interest in the display of mountaineering equipment from the historic expedition.

The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi met the 1965 team members and the kin of those deceased, and congratulated them on their historic achievement. Shri Modi recalled being himself tremendously inspired by the news of their extraordinary feat as a young boy in 1965. He also released a book entitled “The Great Himalayan Climb” to commemorate the anniversary.

Ceremonies and functions celebrating the Ascent were held at various locations across India including at New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Darjeeling, Bengaluru and Srinagar. Special screenings of the movie made on the 1965 expedition were also held.





Dear friends,

I am extremely pleased to present an overview of the 1965 expedition through some images which were taken by the team members. I do hope these pictures and my memories associated with them will provide you an intimate glimpse into our experiences and the scope of the expedition.

- Capt. M S Kohli

Like the earlier two expeditions in 1960 and 1962, the third Indian Everest expedition, with 19 members, 46 Sherpas and 900 porters, also left from Jaynagar (on February 26, 1965). Crossing terraced fields and dense forests for a week, the team reached Okhaldunga, where the Burra Hakim, the Deputy Commissioner of the District, gave a rousing reception.



On March 14, the team reached Thyangboche described as 'one of the most beautiful places in the world.' The view of Ama Dablam and Everest behind the Lhotse-Nuptse Wall were most exciting.

Sonam Gyatso is resting against a dog who had joined the team at Jaynagar. After reaching Base Camp he refused to go back and spent 2 months with the team, seeing off climbers and welcoming them back. He was accepted as the team mascot and named 'Tiger'.

Base Camp was set up at 17800 ft. facing the Lho-La pass which leads into Tibet. Here the 900 porters were paid off.





The Khumbu Ice Fall was the first major challenge. Three parties were made of members and Sherpas. Over 2000 ft. of fixed rope and several aluminium ladders were used for vertical ridges and bridging crevasses. Camp I was set up on top of the Ice Fall at 20,200 ft. From here the route up to the Lhotse Face was gradual. We were now in the Western Cwm, where we rested (left).

Lhotse, with its face in the background (right), was the second major challenge. Rope had to be fixed on its entire hard ice slope.

At higher camps, Pumori peak provided a spectacular background.



The route to South Col required us to negotiate the Lhotse face. Due to the steep incline and hard ice, it was extremely difficult to negotiate this section. There were a number of moving crevasses and vulnerable areas. Marker flags were fixed all along to demarcate the route .

We reached South Col (26,200 ft) by the end of April, the windiest and most inhospitable place on the earth.

The route beyond South Col was still relatively unknown. The high camp was set up at approximately 28,000 ft below the south summit.



The Indian Tricolour, tied to a yellow pole by the first summit team of Nawang Gombu and Avtar Cheema on May 20, was there for the other three teams to see.

Sonam Gyatso and Sonam Wangyal (right) reached the summit on May 22. Gyatso was in pain due to frost bite on his back, which Wangyal tried to treat by applying Vicks – a decongestant.

The third team constituting C P Vohra (left) and Ang Kami reached the summit on May 24. C P Vohra was the first geologist to reach the summit (later awarded the title ‘Tiger of Geology’) and even able to find a fossil on the summit ridge.



Major H P S Ahluwalia reached the summit on May 29 (the twelfth anniversary of the first first Ascent), arm in arm with Harish Rawat and Sherpa Phu Dorji (left) – the first time ever that three climbers stood together on the summit.

Phu Dorji had earlier excitedly mistaken a team member for the Yeti. This photograph was taken by Major Ahluwalia, the official photographer for the expedition.

The summit was now full of flags hoisted by the four summit teams, a first for any expedition till then.



The entire team celebrated when we reached back down to Thyangboche (left). Everybody started dancing Bhangra.

Thyangboche monastery had been decked up with flowers and gates were beautifully decorated to welcome the team (right).



The monks of Thyangboche, dressed in brightly colourful robes and fantastic masks, gave remarkably energetic performances to celebrate our success (left).

