

India

HIMALAYA

Overview of foreign expeditions. There was a marginal increase in the number of foreign expeditions to the Indian Himalaya—40 teams compared to 35 teams that climbed last year. The Ladakh area received 14 expeditions, mostly to the Nun-Kun massif and many to Stok Kangri—an easy walk-up to 6,000m opposite Leh. Stok Kangri now has the reputation of being the most climbed 6,000m peak in the world!

The Kumaon Range received five teams and the best climbs were achieved here. Martin Moran (UK) continued his love affair with the Indian Himalaya and made a fine ascent of Chiring We (6,559m), last climbed 25 years ago. The British climbed Adi Kailash and made a ascent nearby. Saf Minal (6,911m), on the edge of the Northern Nanda Devi Sanctuary, was climbed by an American-British team. The ascent, by a new route, came after a long gap, last having been climbed by a Japanese team in 1975.

The Gangotri area continued to remain most popular, with 10 teams climbing there, and the adjoining Garhwal received six teams. Peaks like Thalay Sagar, Arwa Spire, and Bhagirathi continued to attract mountaineers.

Lastly, in the Himachal Pradesh easy peaks like Manali Peak, Friendship, and KR group were climbed several times. Several teams climbed in the Miyar Nala of Lahaul. An Indo-British team trekked in the relatively unknown areas of the Pangli valleys of Lahaul. Visiting less-frequented valleys, they crossed high passes and brought back memorable photos as reference for future climbers.

Overview of Indian expeditions. A total of 65 expeditions from India climbed in the mountains. West Bengal led in numbers with 42 teams, followed by 10 teams from Maharashtra. The Indian Mountaineering Foundation organized four expeditions (two all women teams). Uttaranchal received 35 teams, followed by the Himachal Pradesh with 26, Ladakh with three, and Sikkim with one.

The major event for the Indian Himalaya was exploration of the Tsangpo-Siang Bend from the southern approaches. A team of three Indians made a route through thick forest of the Arunachal Pradesh and reached the Line of Control between India and China, where the Tsangpo enters India to be called the Siang. The same river is called Brahmaputra as it flows into the plains of Assam. The full exploration of the Tsangpo gorge was thus completed.

An Indian army team climbed Kangchenjunga from Nepal and flagged off the celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of the first ascent of the peak to be held in 2005.



MIYAR NALA

Miyar Valley, upper glacier exploration and short new routes. A four-strong party from England and Scotland (Graham Little, Jim Lowther, Kevin Kelly, and myself) visited the Miyar Valley in May. The area offers large granite walls in a mountain setting. Various parties have been to the area since it first came to prominence after a visit by an Italian team in 1992. Most teams have established base camps at the snout of the Miyar Glacier and climbed in the adjacent valleys. Previous trips have given a variety of names to side glaciers that already have local names. We journeyed further up the Miyar Glacier to the junction with the Jangpar Glacier, which we explored and found to offer some impressive mountain big wall potential.

May seemed to be too early to attempt technical rock climbing, as ledges held much snow from an unseasonably late fall (the heaviest for 25 years), which was melting and flowing down the rock walls. We climbed two snow routes. On one, we dropped a pack after completing the difficult climbing; this forced a retreat short of the summit. We climbed three rock routes on slabs and spires nearer base camp. In brief:

Christina Peak, 5,420m (GL, JL May 14), by south face at PD.

South face of Pt 5,960m (BD, KK), retreat from 5,800m after dropping a rucksack.

Lammegier Spike 5350m (GL, JL May 22), Alpine D.

First ascent of 600m+ rock route on slabs above Khai Got on east side of Miyar Nala (BD, KK), UIAA VI.

Many of the currently available maps of the Miyar Nala and the glacier area are generally small scale and often of poor quality. The sketch maps produced by the Slovenian and Italian expeditions, while useful, are often not topographically very accurate. Some of the heights claimed for climbed peaks are exaggerated.

There is also mounting confusion over the names of the glaciers that lie to the east of the Miyar Nala/Glacier. Dali Got below the snout of Miyar Glacier has been the site of several expedition base camps and as such is a useful reference point. The following names have been used, with our favored versions (which are often local names) given first, followed by alternatives.

Glaciers linking to the Miyar Glacier:

Jangpar Glacier (no alternatives): the final glacier to join the Miyar Glacier (about 6 km above Dali Got at its snout).

Glaciers not linking to the Miyar Glacier:

Dali Glacier (Spaghetti Glacier, Thunder Glacier): lies directly above Dali Got.

Chhudong Glacier (Tawa Glacier): lies just over 1 km down the valley from Dali Got.

Takdung Glacier (Nameless Glacier): lies 4 km down the valley from Dali Got.

