

India

SIKKIM

Nepal Peak, ascent via the southeast and south ridges. A 12-member expedition from the DAV Summit Club (German Alpine Club) led by Herbert Streibel went to the very rarely visited region of North Sikkim to attempt Nepal peak (7,153m). The team travelled from Gangtok via Lachen, Yakthang, and Yabuk to a base camp at 3,900m on the glacier leading up to Nepal Gap. Camp 3 was established at 6,620m on the south east ridge of Nepal peak. On October 21 the leader with Claudia Carl and Johann Paul Hinterimmer climbed the final section of the south ridge to the summit.



HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

KUMAON

Adi Kailash Range, first ascents and an attempt on Adi Kailash. A joint Indo-British expedition led by Martin Moran explored the Adi Kailash mountain range of Eastern Kumaon in Sept–Oct. No previous climbing had been recorded in this area, which lies between the Darma Ganga and Kuthi Yankti valleys east of Panch Chuli, and within the Inner Line security zone adjacent to the Tibetan border. The range was found to possess six 20,000' peaks and dozens of challenging 5,000m summits. The main objective was Adi Kailash (6,191m: a.k.a Little Kailash), a peak with distinct resemblance to Holy Mount Kailash some 110km to the north in Tibet.

The team obtained Inner Line permits and a climbing permit for Little Kailash and its surrounding tops. Since Adi Kailash is itself regarded as a holy peak, the team undertook not to tread the final 10m of the mountain. Approaching via the Darma valley, the party reconnoitred the western approaches to the range and found that access to Little Kailash is blocked by a higher peak of ca 6,300m. They therefore crossed to Jolingkong in the Kuthi Yankti via the Shin La (5,500m), which is advertised as a trekkers' pass but has a tricky and potentially dangerous western wall of PD+ standard. Adi Kailash rises directly above Jolingkong, where there is a sacred lake and small temple.

An attractive 5,950m snow peak north of the Shin La was ascended at PD+ by a team of six (Richard Ausden, Martin Moran, Tom Rankin, Mangal Singh, Steve Ward and Andrew Williams). They wish to christen this The Maiden. Two smaller 5,000m peaks were climbed close to Jolingkong lake at grades F and AD respectively. Mike Freeman, James Gibb, Pat Harborow and Moran then attempted the north face of Adi Kailash, following the left-hand of three prominent glacier tongues. Having found a way through the crux rock band at Scottish III/IV, they were stopped by a combination of 55° powder snow lying over loose shale 200m from the summit. On the return journey John Allott, Freeman, Moran and Hari Singh crossed

the 5,200m Nama Pass (PD), which links the two valleys between Kuthi and Sela. Long-known as a traditional route for local people, this glacier pass is now rarely traversed but gives access to several of the other peaks in the range.

The nomenclature and altitudes of many peaks could not be accurately ascertained. The team was not allowed to take a GPS device nor given sight of any recent military maps. Instead they had to rely on a dated 1:200,000 Survey of India extract. The Army and Indo-Tibetan Border Police personnel were otherwise helpful and co-operative throughout the visit.

This remarkable area was entirely unspoilt save for Border Police check posts. Many highly challenging peaks were discovered, most particularly 5,950m Yungtangto, the five-toothed ridge of Pandav Parvat, and 6,321m Nikurch Rama, which has an nightmarish north east face.

In recent years a gradual relaxation of restrictions to joint and foreign expeditions has enabled climbers to penetrate many exciting border ranges in India for the first time in 40 years. Official Climbing and Inner Line permits must be obtained and fees are currently \$4,900 for all border peaks.

MARTIN MORAN, U.K.

Suj Tilla West (earlier known as Suitilla), first and second ascents. Two of the finest ascents of the season were on Suj Tilla West (6,373m). These were made by two separate teams in different styles. The peak rises steeply near Ralam village in eastern Kumaon and had been attempted previously. The recorded height was 6,373m, but on recent maps the true height has been given as 6,394m. First a team from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation attempted the peak, fixing ropes to the ridge. However one of the members slipped and was injured. Other team members helped in the rescue and the attempt was given up.

Then came an alpine-style climb of the peak—a wonderful first ascent by two British climbers, Graham Little and Jim Lowther. They reached the summit on September 28. This is what Jim Lowther had to write about the climb: “Graham and I climbed the peak in pure alpine style in a 22-hour long continuous push. By the time we got to the western summit at 6,373m (which we thought was going to be the highest point on the ridge but turned out not to be) we were totally spent and didn’t have any reserves left to traverse the ridge to the other, eastern point, which we now believe to be 21m higher. We had to get down fast because we had no bivi gear. This we did, and when we met up with the Navy a day later, we told their leader about the height differences of the two summits. The western summit we climbed is the one that you’d naturally assume is the highest point, as it is the dominant snow peak visible from Ralam. The eastern summit is set back along the ridge.”

Within a few days they were followed by a team from the Indian Navy, who fixed 1,100m of rope and followed almost the same route to reach the same point. This was a worthwhile second ascent of the peak. (See report below by Satyabrata Dam.)