A historic reception was accorded to the team upon our return at Palam Airport, in New Delhi. The Hon'ble Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru himself headed the reception committee (right).

Bhagirathi III (6454m)

Twin Ascents

Garhwal Himalaya, Uttarakhand



In the first of the two accounts, Bianca Dias narrates the IMF All Women Expedition to Bhagirathi III (6454m) in the Garhwal Himalaya in June 2015. The team of 8 women climbers faced extremely inclement weather, which made the technically difficult mountain even more daunting.

We reached Gangotri on June 3 and hiked up to 3,400m till Mt. Rudigaira for further acclimatisation. After offering Puja at the Gangotri temple, we started on our march towards Bhagirathi Base Camp.

After establishing base camp on June 7, we started the load ferry to Camp I, situated at 5270m. The weather turned really bad on the morning of our march and we could only move the next day to occupy Camp I. The weather kept on changing and there was heavy snow fall through the night. The next day we started the load ferry to Camp 2 at 5845m.

The team had to cross over an ice patch, with a gradient of approximately 60 degrees, and another rocky patch. Camp 2 was set with one tent pitched, and loaded with ration and technical equipment. We experienced a white out on the way back to Camp 1. Next day, when we were to move to Camp 2, the

weather worsened with very low visibility, and the team decided to move back to base camp to wait out the bad weather. On June 17 it cleared and we moved directly to Camp 2. Next day our Sherpas moved to set up Summit Camp at 6195m in the col of Bhagirathi II & III, which was tough as the cornice on the rocky north ridge had sheer drops on both sides. The route to summit camp had snow, ice and 500m of fixed rock to negotiate.

On June 21, the day of the Summit push, the weather worsened, with white-out conditions. At around 7.00am the weather opened up and it was decided to try and reach as high as possible. We had reached up to 6338m when the weather turned bad again, and we had turn back to Base Camp. A final puja was offered at the base camp and we thanked God for keeping us safe and for the wonderful time that we had.

– Bianca Dias



Summit Camp on the ridge towards Bhagirathi III

Debabrata Mukherjee gives an account of his team's successful ascent of Bhagirathi III (6454m), in September 2015. The tough climb was made tougher by the scorching summer that melted all the snow and exposed the bad quality brittle rocky face of the mountain.

Our team reached Upper Nandanban on September 6, 2015, and set up base camp. The next day's weather was bright and sunny, and we began load ferry to Camp-I (5343m). The 2.6 kms 30°-60° scree slope took about 2 hours to reach. The next day, HAPs took up ropes and technical equipment directly to Camp-II.

The climbing team moved to Camp-I on September 9 and started load ferry to Camp-II next day. The aerial distance was only 1.2 kms, but the unstable 65° boulder and scree zone was very tiring. After the load ferries were complete, the Summit team occupied Camp-II.

On September 12, the summit team members started to fix the ropes till Summit camp. They first traversed 700m on the SW slopes under Bhagirathi-IV and then started fixing the ropes. With the Sun climbing up, the snow and ice started melting and the number of loose stones and pieces of icicles increased. By late afternoon they finished fixing about 1200m of ropes on the wall up to the Summit camp, which was to be set at 6090m, just on the col connecting B-III & B-IV. The next day, on our way to occupy summit camp, we crossed the scree zone.

The summer and monsoon had melted the snow exposing the bad quality and brittle rock face. The pitons kept getting loosened. Finally we reached summit camp after climbing two chimneys and traversing under the Bhagirathi-IV. We had to climb up about 7-8 m and then dug out a small shelf to pitch two 3-men tents. Next day we fixed ropes on the summit route, including the two rock steps.

The day of the summit push was windless and clear. The right side of open arête just on the col went down 1500m straight to Gangotri glacier, while the other side was 600 m to the foot of the East face. The second rock step had an overhang which was very tough to negotiate. The next 250m of the 70° ice-snow climb following the fixed rope wasn't that difficult except the hanging icicles from the overhanging cornice. We traversed the final 60m 40° arête to reach the summit at 11.15 hrs. We were atop Bhagirathi-III crossing 257.3 aerial metres and climbing 365m in height.