BRIAN DAVISON, *United Kingdom*

Miyar Valley, Neverseen Tower (5,700m), Mai Blau. Eloi Callado and I arrived there at the beginning of September, and after setting up our base camp (4,800m) at the glacier's moraine we started carrying the stuff to the base of the wall (5,050m). To reach the base we had to cross the glacier and climb a 400-meter snow ramp (35°-40°). We put up a new route called Mai Blau (in Catalan that means Never Blue) on the west face. It was a natural line that combines cracks

and slabs. The route name reflects the bad weather: the sky was never blue. Last summer the monsoon had been bad and the post-monsoon was not much better. The sky sometimes cleared in the morning, but it would cloud over and snow in the afternoon.

We climbed in “capsule style,” setting two camps on the wall (at the second and fifth belays). We spent 13 days living on the wall (12 bivis) to climb 13 pitches, some of them longer than 70 meters, graded A3+/6b/70° (890 meters climbed, not counting the snow ramp). On the summit day we climbed alpine style the last four pitches and the final Ca 150m snow ridge. But before the final attack on the summit, we rested two days on the portaledge because of the weather.

We rappelled down the route (there are bolts only at belays) from summit to the second camp, and the next day continued to the base of the wall. After this journey a three-day non-stop snowfall started. We were stuck for the next two weeks at the base camp glacier without the possibility of walking down to the main valley. It was time to return home, but we couldn’t move, and conditions in base camp were harder than on the wall. We had 1.5 meters of new snow, and problems with cooking in the tent in base camp. We waited to leave until the weather changed. We were in a remote zone, and during five weeks in the valley, we didn’t see anybody. Just some shepherders during the first trekking days. That’s all!

It’s difficult to find porters in the area, so we brought them from Manali (the most important town in the area). But to return to Manali we needed to cross a road pass (Rothang Pass, 4,800m) that is at the same altitude as base camp. We were afraid that the road could be closed because of the snowfall. But snowplows were working there, and with a 4-wheel-drive car we could have crossed it. The problem was that our driver decided to turn back before crossing it, so we finished our adventure hitchhiking on a truck.

SILVIA VIDAL, *Spain*



Neverseen Tower (5,700m). (1) Italian route (Di Vincenzo-Marcheggiani-Miele, 1992—reported in AAJ 1997). (2) Mai Blau (Callado-Vidal, 2004). (3) Spanish/Catalan attempts (Casablancas-Llongueras, 1999, 2001). Xavi Llongueras SGIM



Eloi Callado starting the epic snow-filled hike out from Neverseen Tower. Silvia Vidal

Castle Peak subsidiary summits, first ascents. Roberto Iannilli and Domenico Perri left Rome on July 27th, spent several stressful days in Delhi trying to regain their missing baggage and then experienced more delays above Manali, when a heavy storm washed out the road over the Rohtang Pass and 13 porters had to be hired to transport all their gear to the far side. From a base camp at 4,000m in the Miyar they hoped to attempt the big west-facing rock wall on the unnamed 6,000m+ peak at the head of the Spaghetti Glacier (Iannilli had climbed ca 400m of this in 2003 and the left side of the face was climbed a little later the same year to a 5,845m fore-summit—christened Mahindra—by Slovaks Dodo Kopold and Ivan Stefanski; see *AAJ* 2004). However, the wall was plastered with snow and ice, so the pair changed their objective to a lower sub summit of Castle Peak, overlooking the main valley.

After establishing an Advance Base at 4,650m, the Italian pair attempted the west face, very compact in the lower section to a large ledge system, then a more featured headwall above. On August 5 they climbed a 480m crack system to the ledge. A White Chocolate Croissant was graded UIAA VI. On the 9th, after a couple of rainy days, they made a light and fast attempt on a more direct line to the right but on the headwall it started to rain and the pair retreated, having to sit out the night with no gear at 5,000m. On the 12th they started up the face once more, this time with bivouac equipment. After a night on the ledge, they reached the summit on the 13th, having climbed 1,500m (18 pitches) to 6c. They named the summit Iris Peak (5,400m) and the new route, which they rappelled, Mustang Café.

On the 19th Iannilli soloed another route more to the left, ending on a lower subsidiary summit. This was about 5,000m in altitude and named David62's Nose. The 13-pitch route (740m of climbing) was named Prot House and had difficulties up to 7a+. The same day two young French women, Margherite Arpin and Aurèlie Delage, arrived in the valley and while they were waiting for their third compatriot to show up in several days time, they joined Iannilli and Perri for a fourth route up a wonderful crack line on David62's Nose. Delage and Iannilli alternated leads on the 13-pitch (590m) climb, which they named Shim-Nak (6b). Iannilli suggests that the altitudes quoted by the Slovak team for Castle Peak and the subsidiary summit on the north flank reached by *The Sharp Knife of Tolerance* (2002), are greatly exaggerated. The Italians placed only two bolts (on one compact slab pitch) during their stay, relying on nuts, cams, and pegs for belays and protection.

