



April 2015



Thinking Aloud

Tribute to an Unknown Jewel - Jay

Podium

Walking with Malli Mastan

We Recommend

Links to articles & videos

Dear Reader,

“Never Give Up, Never Give In!” is exactly what Malli Mastan Babu preached and practised. He was an Indian adventurer and motivational speaker who till the very end did what he loved the most - scaling new heights and climbing mountains.

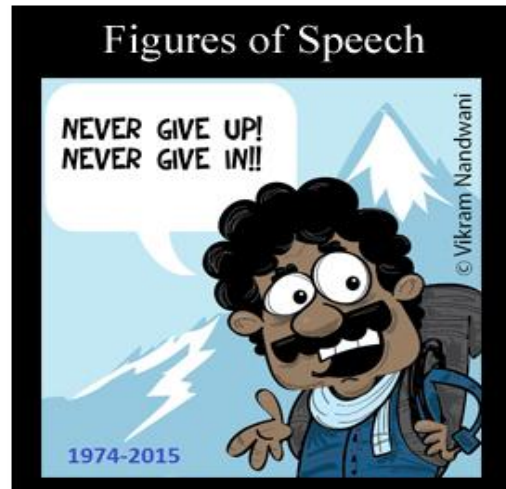
Hailing from Jana Sangam village of Sangam Mandal in Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh, Malli studied at Sainik School, Korukonda during 1985-1992 and later went on to complete a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the National Institute of Technology, Jamshedpur, in 1996. Malli did not stop here and further pursued M. Tech in Electronics from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, in 1998. After a three year stint as a software engineer, Malli was selected for the prestigious two years management course at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, graduating in 2004. He stood out in various sports and adventure activities at these institutes. Malli's untiring efforts to increase the fitness levels of fellow-students and to institutionalize adventure activities led to the foundation of IIM-C's Adventure Club in 2003. It was here that he was awarded the Dr. B.C. Roy Awards for his outstanding contribution towards enriching campus life.



It is said that he found his life's true calling towards nature and mountaineering after drawing inspiration from Lt. M. Uday Bhaskar Rao, a former student who passed away during the Indian Army's Everest expedition of 1985. He decided to follow his inspiration and took to mountaineering after graduating from IIM-C. Malli soon became an inspiration to the many students in his former institutions as he wrote to them often, participated in alumni meets and took efforts to conduct courses on hiking, high altitude trekking, yoga and Vipassana meditation.

He has several feathers in his cap:

- He was the only South Asian to accomplish 7 Summits and the **only** person in the world to climb these summits **on seven days of the week**, one in each calendar month (172 days in 2006). Within seven months, Malli conquered the peaks of Mt. Vinson Massif (4,857 metres; first Indian ever on Vinson Massif, Antarctica's highest mountain), Mt. Aconcagua (South America, 6,962 metres), Mt. Kilimanjaro (Africa, 5,895 metres), Mt. Kosciuszko (Australia, 2,228 metres), Mt. Everest (Asia, 8,850 metres), Mt. Elbrus (Europe, 5,642 metres) and Mt. Denali (North America, 6,194 metres). He managed to also summit Puncak Jaya (4,884 metres, also known as Carstensz Pyramid) on 28 October 2006.
- He was awarded the 'Conjee Rustumjee Cohoujee Bey Award' for 'Outstanding Youth of the Year' in appreciation of his feat of being the world's fastest 7 "Summiteer" and the 1st SAARC National 7 "Summiteer" in 2006.
- An incredible climber that he was, he completed the ten highest climbs in the Americas.
- He was awarded the Youth of the Year award by US Senator John Kerry in August 2006.
- Malli was also conferred the title "The Pride of India" by the Indian American Friendship Council, at Dallas, Texas in August 2006.
- In June and July 2007, he hiked and trekked a high-altitude traverse of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath in the Himalayas.
- Towards the end of 2007, he ran 14 half marathons in 14 days in 14 different states and had completed 8 full marathons and 3 half marathons in 13 days, spanning 10 Indian states.
- In 2008, Malli accomplished a solo trek from Mt. Everest to Mt. Kanchenjunga in less than 100 days. En route, he ascended the world's five tallest peaks Mt. Everest (8,848 metres), K2 (8,611 metres), Kanchenjunga (8,586 metres), Lhotse (8,516 metres), Makalu (8,475 metres) and Cho Oyu (8,201 metres).



