

/ An Ol' Ranger

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M.S. Gill

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My love affair with the Himalayas started in 1961 when I trained at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling, under Tenzing Norgay and his nephew, Nawang Gombu. The affair

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continued during my stint as deputy commissioner, Lahaul-Spiti, under the great Punjab chief minister Pratap Singh Kairon. A winter crossing in February of the Rohtang Pass remains a precious memory. Two years ago, we went to Leh, and on to the Nubra Valley, across the 18,500 ft high Khardung-la. We were awed at the sight of the vast Siachen-Nubra Valley going down to Turtuk, the border with the other Kashmir.

Last week, we went to Leh again. The one-hour flight from Delhi is itself an unforgettable experience. We sat on the left behind the cockpit, so as to gaze in wonder at the mighty peaks, all the way to the Karakoram range. K-2, Nanga Parbat, the numerous 8,000 mtr-plus peaks of the Baltoro Glacier, Concordia—all of them could be glimpsed in the morning sun from the east. The only equivalent of this great experience is a morning flight in clear winter skies from Delhi via Kathmandu to Bhutan, when one can count all the great Himalayan peaks—Everest, Lhotse, Numpse, Nanda Devi, Kanchenjunga, and many many more—as one flies west to east.

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