ROBERTO IANNILLI, *Italy*

CHANDRA BHAGA RANGE

CB-14 (6,078m), plane wreckage found. An Indian (Bengal) team led by Anal Das climbed this peak on 19th of August. Summit climbers were Swaraj Ghosh, Ajoy Mondal, Subrata Banerjee, Sanjay Ghosh, Moloy Mukherjee, and Arindam Mukherjee with three high altitude porters. They made a rare ascent of the west ridge to the summit. On their approach to the mountain this large team comprising of 14 members located the wreckage of a plane, which had crashed here in 1968. They reported the matter to the nearest authorities and in a large recovery effort many parts of the plane were brought back and a major mystery was thus solved.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

SPITI



Khhang Shiling on left and Shigri Parvat from Khamengar valley in Spiti. *Divyesh Muni.*

Khhang Shiling (6,360m), first ascent. A three-member team sponsored by The Himalayan Club made the first ascent of Khhang Shiling peak (6,360m–20,866') on 19th September assisted by Sherpa Lakhpa Bhote. ("Khhang Shiling" means "Snow Mountain of four ridges"). The team consisted of Vineeta Muni, Shripad Sapkal, and me. We explored the Khamengar Valley in Spiti, a rarely visited area in Himachal Pradesh. The peak Khhang Shiling is a prominent mountain at the head of the Khamengar Valley.



Dibbibokri Pyramid, from a col on Khhang Shiling. *Divyesh Muni*

We approached from Mikkim near Kaja to reach base camp (4,320m) in three days. ABC was at 5,160m. We established Camp 1 at 5,880m in a basin formed between a large rock feature and the Shigri Parvat massif. We climbed along the glacier until a bergschrund below the col between Shigri Parvat and Khhang Shiling. It was decided not to attempt Shigri Parvat since the entire route to the peak was over steep but loose rocks with a constant barrage of rockfall down

the face. The route on Khhang Shiling looked promising, so we dumped rope and some hardware at the col and returned to C1.

Next day Vineeta, Shripad, Sherpa Lakhpa, and I left for the summit by 7 a.m. Although the route was not very steep, we had to fix three rope-lengths due to the hard ice below the thin layer of snow. A strong wind increased the wind chill and all of us were very cold. We ran short of rope to fix the last two rope-lengths and carefully belayed each other to the top.

We started our return journey on 23rd September. Since we did not attempt Shigri Parvat, we had a few days to spare and decided to trek across the Pin Parvati pass into Kullu, which brought us to the traditional route to Manali.

DIVYESH MUNI, *The Himalayan Club, India*

UTTARANCHAL

Uttaranchal, new regulations. While the world is opening its doors to mountaineers and mountain lovers, the news from the new Uttarakhand State in India is distressing. The state contains some of the most beautiful areas in the Indian Himalaya, with peaks like Nanda Devi, Kamet, and Shivling. The Uttarakhand State has imposed severe restrictions on climbing and imposed special royalty charges for mountaineers to pay (minimum US \$1,400). This is in addition to charges payable to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. Moreover special and separate permission (red tape!) must be obtained from the officials in the state, forest department, and local authorities. At least half the porters must be employed from local villages, and each village is to be paid a fee as you trek through it. The forest department is to be paid a special fee to camp on their land. Several foreign expeditions (notably a Spanish team on Shivling) were charged these extra fees in 2004. Indian mountaineers and trekkers are also not spared, and for the first time Indian teams will have to pay peak fees to climb a peak in their country. After many discussions, negotiations, and protests, which were brushed aside, the state government has decided to impose these rules for the 2005 season. Please check full details, rates and addresses for formalities at www.indmount.org.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

GARHWAL

Bhagirathi III (6,454m), direct southwest pillar, Stairway to Heaven. From the summit of Shivling in 1996 I saw the challenge: to find a direct route on the ridge of Bhagirathi III, because the southwest pillar route by the Scottish team of 1982 didn't follow the actual ridgeline of the southwest pillar. I wanted to master the route with free climbing and in alpine style. I wanted the route to be difficult and challenging, but Jörg Pflugmacher and I, both from Bavaria, also wanted to exclude any unpredictable risks to our lives. This is why we used bolts at belay stations and at dangerous points in free climbing—the style was similar to Wolfgang Güllich's on Nameless Tower in Pakistan.

On my 2001 expedition with Robert Jasper we started from the west face basin. The conditions were very bad: considerable snow and ice. The difficulty from the start to the pillar's ridge (10 pitches) was M7+. In the 2004 expedition we started from the foot of the direct

southwest pillar and free-climbed more than 30 pitches of 5a to 7b (French scale), with the exception of two pitches that might be a real challenge to any climber who repeats our route. Due to a snowstorm in the upper region we couldn't climb higher on the iced slabs and had to move to another crack system with the help of a pendulum traverse. More information can be found (in German) at www.expeditionsbergsteigen.de. Please see "Berichte" (reports) for photographs of the 2001 and 2004 expeditions. [Additional details also in Lindsay Griffin's summary, below—Ed.]

