

Gurdial Singh

A Profile

Born at village Uddoke in Amritsar district in Punjab on Jan 1, 1924, Mr Gurdial Singh is among the early educationists who attained a rare degree of proficiency as a mountaineer. A student of Government College, Lahore and then Aligarh Muslim University, Mr. Gurdial Singh excelled in sports with swimming claiming the bulk of his attention. He was, in fact, the State and University champion in the backstroke event over the 100 and 200 metres at Lahore in 1942.



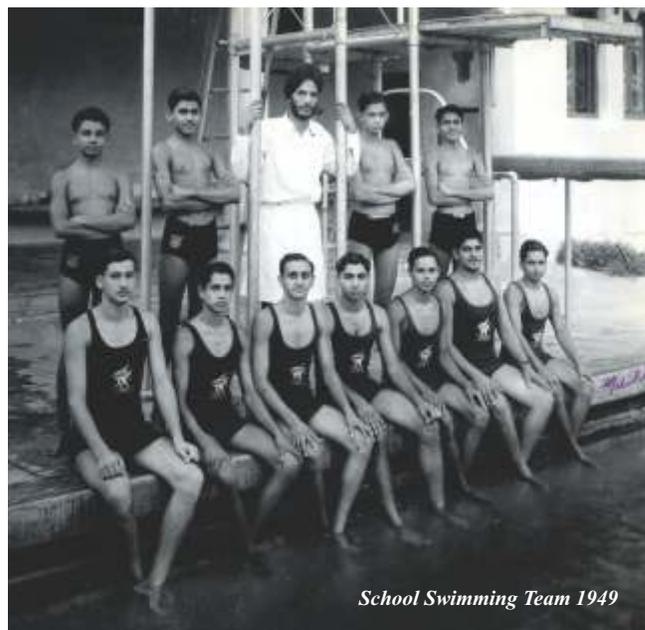
Meeting Lord Louis Mountbatten (1947-48) L-R: JTM Gibson, Bidhu Dhar Jayal (10 T '38) who taught at Doon (1944-47), Sudhir Khastgir, Guru, KB Sinha. KNP Nair and the Head Master AE Foot

Keenly interested in mountaineering, he spent a good part of three decades in going to the high hills. His early feats include the climb to Bandar Punch (20, 720 ft), as member of Jack Gibson's expedition in 1950. He organized the first Indian expedition to Trisul (23, 360 ft) in 1951, reaching the summit with R. Greenwood and D. Thondup. He accompanied General William's expedition to Kamet (25, 447 ft) in 1952 and was with the Bengal Sappers again the next year when Major N.D. Jayal ascended Abi Gamin (24, 130 ft) with sherpa Pemba Sunda and Garhwali Puran Singh. He also joined Major Jayal's successful expedition in Kamet in 1955 and climbed Abi Gamin along with Captain John Dias and three local hillmen – Kalyan Singh, Diwan Singh and Bijai Singh.

Gurdial Singh had amazing endurance and has the distinction of having spent six nights, most of them without oxygen, on the South Col (26, 200 ft) in 1962.

This is the longest known period of stay by any amateur climber on the South Col. He climbed Bandar Punch at the age of 52. In 1952, he became the first Indian to be elected to the premier climbing club of the world, the Alpine Club, London. He was invited, as an adviser to expeditions, by the Bengal Sappers, Indian Military Academy, Regiment of Artillery and Nehru Institute of Mountaineering.

He taught at the Doon School for 34 years and retired as Deputy Headmaster in 1979. In 1957, he also taught at Gordonstoun School at Scotland under the auspices of the British Council. During the period he stayed abroad, he trekked the Scottish hills and the Lake District. At one time a regular contributor of articles on adventure and mountaineering, Gurdial Singh was awarded the Arjuna Award in 1965, the Padma Shri in 1967 and the IMF Gold Medal in 1983. His brother, Lieutenant General Sartaj Singh, distinguished himself in the 1971 war with Pakistan and was awarded the Padma Bhushan.



School Swimming Team 1949

[This information on Guru is reproduced from the book 'India's Highest Sports Awards and those who won them'..... Ed]