We returned to base camp after collecting our garbage and also leftover trash from previous expeditions. At base camp we collected further 4 more sacks of garbage.

- Debabrata Mukherjee

Mt. Kakstet (6461m)

First Ascent Ladakh Himalaya



The IMF organised an 11-member Winter Expedition to Mt. Kakstet (6461m) in the Ladakh Himalaya early this year. This was the first ascent on this peak. One of the members Rigzin Tsewang recounts the experiences of facing the extremely inclement weather conditions during the tough month of February.

I was really excited about the IMF winter expedition to Mt Kakstet (6461m). Weather was really bad on our way to Chushul village (4200m). There was fresh, slippery snow on the roads making it a rough journey. From Chushul, it was about 2 hours trek over the moraine until we reached the base camp at 4450m, on February 23.

After offering puja next day, we did a recce of the peak from Shirti La Pass. We decided that the northeast side was a good approach route for our climb next day. The next day the weather worsened, with poor visibility and wind. When it got better we started out. The weather conditions continued to worsen and the batteries of both the GPS and the walkie talkie set died. Ultimately we turned back and headed down to base camp.

We planned to climb again the next day from the South East side which was steeper than the other side, but a shorter distance. We also decided to take extra batteries for the GPS and walkie talkie set.

The next day the weather was mostly good until the ridge where it was very windy and the weather really started to deteriorate with blizzard conditions and severe wind and cold.

The summit was only a few hundred meters away and technically the climb was not difficult, so we decided to continue and push ourselves towards the summit. It was also quite steep which was quite good for our bodies as we got warm due to the steep climb. Even though the weather was worse than before and the wind much stronger, we still really enjoyed the last part of the climb and around 11am we were able to reach the majestic Mt Kakstet peak. The view was spectacular but the weather was really bad and visibility was minimal.

The descent in fact was more difficult than the climb up because of loose rocks and after an hour we safely reached a resting area below the steepest part of the peak. I felt extremely happy and also relaxed that we had made it through the harsh weather.

- Rigzin Tsewang



IMF to launch Cleaning Expedition Program supported by ONGC

In a first of its kind initiative under the ambit of CSR, India's leading oil giant ONGC will be partnering with the IMF to launch 4 clean up expeditions during 2015 and 2016. The intention of the exercise is to send teams on the ground to areas showing strong indications of garbage build up, to clean these areas and retrieve all the trash, as well as encourage future expeditions in the Indian Himalaya to adopt environment friendly practices. The following are the plans under this program :

1. Four expeditions will be dispatched to the following areas and collect garbage from the road head village right to the top and bring it down to municipalities where a proper waste disposal system is in place:

- (a) Stok Kangri Base Camp, Leh
- (b) Bara Shigri Glacier, Rohtang-Batal-Kunzum Axis, Himachal Pradesh
- (c) Tapovan, Garhwal, Uttarakhand
- (d) Pindari Glacier, Kumaon, Uttarakhand.

2. ONGC has further allocated a grant of Rs. 8 lakhs specifically for cleaning-up of the Gangotri region.

3. The IMF will produce a document on observations while undertaking this exercise, giving recommendations and guidelines on environment management and share this document with mountaineering clubs across India to sensitize the mountaineering and trekking community.

4. The IMF has launched the 2015 version of the application form for permit for Indian expeditions where environment related guidelines have been updated in detail to show the importance of compliance to these guidelines.

5. The long term objective of the program is to ensure that all expeditions operating in the Indian Himalaya strictly follow environment related guidelines.

For more information: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/ONGC-takes-PMs-Swachh-Bharat-drive-to-Himalayas/articleshow/48460516.cms>



IMF holds Climbathon 2015

IMF conducted the third edition of Climbathon, its Alpine Mountaineering Leadership Programme, from August 4 to August 28, 2015, in the Bara Shigri glacier in Lahaul & Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.

