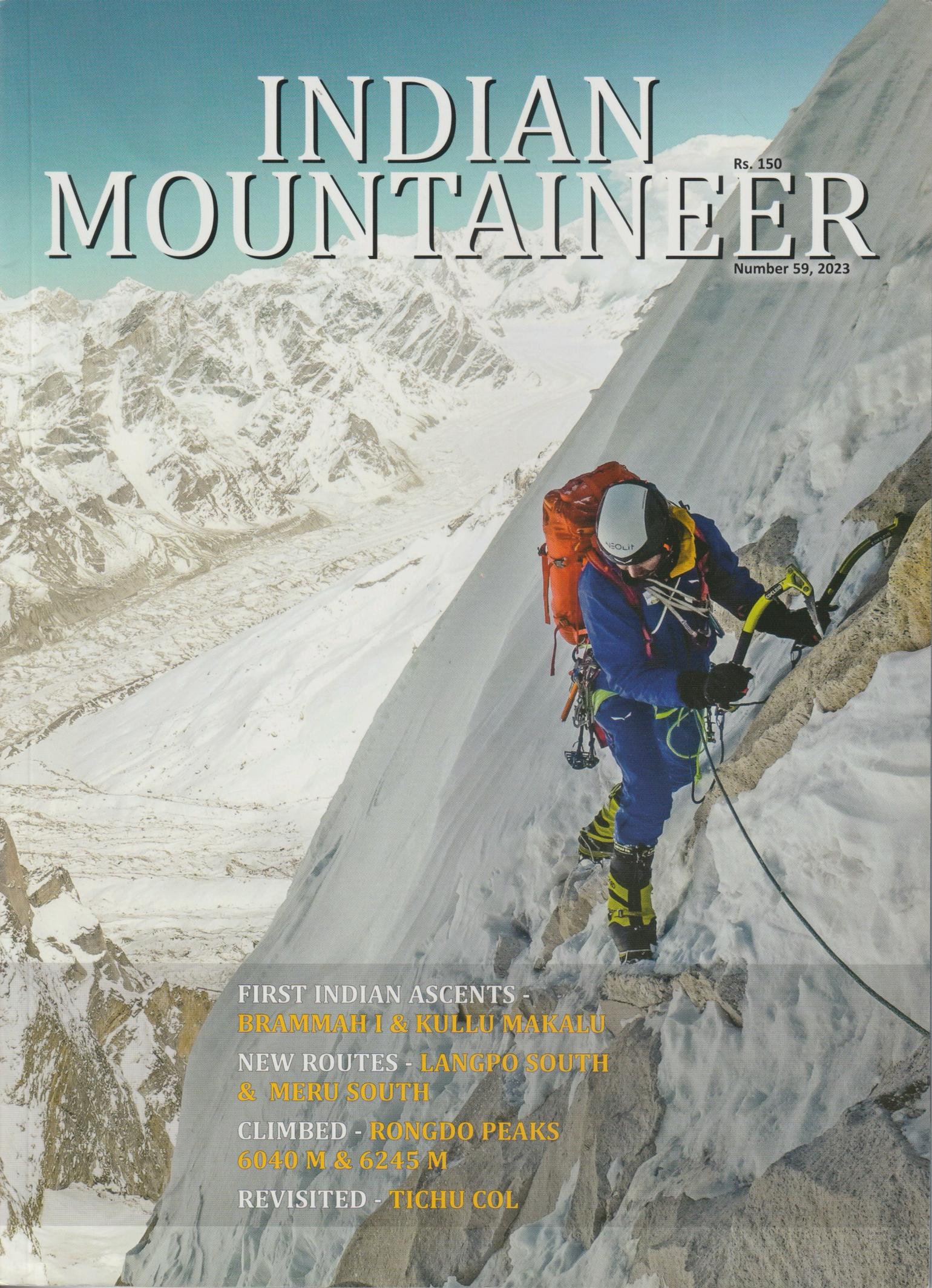


INDIAN MOUNTAINEER

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FIRST INDIAN ASCENTS -
BRAMMAH I & KULLU MAKALU
NEW ROUTES - **LANGPO SOUTH
& MERU SOUTH**
CLIMBED - **RONGDO PEAKS
6040 M & 6245 M**
REVISITED - **TICHU COL**

DR MANOHAR SINGH GILL (1936-2023)

