

Grandson does Tenzing proud on Mt Everest

The memory of Tenzing Norgay's ascent of Mt Everest was revived afresh Wednesday when his grandson, an Everest hero himself, summited the world's tallest peak for the third time.

Tashi Tenzing, son of Tenzing's eldest daughter Pem Pem, a mountaineer herself, reached the 8848-metre peak at 7 a.m. Nepal time Wednesday, Tashi's wife Bandi Nima Sherpa told IANS.

'I did it,' he told me on the phone from the summit,' a jubilant Bandi Nima said. 'I feel so happy! I am going to call my mum right away.'

Though Tashi ascended the summit earlier in 1997 and 2002, this year's climb is special because he chose the route that goes through Tibet.

'No one in the Tenzing family, neither Tenzing nor his son Jamling nor Tashi, had ever climbed through Tibet,' Bandi Nima said. 'They had all chosen the southern route going via Nepal.'

'They are Tibetan people born in Tibet. So to go through the mother country is a matter of special pride.'

Bandi Nima said Tashi had told her if he pulled it off, it would be his last Everest expedition.

'There are hundreds of people on the summit,' he told Bandi Nima. They included Tashi's client, Klara Polackova, whom he had guided to the summit of Mt Cho Oyu last year.

What makes Tashi's summit this year all the more interesting is that on the same day, two more Sherpa legends strode to the peak.

Apa Sherpa, who broke his own record for the maximum number of ascents, summiting for the 17th time, was accompanied by 'Everest Express' Lhakpa Gelu Sherpa, who reached the top the 13th time.

Lhakpa created a record for the fastest ascent in 2003 when he reached the summit in 10 hours 56 minutes and 45 seconds.

Apa and Lhakpa returned from the US to lead the Super Sherpa Everest Expedition, designed to bring to the limelight the Sherpas, the unsung heroes of mountaineering without whose help many records would not have been possible.

Bandi Nima said she couldn't sleep at night, when she knew he had started out from the last camp for the peak.

'I prayed to the gods for his success and safe homecoming,' she said. 'At 5 a.m., I went to the Swayambhunath temple to offer my prayers. And as soon as I returned home, I received his call.'

'He will make the final bid Wednesday,' Tashi's wife Bandi Nima Sherpa told IANS. 'Besides guiding a client, he will also be carrying the Toyota flag to the peak.'

An alumnus of Darjeeling's prestigious St Paul's School and Sociology graduate from Delhi University, Tashi married an Australian mountaineering guide, Judith Pyne, and settled down in Australia in 1990, acquiring an Australian citizenship.

Three years later, he led an expedition to Mt Everest to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the first ascent. Though two members of the team reached the summit, Tashi himself turned back after tragedy struck and his uncle and climbing partner Lobsang Tshering fell to his death.

But he was successful four years later and repeated the feat in 2002.

Last year, the 42-year-old, then divorced from his first wife, proposed to Bandi Nima, a member of Nepal Tourism Board, whose brothers run a famed trekking agency as well as a domestic airline, and moved to Kathmandu.

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