Climbathon 2015 was conducted with 30 participants entering the Introductory program. Learning sessions included both the hard-core mountaineering skills as well as the soft-core leadership/team building skills. Teaching methods included a spread of different styles, ranging from role-play to interaction through formal teaching sessions and group presentations and experience sharing. The final expeditions involved 5 teams successfully climbing five different mountains ranging from 6000 to 6500m, all expeditions had to establish a base camp and then a summit camp.

The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation, UIAA, had appointed Mr. Ian Wall as their observer to assess the participants in the programme. Mr. Wall lauded the programme as “highly professional and well-rounded”, with “learning sessions that included both hard-core mountaineering skills and soft-core leadership/team building skills”.

UIAA is also considering accreditation of the programme at their top standard, i.e. 'High Alpine', from the next year's Climbathon, as confirmed by the UIAA chairman of Training Standard Panel Chair, Mr. Steve Long.

IMF Emerging as Knowledge Based Partner

During the course of 2015 the IMF has increasingly been drawn into playing the role of consultant for various government departments and institutions. The following are some of the institutions which have been actively engaged with the IMF to take support in multiple areas.

Skill Development Ministry, Government of India :

The IMF is being designated as the Assessment Body for the Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council with the objective of enhancing skills of the youth, leading to employment generation in mountain regions.

Ministry of Tourism, Government of India :

The IMF is jointly working with the Ministry of Tourism on a capacity building program for adventure professionals, starting with a foundation program where graduates would be referred to as Adventure Travel Scouts. The initial plan is to train 1400 professionals under this program.

National Disaster Management Authority :

The IMF is working closely with the NDMA to establish a process to both sensitise and train responders in case of a natural disaster in mountain setting.

Educational Institutes :

The IMF is collaborating with educational institutes on multiple levels, including the following :

- * Khalsa College and the IMF have collaborated to establish a Foundation Course in Adventure Sports. This is a part time course for three months involving 6 hours of classes per week including theory and practicals. Those who clear the course will receive a certificate issued jointly by the IMF and the College.
- * One seat in the Undergraduate Course at SGTB Khalsa College, New Delhi will be reserved for students specifying mountaineering/adventure sports, under Extra Curricular Activities.
- * The IMF will provide Internship to students of Sports, Economics & Marketing, Web Journalism (Three Months Certificate Course). The students will intern at IMF for two days every week.

Amul's Delicious Tribute to the Epic Climb



Food giant Amul paid fittingly tasteful tribute on the Golden Jubilee of the 1965 Indian Ascent of Everest with this tweet on May 19, 2015, in its hashtag #Epicclimb. Epic is its premium brand of chocolate ice cream.

For more information and credits:

https://twitter.com/amul_coop/status/600900687367548929

7th Edition of Mussoorie Writer's Mountain Festival Announced

The Mussoorie Writers, an outreach affiliate of Woodstock School, which organises a literary festival each year in Landour, Uttarakhand, to celebrate mountain literature, culture, exploration and history, has announced its seventh edition. MWMF 7 will be held this year from October 22 to 25, with focus on **"Women and Mountains"**. Nanda Devi, both the Goddess and the mountain, would be the central theme of the festival. More than 20 eminent speakers including Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner and Bernadette McDonald are expected to address the participants. Other notable events scheduled include a Photo Essay contest illustrating the theme of this year, viz. "Women and Mountains", a concert by the celebrated blues band from Shillong "Soulmate", and a re-enactment of the Nanda Devi Raj Jat Yatra.

The IMF is looking to develop an understanding to conduct part of the festival at the IMF campus in New Delhi, at around the dates when the festival runs at Mussoorie.