WALTER HÖLZLER, *Germany*

Bhagarathi III, direct southwest pillar, Stairway to Heaven. In 2000 and 2001 Walter Hölzler attempted the direct southwest Pillar of Bhagarathi III, left of the now quasi-classic 1982 Barton-Shaw Route (also called the Scottish Route). On the second attempt, with Robert Jasper, Reiner

Treppte, and Jochen Schmoll, and operating from a portaledge camp at around mid-height, he reached a high point (with Treppte) of ca 5,800m, estimated to be ca 100m or so short of the end of the major rock climbing difficulties. Bad weather forced them down.

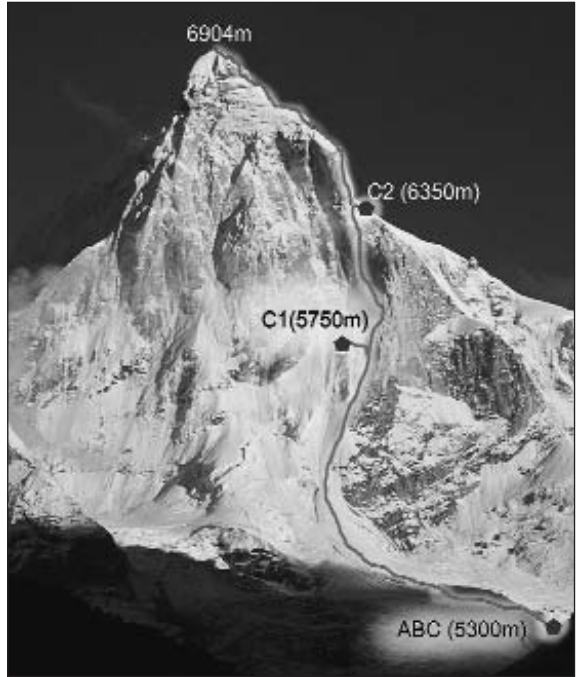
The 2001 team started climbing from the left side of the crest, but on his return in May 2004 with Jörg Pflugmacher, Holzler began up the right side of the pillar and first fixed 400m of rope to a point about one-third of the way up the crest. After removing their ropes to use higher up the route, the German pair then set off for a six-day capsule style ascent, hauling a portaledge. On the 19th of May they left the ledge at 5 a.m. and began climbing in increasingly misty conditions. After a total of 30 pitches from the bottom of the route, they reached the shale band, which forms the final 400m of the line. Setting off up this at 2 p.m. unroped, they decided to make a turn-around time of 3:30. Climbing loose ground of UIAA II and III they continued to the summit, reaching it at 4 p.m. They were back at the portaledge by 10 p.m. The route took a total of nine days. Two other parties attempted the Barton-Shaw Route but were unsuccessful.



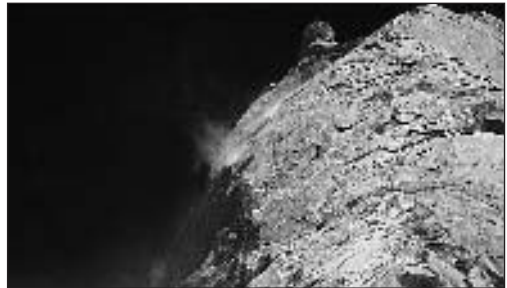
Bhagirathi III. (1) Direct Pillar (Hözler-Jasper, 2001). (2) Stairway to Heaven (Hözler-Pflugmacher, 2004). (3) Barton-Shaw Route (a.k.a. Scottish Route, 1982). *Walter Hölzler*

Thalay Sagar (6,904m), northwest ridge, Harvest Moon. The northwest ridge attracted us because it was an evident line: the buttress looks like a wave from base camp, and the massive granite pillar at 6,400m provides a taste of challenge. We were also curious to see firsthand why nobody had climbed this route before. This turned out to be a perfect expedition for us. The culture mix was very fun: We were four who spoke German, one French, and one English: Stephan Siegrist, Ralph Weber, and me from Switzerland; Thomas Senf from Germany; cameraman Rob Frost from the U.K. who went till the pillar; and cameraman Zvonimir Pisonic from France who went till ABC. It was sometimes a bit confusing, but great team work. The crew (cook, help cook and liaison officer) were very helpful and gave a lot of flavor to the base camp life, especially Dava our cook. All we knew was that the itinerary had been attempted in 1987 by a Spanish Expedition (O. Cadiach, J. Camprubi und X-Pérez-Gil). When we built C2 we found an old belay station. This was the last sign of the Spanish team.