During one of his solo climbs to the Andes in South America in March 2015, Malli breathed his last and the mountains retained its favourite child. There are only a few of us who would dare to take up a path less trodden on like he did. Malli not only demonstrated exceptional courage in charting a path seldom taken by others, but followed his heart till the very end of his journey. Malli Mastan Babu has been associated with Empowered Learning Systems and has always contributed to the learning curve. This month we give you a special issue of **ET** which celebrates Malli's adventurous spirit, his courage, his love for nature and people. May he continue to be an inspiration to all those who would want to follow their dreams, come what may.



Malli during the Trans Himalayan
Solo Expedition in 2007

In **Thinking Aloud**, Jay remembers Malli and compares him to that of an unknown jewel. Malli was an inspiration to all those he crossed paths with. Jay walks down memory lane to the time he, along with Malli, summited Mt. Kilimanjaro on the 15th of August, 2007, and later goes on to explain that mountains are a metaphor in our work. Jay also explains who Malli really was as a person.

On the **Podium**, we pen down some thoughts of people who were associated with Malli especially during his corporate expeditions.

In the **We Recommend** section, we share some links to articles and videos on Malli Mastan Babu.

In **Figures of Speech**, Vikram's toon on Malli says it all!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Resources section on the website or simply **Click Here**. You can also follow us on **Facebook, Twitter, Linked In & Google+** - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us! For smartphone and tab users, please **Click here** to continue reading Empowering Times.



Thinking Aloud

Tribute to an Unknown Jewel - Jay



Project 'Reach for the Sky' - 15, August 2007

**When your time comes to die,
be not like those whose hearts
are filled with fear of death, so
that when their time comes
they weep and pray for a little
more time to live their lives
over again in a different way.
Sing your death song, and die
like a hero going home.
(Tecumseh)**

I used to describe Malli as India's unknown jewel in my workshops. Years ago when I started my career as a Consultant, I used to speak of many individuals, Indian & overseas, who epitomized a 'will to win'. But since 2006, when I first met Malli Mastan Babu, and heard from him his

quest for the Seven Summits, I was convinced that he was the one whose story that I would use at all my workshops, to inspire others.

And, inspirational, he was, to all who met him, and to all who heard his unique personal journey. I was introduced to him by my good friend, Dr. Yogi Chimata, who said, 'Let me introduce you to another guy as crazy as you!' Malli was then on Everest, and by the time I met him had just one more mountain to climb to qualify for the Guinness book, Carstensz Pyramid, part of the Messner or Carstensz list of 7 Summits.

This he completed soon, and then we joined forces to share a dream, organizing India's first Leadership expedition.

I have always maintained that leadership at the cutting edge is life itself. It is not a case study where post-facto we can analyze right from wrong, and talk of risk from the safety of a classroom. Real entrepreneurial business leaders have to face trial by fire on a daily basis when the calls they take impact lives, chiefly their own. While they often have others around them to guide and advise them, the final call is theirs as the buck stops with them, as one great leader famously said.

Simulating this was my goal and Project '**Reach for the Sky**' materialized in August 2007 when a small bunch of us decided to attempt to leave our safe environs and push ourselves hard by attempting to scale the highest peak in Africa, Kilimanjaro. None of us were mountaineers – or for that matter, regular trekkers. But when I discussed my dream expedition with Malli, he gave me the quiet confidence to believe that this could not just be attempted, but accomplished.