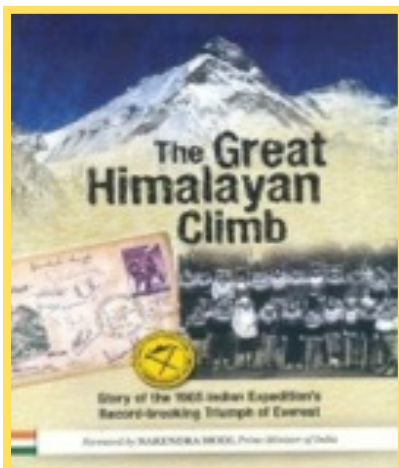
For more information and credits: <http://mwmountainfestival.com/>

"Meru" releases in theatres



August 2015 saw the worldwide theatre release of "Meru", the documentary film chronicling the extraordinary story of the 2011 First Ascent of Mount Meru (6660m) via the Shark's Fin route, considered one of the toughest climbs in the world. Directed by Jimmy Chin and Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi, "Meru" features Conrad Anker, Jimmy Chin, Renan Ozturk, Jon Krakauer and Jenni Lowe-Anker. The film has received much critical acclaim, winning the Sundance Audience Choice Award among others.

For detailed information and credits: <http://www.merufilm.com/>

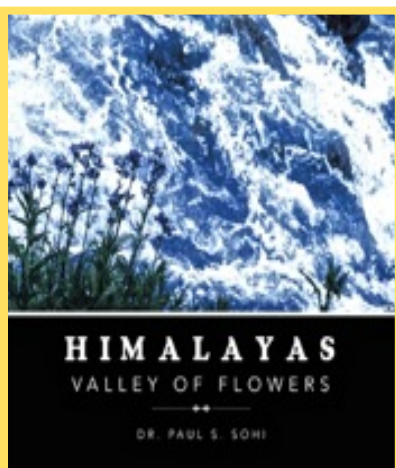
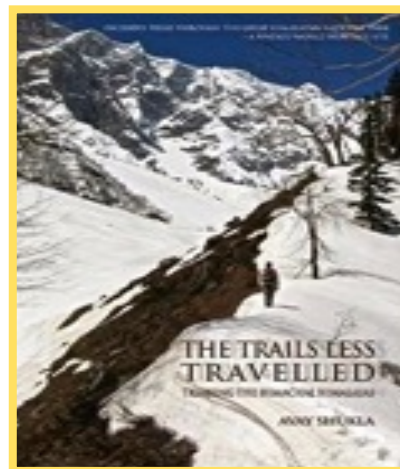


The Great Himalayan Climb
by Capt. M S Kohli * Orient Publishing * May 2015 *

The Great Himalayan Climb is a commemorative volume by Capt. M S Kohli, released by the President of India, on the Golden Jubilee of the first Indian Ascent of Everest in 1965. The foreword to the book has been written by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. A large section is devoted to the recollections of the living members of the iconic expedition. Also featured are the quotes made by the leading mountaineers of the world on the Ascent.

The Trails Less Travelled : Trekking the Himachal Himalayas
by Avay Shukla * Niyogi Books * March 2015 * Rs. 995/-

This first book by Avay Shukla, a conservationist and former bureaucrat, chronicles the author's non-conventional exploratory treks through the remote regions of Himachal Pradesh, spanning a period of 20 years. His observations encompass the land and terrain, the people, the rare flora and fauna, The positive effects of restrictive entry as well as the detrimental impacts of government policies, development, mass tourism and global warming on this ecologically sensitive region.

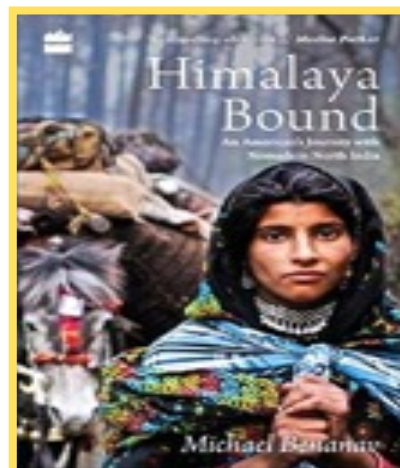


Himalayas : Valley of Flowers
by Dr. Paul S. Sohi * Trafford Publishing * February 2015 * Rs. 1263/-

The Valley of Flowers, part of Uttarakhand Himalaya, is one of the eight UNESCO World Heritage sites. Dr. Paul S. Sohi believes that the Inner Himalaya was home to various Gods and Goddesses who roamed the mountains and valleys, and the Himalaya responded with these magical miniature flowers. His book reflects his belief that the presence of these delicate flowers at an unforgiving high altitude, is a miracle. The pictures featured were taken before the massively damaging landslide of 2013.