The difficulties were bigger than expected. The first buttress (“Shadow Buttress”) was already steep, and the ice thin or very snowy. The perpetual spindrift and the absolute absence of sun make this part pretty demanding. The crux was the “Purgatory Pillar,” which was massive with flakes and no obvious cracks. The pillar was very exposed to the west wind, and the temperatures were variable (from quite cold to extremely cold)—we always climbed with gloves. The use of hooks and beaks was obligatory, and the climb quite delicate at this elevation. Everything



Thalay Sagar’s Harvest Moon route on the northwest ridge. A photo with all the other route lines on the north face of Thalay Sagar is on pg. 84, AAJ 2004. Denis Burdet



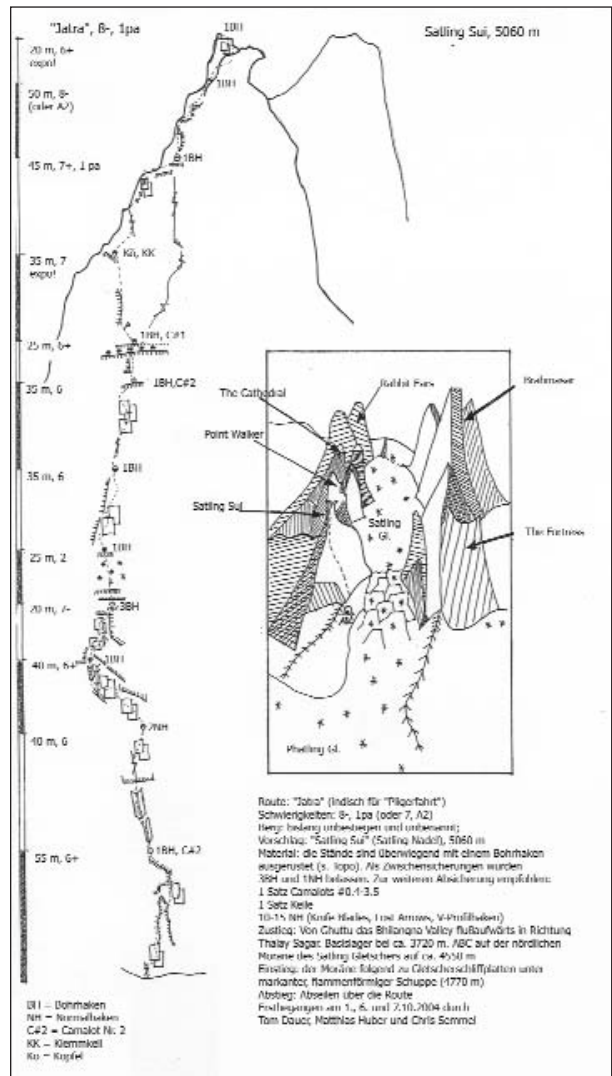
High on Harvest Moon, Thalay Sagar. Denis Burdet (2)

worked very well, and it is always a great reward to reach this summit, especially the first time by a new route and without injuries. It was a really great experience for all of us.

Summary: "Harvest Moon," 1,400m, 6a WI5 M5+ A3; 11 days of climbing and two camps on the face. We fixed rope until C2 at the top of the pillar, and went for the summit in one day from C2. We reached the base camp (4,750m) on August 29 and did the portage to ABC (5,300m) on September 2. We reached camp 1 (5,750m) the 6th, and C2 (6,300m) the 18th. We reached the summit on the 27th, and the 1st of October we were back to Gangotri.

DENIS BURDET, Switzerland

Satling Sui (5,060m), first ascent, Jatra; Point Walker (5,260m), new route. After a three-day approach following the Bhilangna Valley on the south side of Thalay Sagar, Chris Semmel, Matthias Huber, and I reached our base camp (3,720m) beside the lateral moraine of the Phatling glacier. Our aim was to explore the mountains around the Satling Glacier ("Satling" meaning "Seven Phalli"), which had only been visited once before, in 2002 by an English expedition. After two days of checking out possibilities we decided to focus on an unclimbed granite needle on the northern side of the Satling Glacier. Our ABC was established at 4,550m, some 250 vertical meters below the bottom of the face. It took us three days (having to wait out a period of heavy snowfall in basecamp) to open our line up the southwest face. We named the 12-pitch route Jatra ("pilgrimage"). We climbed it on 1st, 6th, and 7th of October, and graded it UIAA VIII/1p.a. The summit not having been baptized before, we suggest the name "Satling Sui" ("Sui"



meaning “needle”). After a rest day we opened the “Central Couloir” (6 pitches, UIAA V M5) on the west face of Point Walker, which had been ascended once in 2002 via the east ridge. Our expedition was sponsored by Marmot.