That was Malli – who believed everything was feasible. I will save the story of the expedition for another occasion but will acknowledge that it is to Malli that we owe our personal triumph of summiting Kilimanjaro on the 15th of August, 2007, and raising the tricolours of India, proudly, and breathlessly singing the national anthem with Malli

leading the singing as we gasped along. It was he who coaxed us through the physical and mental challenges every day, making us believe that we could achieve the quest that we had dreamt of, however ill-prepared we were.

Mountains are a metaphor in our work. I maintain that we all have our own mountains to climb in our life. At the workplace there are many seemingly impossible goals that the firm expects us to tackle. Be it the Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG) that Jim Collins maintains corporates should set their sights on, or a short-term stretch goal that a manager has to achieve, there are many assignments that are considered 'tough, impossible, crazy, stupid, scary, etc.' In other words, 'cannot be done'. Since joining our fold in 2007, Malli became the ultimate symbol of the various concepts of management that we used in our work. For Malli, everything was feasible: be it the Seven Summits or audaciously running a marathon-a-day in every state of the country.

He meticulously planned his work, adept as he was with technology and management principles, and with an attitude that epitomized positivity. When people heard Malli's story the question that invariably followed was, 'Yes, but what is his job?' It seemed difficult to believe that Malli did not have a job but was driven by a mission: to carry the Indian flag to places remote and thereby inspire the next generation of Indian children, much as he had been inspired by a previous one.

Another question that he was often asked was, 'Aren't you afraid?' With a shy smile and a gentle laugh, Malli would neither deny nor accept that fear was part of his life. Where was the time to be fearful when the thrill of challenge was beckoning him forward?

He depended on others to raise funds for his impossible quests and saw himself as a bearer of the India story all over the world. His life and his work touched all he met, and what was most striking about him was that he wore greatness lightly. His utter humility, soft voice, and quiet confidence belied the greatness that he possessed. In his solo treks he befriended solitude, making it an invisible companion who accompanied him ensuring that there was no loneliness in his travels.

And, friends he gathered around the world: from school children who felt enthused by this real-life hero, an explorer straight from story books; to corporate executives who were roused by his tale of a village boy who dreamt of tall mountains; and many other simple folk, whom he met in his wanderings, and with whom he blended naturally.

Where there any regrets that he held? Malli did not waste time in such de-energizing space. In private moments, Malli did mention that he would have liked to see corporate India embrace the spirit of adventure more, but he also knew that their absence from this sport was reason enough for him to go the extra mile – to prove that Indian explorers could be counted amongst the world's best. The lack of national recognition of his feats angered many of us but he was nonchalant about it. So, it is ironic for us to now find that the Indian media & government have discovered him at journey's end.

His life is a message that will continue to inspire generations. I am reminded of Jack London's words that, 'I would rather be ashes than dust! I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry-rot. I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. ***The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.***'

And, that he did. Malli packed more into his life by the time he was 40, than many others. Much to the envy of other climbers, at 31 years he had completed the 7 Summits, and done more in his splendorous life than many before him.

In times to come, Malli's tale will be written about as he was no less than Shackleton or a Messner in his pursuit. 'Because it's there', said Mallory when questioned about his desire to climb Everest. Paying the ultimate physical price in the search for the unknown is but a small amount for these special men. Malli knew this well, and was undeterred in his journey, operating on a shoe-string budget, and adapting well in all the new lands that he visited - learning fluent Spanish, for instance as he moved deep into the wildernesses of South America, and slowly being welcomed by Amazonian Indians and other residents all over the world.

To us, Malli is the epitome of self-actualization, that strong drive towards perfection that is rarely found in men, and whose single-minded search demands a tough price from you. And, Malli did not flinch in this journey.

Sleep well, my dear friend, and we will carry your flame forward.

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Podium

Walking with Malli Mastan



Mr. Anuraaga Chandra is the Global Head-Business Development, Refrigeration at Danfoss Industries Pvt. Ltd.

ET: What hindrances did your team face while on the Dzungri Trek along with Mr. Malli Mastan Babu & how did he guide your team on the expedition?

AC: Malli was the most adored guy in our Dzungri trek expedition. We encountered various challenges and Malli was the most motivating factor in overcoming the same.