Himalaya Bound : An American's Journey with Nomads in North India
by Michael Benanav * Harper Collins India * July 2015 * Rs. 399/-

Michael Benanav, a critically acclaimed American writer and freelance photographer, spent 44 days travelling in the company of the Van Gujjars, a nomadic herding tribe of the Northern India, during their annual spring migration to the higher reaches of the Uttarakhand Himalaya. The book intimately chronicles the life, travails, hopes and experiences of this fascinating tribe and the relationship they share with the land and their animals.





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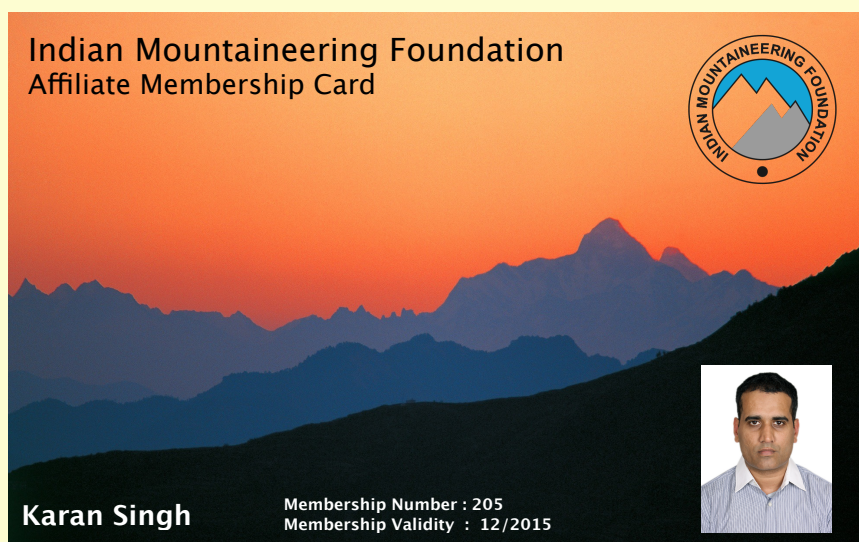


ADVENTURE TRAVEL
TRADE ASSOCIATION



IMF launches Affiliate Membership

The IMF has announced the opening of its Affiliate Membership and is encouraging mountaineers, trekkers and adventure lovers from all across India to get connected through this membership. This new platform would help enhance the profile of adventure sports in India, while also adding to the overall skill level associated with the sport and sharing information on important aspects like safety and environment issues. Affiliate members can also look forward to numerous privileges at the IMF.



Affiliate Member benefits:

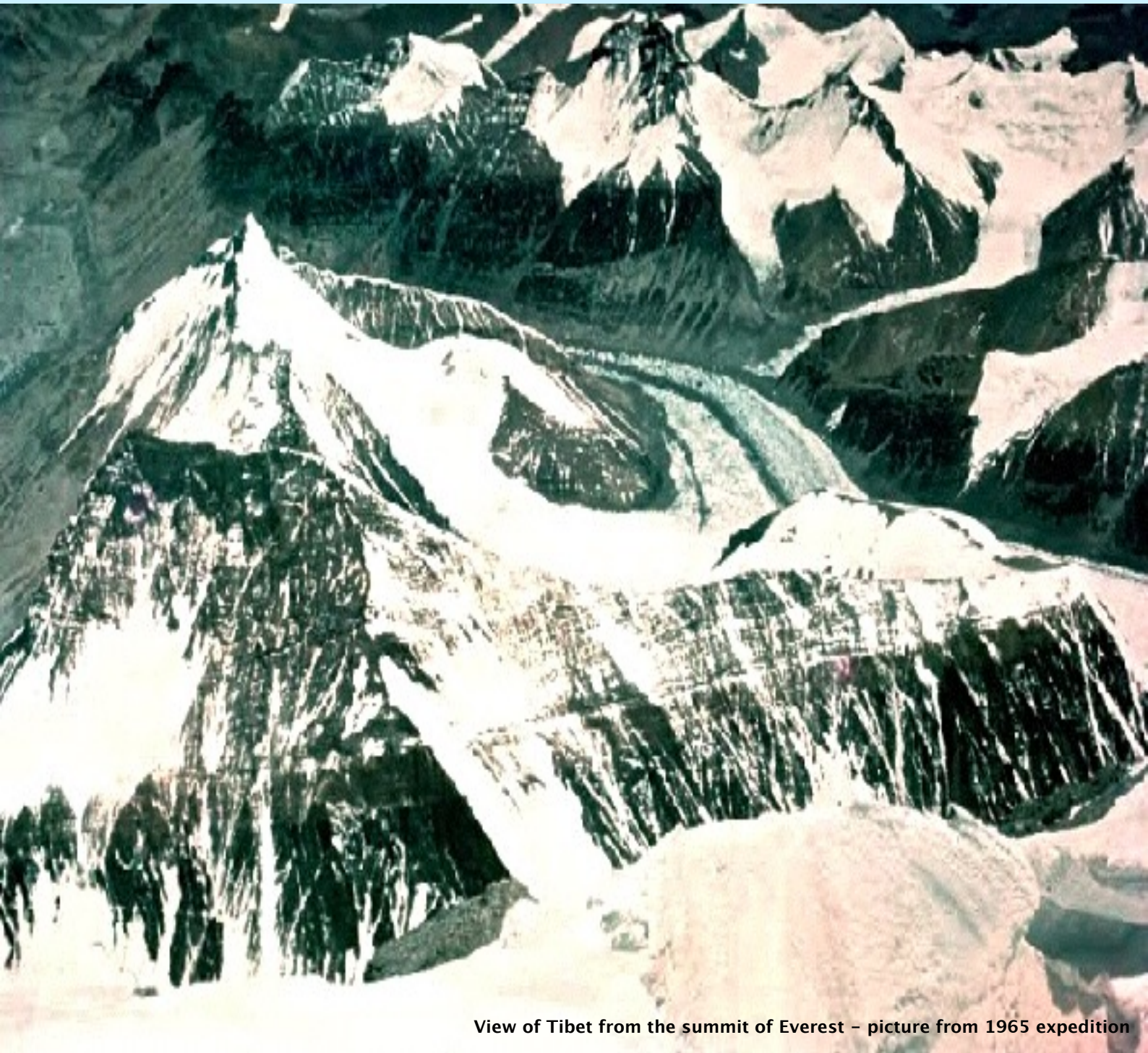
- ★ Receive copy of the IMF Journal 'Indian Mountaineer' and 'Apex'.
- ★ Join members only platform and share material on recent expeditions and treks.
- ★ Get invited to various talks, events and training programs across location.
- ★ When in New Delhi, access the IMF equipment store, the library and use the accommodation at IMF Centre.
- ★ Avail special discounts on using the IMF climbing wall.
- ★ Receive special offers for purchasing outdoor equipment, books and publications.
- ★ Be a part of IMF committees and regional chapters, and help support the growth of adventure sports in India.
- ★ Receive advisories on safety, environment and subjects of common interest.

Visit the IMF website www.indmount.org to view the detailed membership brochure and apply online.

Apex

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Newsletter * Volume 2 * October 2015

Golden Jubilee Special Edition



View of Tibet from the summit of Everest – picture from 1965 expedition

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Published for the
Indian Mountaineering Foundation
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