TOM DAUER, *Weyarn, Germany*

Janhkuth, west face attempt. The main goal of the expedition was to make the first ascent of a 6,805m peak known as Janhkuth, north west of Chaukhamba. Only one other party has attempted to climb this mountain: the Austrians, Josef Jochler, and Christian Zenz, in 2002. Their attempt was stymied by inclement weather to such an extent that the climbers barely left Base Camp. Like Jochler and Zenz’s attempt, our expedition proved unsuccessful in attaining the summit.

After establishing base camp at Sudenban (4,535m) on the lateral moraine of the Gangotri Glacier, Malcolm Bass (UK), Marty Beare (NZ), Andy Brown (UK), Pat Deavoll (NZ) and Paul Figg (UK) used five porters to help place a “dump camp” at 4,635m. They then ferried loads to an Advanced Camp (5,000m) at the base of the Maiandi Bamak. For this their snow shoes proved invaluable. By September 27 the New Zealand couple had three weeks food at Advanced Camp, while the three British, opting for a “lighter-loads, more-mileage” approach, took until October 4, though during this time all the climbers reached a Camp 1 at 5,230m on the Maiandi Bamak below the West Face of Janhkuth.

After a spell of heavy snowfall, Beare and Deavoll started up the central couloir on the west face at midnight on October 6. They climbed for 12 hours up 45° deep snow to camp at 5,700m. Next morning they continued up steeper ground, including two pitches of 80° ice, and after another 12 or more hours reached the crest of the South Ridge at 6,400m. That night Deavoll developed a bad headache. In addition a big electrical storm hit the mountain, though the heavy snowfall was at lower altitudes. Next morning Beare reached 6,500m on a horizontal section of the ridge leading to mixed ground beneath the summit and then returned to camp. He estimated another two days would probably be required to reach the top. Unfortunately, Deavoll continued to deteriorate and by evening was vomiting. The following morning was cold and with Deavoll clearly very ill the pair had no option but to descend (10 rappels from Abalakovs, then down-climbing).

Meantime at 10pm on the 6th, Bass, Brown and Figg left Camp 1 and climbed mixed ground up a buttress line to the right of the central couloir, reaching a point roughly level with the first New Zealand camp (ca 5,700m). The storm during the evening of the 7th deposited far more snow at this altitude and at midnight they decided to descend before retreat became impossible due to building avalanche danger.

By the 10th heavy snowfall and cold temperatures had arrived and it was obvious further climbing was out of the question. The team had a difficult time stripping their camps and breaking a trail down to Tapovan so that porters could reach base camp but by the 18th they had made it safely to the road at Gangotri.

MARTY BEARE, *New Zealand, and MALCOLM BASS, United Kingdom*

Chaukhamba III (6,974m) and IV (6,853m). An Indian expedition (Nehru Institute of Mountaineering) led by Col. Ashok Abbey made the first attempt on these unclimbed peaks. The team consisted of instructors from the Institute. A high point of 6,300m on the western

flank was reached on 8 July. The weather conditions were generally poor.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor,*
The Himalayan Journal

Saf Minal (6,911m), northwest face. John Varco (U.S.) and I (UK) made the first ascent of the northwest face of Saf Minal (6,911m) in the Indian Garhwal reaching the summit on October 5. Unlike its sister peaks Kalanka and Changabang with their 1,700m near-vertical faces of immaculate granite, Saf Minal is the twisted relative. The peak looks like a cross between K2 and G IV, and its near-2,000-meter sweep of black shale and loose mixed climbing offers a dark challenge. After acclimatizing to 5,500m on a small foothill, we set about our ascent in pure alpine style with no reconnaissance, fixed ropes, or camps.

We took the most striking line on the face, starting up a distinctive ridge before sustained mixed climbing on rock of dubious quality and over snow-covered slabs led to a system of ice couloirs in the upper part of the face. Following three days of reasonable weather, conditions deteriorated, trapping us in our partially erect tent. After 36 hours of cramped torment we opted to climb in the continuing storm, reaching the west ridge in the dark only 200 meters below the summit. To our surprise, the following morning brought perfect weather for our successful summit push, with cloudless views into China and the secretive Nanda Devi Sanctuary.

Having climbed in lightweight alpine style, things became even more interesting on our descent when the poor rock and traversing nature of the line took its toll. We staggered into base camp after two days of abseiling and tricky down-climbing, a cut rope, running out of food, and with only one stopper and a couple of cams remaining of our rack. I lost over 25 pounds on the ascent. This climb was probably the most expensive but rewarding diet plan we've ever followed.

As far as we know this is the only ascent from the north side. A Japanese team made the first ascent from the easy snowy south side in 1975, and we know of no ascent since.

