

# Mr. Pertemba Sherpa

At 58 Mr. Pertemba Sherpa has accomplished what very few men dream of in mountaineering. 'I came, I saw, I conquered', would come close to describing his achievements in the mighty Himalayas.

He was born and brought up in the Khumjung Village of the Khumbu (Everest) region and was amongst the first students in the Khumjung School (constructed and funded by Sir. Edmund Hillary Trust) in 1960. However due to financial constraints he could only complete his studies till Grade 5. Then in 1966 the construction of the 'Gateway to Everest', Lukla airport, was started and he got his first job there as a kitchen helper.



He met Colonel Jimmy Roberts while working in Lukla who offered him a job in Kathmandu and worked for and stayed with Jimmy Roberts in Kathmandu. In 1968 he started his climbing career by summiting Mardi Himal with a group of German clients and reached the summit. For the next two years he was trekking around various regions of Nepal and successfully summited the Yala Peak and Dhampus Peak and in 1970 he joined his first major peak expedition with the British and Nepal Army, joint expedition to Annapurna I. The expedition was a success and he reached till the last camp as a support team. This was the only second team after Werner Herzong had successfully conquered Annapurna I, 20 years earlier.

The following year he joined as a "climbing Sherpa" for the Everest South Face expedition which did not succeed due to bad weather and delay in climbing due to the time taken in finding the route to the summit from the South Face. He however, reached another milestone by reaching 8000 meters. This was a joint International expedition.

The very next year in 1972 he joined a British expedition to Mt. Everest (Sagarmatha) as a climbing Sherpa, trying to summit from the South Face. Chris Bonington was the team leader for this expedition. The expedition failed due to bad weather and tough route. For the next three years Pertemba stuck to climbing and successfully summited Mt. Urgan Hindukush in Afghanistan with a Swiss expedition and also trained in the Alps with late Dougal Hutan. Then in 1975 Chris Bonington selected Pertemba as an expedition Sardar for the next expedition on Everest but this time they changed their route and opted for the South West Face. 'Third time lucky' and more importantly with experiences of two failed expeditions, this time they conquered the South West Face and became the first ever climbers to reach the Mt. Everest Summits from this route. This effort of Pertemba was recognized by the late King of Nepal, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev who awarded him with the Gorkha Dukshin Bahu (1st class) award.

After conquering Everest, for the next three years he was climbing various mountains like Mt. Kosiyasko in Australia and Mt. Gauri Shanker in Nepal. Along with his climbing profession he was participating and guiding members in research programs in Ganesh Himal and Arun Valley and was an active participant for the Himalayan Jubilee Celebration in India (Mumbai) and the Sagarmatha week in Nepal.

In 1979 he was invited as a climbing Sherpa for the Everest Expedition via South East Ridge which was his second success on Mt. Everest.

With so many feathers to his cap on the Himalayas the next big highlight of his career was as a trekking guide for His Royal Highness Prince of Wales and Dhirendra Shah in Annapurna region. This trek is now popularly known as the "The Royal Trek". He also escorted Mr. Robert Mcnamara in the Langtang and Everest region. This was in 1980. In 1981 he became an Instructor for the Manang Mountaineering School.

In 1983 he joined an American team of men and women for the Everest expedition which failed due to bad weather. Then in 1984, for his sixth time, he joined a Norwegian Expedition from the Everest South Col route and successfully summited Mt. Everest for the third time. This was also the first summit by two 55 year olds, Chris Bonnington and Amerial Dick Daes, then becoming the oldest to climb Everest. This was also the first single expedition that was able to put as many as 17 people (including Sherpas) on top of Everest.

Having summited Mt. Everest three times from two different routes, Pertemba decided to stop climbing Everest. However he started his new venture Nepal Himal (P) Ltd., a trekking and expedition company in 1985. For the next two years he was organizing treks and expeditions around various regions of Nepal and then in 1988 he joined a China, Japan and Nepal team as a co-leader for the Everest traverse expedition. Even though he did not climb Everest the expedition was a grand success and this expedition was the 1<sup>st</sup> of a kind to be telecast live on the net from the top of Mt. Everest. For his contribution on this successful climb of this expedition, he was awarded the Tri Sakti Patta (3<sup>rd</sup> Class) by His Majesty's Government of Nepal and a Sports medal (1<sup>st</sup> Class) from Peoples Republic of China.

In 1993 he summited Mt. Twins Peaks in Sikkim with a Japanese expedition and his last expedition as a climber was Mt. Manaslu in 1995, Nepal, again with a Japanese group which was also a success. From then till date he has led many expeditions to various mountains but has stopped climbing.

Apart from his mountaineering feats he is involved in social work. He is a member of the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) and was an executive member for 10 years. He was the executive member for the Himalayan Rescue Association for 8 years. He is a life member of Sherpa Sewa Kendra and has been working there for more than 14 years. This association constructed a monastery in Boudha which is used for funeral rites, prayer ceremonies and organizes Loshar picnics (Tibetan New Year), funds children for education etc.

In 1989 the most holy and famous monastery of Khumbu region, Thyangboche Monastery was destroyed by fire. The next 7 years until the monastery was rebuilt, Pertemba was an active member of the fund raising committee.

He is a founder member of Kathmandu Environmental Education Project (KEEP) and served as chairperson for 6 years. Apart from providing *"impartial and independent information to travelers, and ensure the future ecological and cultural prosperity of Nepal through positive impact tourism and outreach project work"* KEEP organizes First Aid training courses on High altitude for trekking guides.

He is also an active member of the French foundation called Benoit Chamoux which works to ensure education for children of deceased mountaineers. He is also a member of the Japanese trust Ken Noguchi since the last 4 years which funds education of climbers and their children.

He is an advisory member of the Himalayan Trust since the year 2000. The trust works for development programs like making roads, water supply, making/repairing bridge(s), making/repairing Gompas (monasteries) in the Solu Khumbu region. They are also responsible for maintaining and running more than 20 schools around Solu Khumbu area, which was built by Sir Edmund Hillary as well as a hospital in Khunde and a health post in Phaplu.

Apart from this, Pertemba is also an advisory member of Promise Nepal, a UK based charity which supports Organizations working for the betterment of the leprosy affected people of Nepal.

Now, Pertemba is campaigning to conserve the almost vanished Sherpa traditions. He has donated his ancestral house in Khumjung to be preserved as a Sherpa heritage house for future generations. The house is older than many local ancient monasteries and is unique among the Everest Villages where Sherpa homes have been radically modernised. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has agreed to be the President of the Sherpa Heritage Museum and Sir Christian Bonnington, it's Patron.

Pertemba, a man who has reached the highest peak on earth, several times, is more than just a mountaineer. His feats and contribution to society is commendable. Although reaching great heights from meager beginnings he still remains humble and kind, always looking for and finding ways to help a cause to uplift his society.

(Text by Sacred Summits (P) Ltd.)