At the beginning of the trek itself Malli advised us on the dos and don'ts. But not many of us listened to him in full earnestness. As we continued, the altitude started impacting us and by evening fatigue was common among all of us. Malli took charge of the situation: he took all our bags away and started carrying them himself. He went to each one of us and talked us out of the fear in our minds of altitude sickness. He even carried one of us on his shoulders. The interesting fact was that he had closely observed everyone and noted all the mistakes done. In the debriefing session conducted by our facilitator, Jay, in the evening, he explained to us in detail why we got into a problem and how we could avoid the same the next day.

The next day was totally different. We listened to Malli as he gave us tips which made trekking easy and highly enjoyable. Tips such as “chalte chalte aaram karo”, “do not look beyond three steps”, etc. He explained a lot about forest flowers, told us motivating incidents/stories, captured us in multiple photographs and thus ensured that we did not think about the long distance we needed to cover. In the evening, when none of us were in the mood to eat anything due to exhaustion, he personally served food to all and encouraged us to eat. He ensured that some of us took medicines, so that they could be prepared for the next day.



**Malli with Mr. Anurag Chandra & Team Danfoss
at the start to Dzungri Top in 2010**

The final day's trek, which started at three in the morning, was the most memorable one. Due to the cold, when we all were loaded with woollens, he came in simple track pants and a T-shirt. He explained the need to synchronise with nature and made us take away all those extra woollens and then led us from the front in pitch darkness. Once we reached Dzungri Top, Malli took out the Indian flag and handed over the same to us thus arousing patriotism in all of us. Since we were at the top of the mountain, he politely reminded us that the mountain was gracious to allow us to reach its top and we should be humble, respectful and immensely thankful to the mountains.

My team and I still remember every word Malli said in the debriefing session once we returned. His observation skills and communicating the facts in a very simple and effective manner was unparalleled. During this expedition, our team became very close and well-knit and got ready to face some major business challenges ahead. “A great mountaineer” he was, but also an effective consultant and a humble human being in spite of his great achievements.

In short Malli was a friend, guide, task master, consultant, guru, doctor, a gentleman, all in one. It is so difficult to accept that he is no more. RIP.



Mr. Shreekanth is a Chartered Accountant and works in a private bank. He summited Mt. Kilimanjaro as part of a team led by Malli on 15 August 2007.

ET: How did Mr. Malli Mastan inspire you during the Leadership expedition to Kilimanjaro in 2007?

S: My words would hardly do any justice to Malli. He was an amazing person, cheerful, enthusiastic, down to earth, ever smiling and courageous. When I first heard that he had summited all 7 peaks my jaw just fell. Throughout the expedition, he was always at hand to support others, be it during the climb, early in the morning - I had not even woken up before him and never did he sleep before us. He

used to reach at the camp before us, take care of everything, have dinner with us and used to lead the night discussions. Personally, he took care of me like a father or mother. He was a true leader and the mountains were his friends. He lived with mountains, the mountains allowed him to summit and it finally took him back as if he was her son.



Mr. Yugandhar (Yogi) Chimata, M.D. is a leading Nephrologist and the President of Dallas Renal Group, Dallas, Texas

ET: Mr. Malli Mastan always promoted the spirit of adventure in India and abroad. What are the key lessons that you draw from his life?

YC: I have known Malli Mastan Babu for over a decade now. I was connected to him by a mutual friend in Los Angeles. All three of us were alumni of Sainik School, Korukonda in Andhra Pradesh.