IAN PARNELL, *United Kingdom*



Saf Minal's northwest face, Parnell-Varco route.
John Varco



A cozy bivouac on Saf Minal. *Ian Parnell*



Ian Parnell on Saf Minal. *John Varco*



Ian Parnell on Saf Minal, with Kalanka and Changabang behind. *John Varco*

KUMAON



Little Kailash, showing the first ascent route on the southwest ridge. *Andy Perkins*

Adi (a.k.a. Chota or Little) Kailash (5,925m), first ascent; Nikarchu Qilla (The Fortress of Nikarchu, 5,750m), first ascent. An international team of climbers has made the first ascent of *Adi* (aka *Chota* or *Little*) *Kailash* (5,925m). The mountain is located close to both the Tibetan and Nepali borders of India in the restricted Inner Line area, and is revered due to its similarity to the famous holy mountain of *Kailash* in nearby Tibet. This guided expedition organised by *Martin Moran Mountaineering* and led by *Martin Welch* and myself also made the first ascent of a nearby mountain we named *Nikarchu Qilla (The Fortress of Nikarchu)* at 5,750m.

Tim Woodward (UK), Jason Hubert (Scotland), Paul Zuchowski (USA), Martin Welch (Scotland), Diarmid Hearn (Scotland), Jack Pearse (UK), Amanda George (Scotland), and I (UK) made the first ascent of *Little Kailash* by the southwest ridge on October 8 in perfect weather in



Little Kailash from *Jolingkong*, during a 2002 attempt from the north. *Martin Moran*



Andy Perkins leading the southwest ridge of *Little Kailash*. *Paul Zuchowski*

seven hours from our ABC at 5,400m. The route was around alpine PD+/AD-. Out of respect to local sensitivities, we stopped a few meters short of the summit, and no fixed rope was left on the route.

Welch, Woodward, Hearn, Pearse, George and Gustavo Fierro-Carrion (Ecuador) also made the first ascent of Nikarchu Qilla (5,750m), which is located 3 km northeast of the unclimbed Nikurch Rama (5,995m). This alpine-style ascent was made by the southwest face from a camp at 5,200m at alpine F in about 7 hours, and the team also stopped a few meters below the summit.

ANDY PERKINS, *United Kingdom*

Chiring We (6,599m), second ascent. Chiring We is situated at the head of the Kalabaland glacier and is not frequently visited by mountaineers. The first ascent was achieved in 1979 by a team from Mumbai under the leadership of Harish Kapadia. The 12 member-team led by Martin Moran completed the second ascent 25 years later. They followed the west ridge (route of first ascent) after establishing four camps above base camp, and the summit was reached on 26th September. The nine summiteers were Martin Moran, Alex Moran, Jonathan Preston, Liam Warren, Paul Watson, Stuart Reid, Christopher Wheatley, Geoffrey Dawson and Christopher Harle.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