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

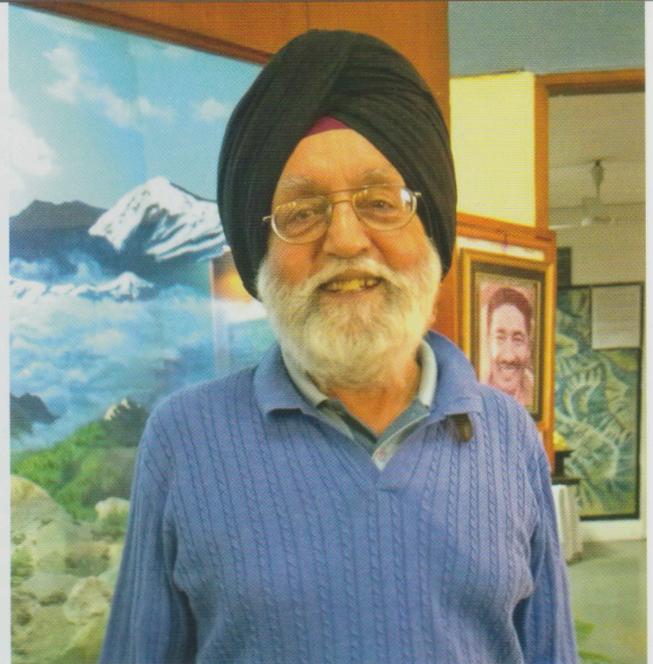
Dr MS Gill, aged 86, passed away in Delhi on 15 October 2023 after a brief illness. He had the rare distinction of having been the President of two of India's highest mountaineering bodies - The Indian Mountaineering Foundation (1993 to 1999), and The Himalayan Club. He brought about dynamic changes in the working of both these organisations, and more importantly, brought with him an unparalleled leadership. His administrative capabilities and his diplomatic and humorous approach created lasting impressions - and both these organisations were proud to call him their own. He gave The Himalayan Club its first and only home in its long history. The Club is indebted to him for tirelessly working to raise funds, which enabled the THC to buy an office in Mumbai.

Dr. Gill was part of the Indian Administrative Services, which he joined in 1958 and in his long illustrious career till 2001, he served in various capacities as DC Lahaul and Spiti, and in many other remote areas. He was Secretary Agriculture, and later held the reins of the office of the Chief Election Commissioner of India from 1996 to 2001. He was responsible for the introduction of Electronic Voting Machines thus reducing electoral malpractices. For this work, he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award in India. In April 2008, Dr. Gill was inducted as the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, for two terms. As a Congress member of the Rajya Sabha for two tenures (2004 - 2016), he was known for his sharp intellect and plain speaking. Being a prominent Sikh, he was also honoured with Nishan-e-Khalsa.

Dr Gill had a long and abiding interest in the Himalaya. He wrote the book *Himalayan Wonderland: Travels in Lahaul – Spiti* and published several professional papers in the course of his duty. Later he undertook the Basic Training Course in Mountaineering under none other than Tenzing Norgay at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling.

Dr MS Gill was born in an affluent family of senior military officers and bureaucrats, on 14 June 1936 at Taran Taran (Amritsar). His late father Col Pratap Singh Gill was the Lt Governor of Goa.

I recall a personal anecdote. The Korean expedition



from Dankook University was not getting clearance from the Forest Department for a peak in Uttarakhand. As the LO of the Korean team, I ventured to seek his help – he was the President of IMF at the time. I was quite apprehensive of meeting him at his residence late in the evening, but was surprised at the positive response and hospitality shown by Dr Gill. He not only immediately rang up the concerned authorities but insisted that we have a drink together.

A prolific writer and scholar, he penned several books and articles. Some of his most read books are *An Indian Success Story: Agricultural Cooperatives* written during his study leave at Cambridge; *Himalayan Wonder: Travel in Lahaul and Spiti*; *Tales from Hills: Lahaul's Enduring Myths and Legends*, and a very interesting article on his journey to Lahore.

A doting father of three daughters, Dr Gill was a gifted gardener and a bird lover. His huge official bungalow, as the Sports Minister, was a riot of colour, with flowers, peacocks and other birds.

His loss will be deeply felt by IMF members and the entire mountaineering fraternity.

Surjit Puri

Wing Cdr Sudhir Kutty and Harish Kapadia

Gp Capt. R C Tripathi, VM (G)