As you may surmise, he was several years younger to me and hence we were not in school together. But our school (like most schools probably) weaved a strong bond of connection between all the students that studied there regardless of their age or their socio-economic status. That is how I made an instant connection with Malli and invited him to Dallas in 2006. He stayed with me and I connected him to several more people most of who contributed generously to a fund that would allow him to pursue his passion. I had kept in sporadic touch with him through the years including during a dinner meeting with Jay and Malli in Bangalore in 2009. While I feel quite sad that he is no more with us, I am quite happy that he passed on to the afterlife doing what he most loved. Here are the lessons I have drawn from his short but illustrious life:

1. Be very simple and unassuming despite your achievements. Malli was truly a simple soul with no pretences. He connected with everyone he came across and truly enjoyed their company.
2. Follow your passion against all odds. Malli came from a family of limited means. However, he did not follow the beaten path of education, job, marriage, children etc. He was always sure of what he wanted. His passion was mountaineering and adventure. He did not let any other pursuits hamper his goal of pursuing his passion.
3. You don't have to make noise when you pursue your passion and achieve your goals. I am reminded of a marketing campaign that Heineken Beer had several decades ago. "You don't have to make noise when you make a great beer." He was surprisingly very quiet about his pursuits and achievements. Pursuit of his passion was itself a great reward for him. He did not look for any further recognition.
4. Live simple but think big. He never let his simple background dictate what he could or what he could not achieve. He always found a world of possibilities ahead of him despite the constraint of resources.
5. If you follow your passion, you will never go wrong. You will be rewarded well both in life and death.



Mr. Umar Teekay is the head of Teekays group, which is into corporate interior fit-outs across India. Mr. Teekay has travelled around the world and is passionate about nature, wildlife and adventurous sports. In 2007, he scaled Mt. Kilimanjaro which was organized by Malli. Ever since, they have been friends and have undertaken some interesting treks together.

ET: Mr. Malli Mastan gave himself to nature and made India proud in his lifetime. What are the key takeaways from his life?

UT: Malli gave himself to nature. No doubt, he did many things that made India proud. However, he did not receive the exposure and publicity that his feats deserved during his life time. He was so busy crossing one impossible milestone after another that he had no time to pause and record his achievements and hence the recognition too eluded him. Even some of his closest friends, like me for instance, had no full knowledge about his achievements. Each one of us just was aware of bits and pieces about his life and work. It is sad that his achievements got the recognition only after his passing away. It is only now that we know of his chosen field, he was miles and miles ahead of his competitors.

Two things stand out:

One, his humility and focus; he didn't really care about the laurels. It could be because he was the most humble soul that we knew of, or he was too focussed on what he was doing and nothing else mattered to him or both.

Two, his determination and perseverance, so much so that, leave alone the recognition, even the results didn't matter to him. He just concentrated on what he was doing and nothing ahead or beyond was his concern.

In the end, he got the recognition that he deserved even if it is after his death- so what? He wouldn't have cared anyway. And in turn, India too realized that here was a hero who silently achieved one feat after the other, and had India too firmly etched in his heart in everything that he did. And he made India proud eventually.

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We Recommend

Links to articles & videos

This month, we look at links to articles/videos, extracted from the World Wide Web, of Malli's account of his expeditions through his blogs and articles.



An avid lover of nature

<http://round8586.blogspot.in/>

<http://mallikilimanjaro.blogspot.in/>

1. **Malli in his own words**

“Challenge is what enthralls me and free spirit is what I exhibit.”

“Courage and Conviction has been a way of expression of myself.”

“There are two types of great happiness: when you are haunted by a dream, and when you realize it.”

2. **Malli Mastan’s Blogs**

The following are blog links related to some of Malli Mastan’s mountaineering experience, the challenges he faced in some of his climbs and some vivid description of nature in its beauty that surrounded him.

<http://mast-malli.blogspot.in/>

<http://zmsas11.blogspot.in/>

3. **Articles & Videos on Malli**

The following are some links to articles about Malli.

<http://www.outdoorjournal.in/news-2/exclusive-interview-with-hernan-augusto-parajon-provides-proof-of-mastans-ascent-of-cerro-tres-cruces/>

<http://scroll.in/article/717176/indian-climber-missing-in-the-andes-is-the-tendulkar-of-the-mountains>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rky5SkVhRig>

Four part video links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ax4H98Unc6k>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uo0zy8mgodY>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPMO-8r_qZg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjCvXwt4jOk>



Malli in what he does best

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