

CORRESPONDENCE

GURDIAL SINGH

99, Sector 8A,
Chandigarh-160 008.

15 December, 1997

Dear Harish,

I happened to find a pile of old black and white photographs when I rummaged through old papers lying more or less abandoned for over two decades. It was then that I thought that, perhaps, some museum might be the right place for photographs of the early India climbers and their moderate deeds in the high hills.¹

In the summer of 1957, under the auspices of the British Council, I went to the U.K. for a short stint of teaching at Gordonstoun in Morayshire. It was an unconventional public school in some ways. Owing to the influence of Kurt Hahn, one of the pioneers of 'Outward Bound' movement, it laid emphasis on community and rescue services as well as mountain and sea adventure. Its claim to fame was also due to the fact that the Duke of Edinburgh had gone there as a boy in Pre-World War II days when KH himself, an epitome of unorthodoxy, was head master. Later Prince Charles and his brothers followed in steps of the father.

Anyway, soon after my arrival in Scotland, I received a warm invitation from Dr. Tom Longstaff to stay with him in a remote corner of Scotland near Achiltibuic in the far west of Ross-shire. Some six years earlier, after reading in *The Times*, London, of the ascent of Trisul by an amateur Indian climber, he had sent me a congratulatory letter in which he had also added: 'wasn't it a soul experience to get up a peak so intimately linked with Hindu mythology for centuries?'

Accompanied by a colleague from Gordonstoun, it was indeed a rare privilege to be guests at his lodge over a week-end in the 50th year of the first ascent of Trisul by him and the Brocherel brothers from the Alps. Hence it was a memorable occasion, enlivened by the presence of his young wife. He was effusive in his praise for the beauty and people of the Central Himalaya. For me, over forty five year junior in age, to be able to share a few moments with a legendary climber was itself an ennobling experience.

With best wishes,

GURDIAL

1. Some of these photos are printed in this volume as 'From Gurdial Singh Collection'.

— Ed.

GURDIAL SINGH

99, Sector 8A,
Chandigadh-160 008.

16 August 1997

Dear Harish,

In your most interesting 'A Tale of Two Valleys' (H.J. Vol. 53), permit me to point out a factual error on p. 90.

R. L. Holdsworth did not accompany Frank Smythe to the Valley of Flowers in 1937. RLH was then Principal of Islamiya College, Peshawar; a year later he joined the Doon School as housemaster. In *Kamet Conquered* RLH wrote that classic chapter XXVI on high alpine plants of that area, a piece that introduced Frank Smythe to that aspect of the Himalaya. Read it, it will simply take your breath away.

Incidentally, Willi Unsoeld (of the Everest West Ridge fame) and I were in the Valley of Flowers for ten days in 1949. I went again in 1951 with Greenwood after Trisul and then again with Nandu Jayal in 1953, crossing Bhyundar khal on both occasions.

GURDIAL