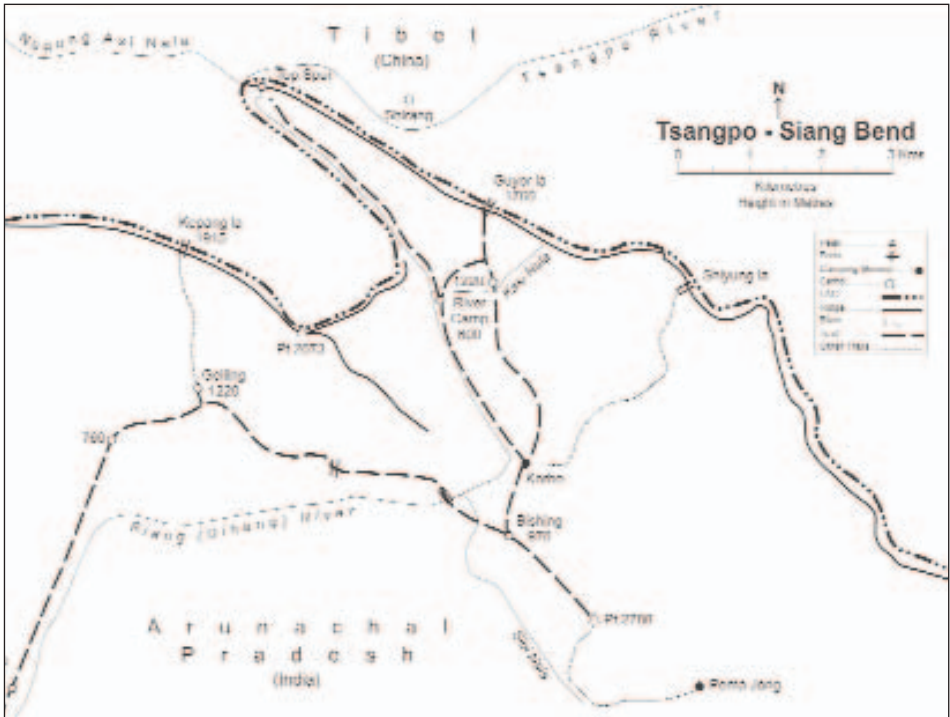
SIKKIM

Tingchen Kang (6,010 m), bureaucratic problems. An Indian (Bengal) team led by AVM A. K. Bhattacharya and sponsored by the Himalayan Club from Kolkatta climbed this peak on 6th November. The summiteers were Subrata Chakraborty with Sherpa Pasang Phutar. They followed the northwest face. The team had an exciting journey and was walked out in bureaucratic hassles by the Sikkim Government. They paid Rs. 5000/- for the liaison officer but no LO turned out until the end. As per the current rules a LO is required both for foreign and Indian expeditions. The Sikkim Government has certainly made it difficult for mountaineers and trekkers. [This team probably used a new northwest approach to reach the upper west ridge, which was first climbed by an Indo-British Military expedition in 1998 and used by Roger Payne and Julie-Ann Clyma in spring 2005 for the peak's third ascent—Ed.]

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

EASTERN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Tsangpo Gorge, exploration from India. Motup Chewang, Wing Cdr. V K Sashindran, and I traveled from the Brahmaputra along the Siang River to the Tsangpo Gorge where it enters the Indian territory. Though a few parties have explored the "Great Tsangpo Bend" in the north (Pemako area in Tibet) there are no records available of approaching the bend from India to the border of India-China. After the 1962 war with China the area was out of bounds. Now in 2004 a team of three Indians reached it from the Indian side, the entry point of the river into India, thus



The Tsangpo-Siang "S" Bend in the Arunachal Pradesh. *Harish Kapadia*

completing the final exploration of the Tsangpo.

The Tsangpo (as it is called in Tibet) originates near Lake Manasarovar at the foot of Kailash. After a long journey eastward via Lhasa, it reaches eastern Tibet. Here its progress is blocked by the great massifs Namcha Barwa and Gyala Peri. The river takes a huge turn between these peaks. This has been termed as the "Great Tsangpo Bend." It was the goal of several explorations from early days. The Pundit explorer Kinthup was one of the first to reach the gorge (in disguise) and he observed the "Rainbow Waterfall" where this mighty river falls. Here onwards the Tsangpo descends steeply southward on the Tibetan plateau to the Himalayan divide leading to the McMahon Line and India.

As the river enters Indian territory at 580m (in Arunachal Pradesh) it takes two "U" loops, which can be called the "Tsangpo/Siang Bend." In Arunachal Pradesh it is called by different names like the Siang and Dihang and is joined by various tributaries. On reaching the Assam plains it is joined by the Dibang and Lohit rivers and onward is called the Brahmaputra River. Due to the various names and vast terrain it covers, it had been a matter of discussion whether the Tsangpo is the same river as the Siang and whether it flows into the Brahmaputra or into the Irrawaddy further east. This was finally solved by modern map makers and satellite imageries.

Our 2004 exploration party traveled from Dibrugarh, crossing the Bramaputra by a two-hour ferry ride to the northern bank. Traveling via Itanagar (to obtain "Inner Line" permits), we followed the road via Ziro, Daporijo to Along. We reached Tuting in two days of further

travel, in all covering 985 km by vehicles. We then trekked to Kopu, Bona, Gelling, and Bishing, the last village on the Tsangpo. We crossed many precarious foot suspension bridges over the Tsangpo, known here as the Siang. From Bishing we climbed a peak of about 3,200m and had a wonderful view of the Namcha Barwa and Gyala Peri massifs.

From Bishing we descended to banks of the Siang and old Korbo village and soon had to climb steeply across several ridges to camp in the forest near the Kasi nala. It was an experience to cut through very thick forest with undergrowth. Two local guides led the way hacking a route through inhospitable jungles. Though we had to be most careful, the excellent clear weather allowed us to enjoy everything except the leeches, snakes, and malaria infested insects.

From this camp, we followed similar terrain, then climbed steeply to Guyor La (1,760m) on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The pass was covered by thick forest and offered no view but it was a historic moment for we civilians to reach here. By late afternoon we descended to the Kasi nala camp. Next day we hacked a route through forest leading down steeply to the banks of the Siang. We followed the route along the Siang. A two-kilometer wide and about 150m-high rock cliff barred the way, with the Siang's water rushing at its foot, blocking passage. We climbed high along the edge of the cliff, and after covering a difficult patch with ropes, we again hacked a route through forest above to traverse and descend on the other side. Going over rocky terrain we finally reached the spot where the Tsangpo takes two "U" loops and enters India. We photographed it extensively, with a background of mountains, hills, and a river in Tibet. After returning to the camp on the Siang, we returned along the riverbank to Bishing, crossing steep cliffs and exposed rocks. We returned via the same route back to Tuting and drove back via Along to Dibrugarh. Our expedition took place between November 16 and December 7.

We dedicated our expedition to the memory of my son, Lt. Nawang Kapadia of the 4th Battalion of the Third Gorkha Rifles, who died fighting Pakistan-based terrorists in 2000.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*