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

Suj Tilla West, second ascent. The Ralam valley lies between the more famous Milam valley to its west and the little-known Lassar Yankti to its east. It harbors the breathtakingly beautiful village of Ralam and a system of three glaciers, namely; Kalabaland, Sankalp, and Yankchari Dhurra. The area has several unclimbed peaks and many that have been climbed only once. It also has

many stupendous routes that are yet to be attempted. None of the peaks rise more than 6,600m, but in terms of technical ice and rock challenges the summits are extremely inviting, especially to small teams of alpine climbers looking for some hard, technical climbs. Due to Inner Line regulations, these glaciers had never seen a western climber and very few Indian climbers till the year 2002, when the area was opened to foreigners. Some of the majestic peaks of this area are: Chiring We (one ascent); Chiring We I and II (virgin); Suli Top (one ascent); Burphu Dhurra (one ascent); Suj Tilla East (virgin); Chaudhara (one ascent). The roadhead for this valley is Munsyari, which can be reached via Almora either from Delhi, Kathgodam or Haldwani.



Suj Tilla West, showing the line of the British and the Indian ascents. Satyabrata Dam

Resembling the shape of a needle towering high above the Yankchari Dhurra Glacier, and located deep into the lush Ralam Valley of the Kumaon hills, Suj Tilla is one of the finest pieces of mountain architecture in the Indian Himalaya. It had remained unclimbed even after four previous attempts by some of the finest mountaineers. The Indian Navy team that I led was comprised of nine members. Only my deputy leader, Lt. Amit Pande, was a seasoned mountaineer with several ascents to his credit. We reached Munsyari on September 16 and on the 19th commenced our trek along the Gori Ganga river. We used campsites at Paton, Liungrani, Kiltam, and Ralam, finally establishing base camp on the 23rd at 4,260m on a snow-covered meadow that overlooked the confluence of the Sankalp and Kalabaland glaciers. We started ferrying loads to advanced base on the 25th. This involved first climbing the 4,828m Yankchari Dhurra pass and then descending onto the Yankchari Dhurra glacier. We established advanced base on the 28th at 4,670m. The route ahead lay through a severely broken and serrated icefall. A pair of British climbers (Jim Lowther and Graham Little; see above) had preceded us on the mountain and made the first ascent of Suj Tilla West on the 29th, using a similar route to that we had planned through the southwest face. We established Camp 1 on the 30th at 5,350m, just above a line of huge crevasses. The entire face was prone to rock and ice falls and we had to do most of the climb before the sun hit it. The face had no let-up anywhere for even a tiny bivouac site, as it rose in a sheer wall of ice all the way to the summit. We would have to climb the one kilometer face in one go from Camp 1.

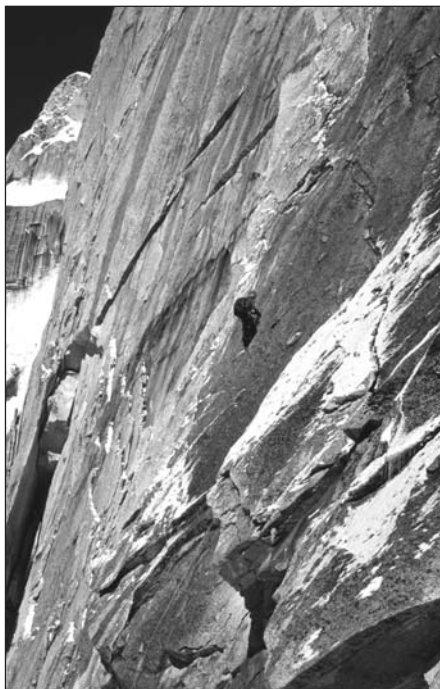
After five days of route opening and rope fixing, we made our first summit attempt on October 6. Starting from C1 at midnight, three members summited the peak after a continuous climb of 15.5 hours. They descended to C1 through a severe blizzard that raged all night and the next day. On the 8th, as the first team returned to advanced base, the southwest face remained plastered with a heavy and dangerous layer of loose snow, making it extremely hazardous for any immediate further attempt. None of the fixed ropes were visible and all traces of our route were buried. A second team of six members summited Suj Tilla West on October 11.

Changabang, west face; Purbi Dunagiri, south pillar and east ridge; three attempts. After three years of training and organization, the DAV-Expeditionskader '02 left Germany for India in mid September. Our goals were the first repetition of Changabang (6,866m) west face (Boardman-Tasker, 1975) and the first ascent of Purbi Dunagiri (6,523m) east ridge. We had no information on the latter other than indistinct photographs. Both mountains are located in the quite famous Nanda Devi Sanctuary. Purbi Dunagiri was our alternative for Dunagiri, since Indian authorities wouldn't give permission for the Rishi Gorge, the normal access to Dunagiri. In any case to get to Changabang's west face we had decided to approach via the Bagini Glacier.

From the village of Juma on the Dhauliganga river, we trekked for two days via Dunagiri village (3,600m) to our base camp, a dreamlike meadow surrounded by impressive mountain scenery. The following days were considerably less romantic. Piles of equipment had to be transported to advanced base by all 11 members of our team along a chaotic sea of loose rock. The "path" led to our proposed camp site at the end of Bagini Glacier, right between Changabang and Purbi Dunagiri.

Four members tried to climb the steep ice slope to Bagini Col, the starting point of the west face, but on this north facing slope there was nothing but meters of deep powder. The climbers were forced to retreat in spite of some stubborn attempts to reach the face.

After this defeat three of them decided to try an alternative line on Purbi Dunagiri, the marvelous south pillar. In super-light alpine style they solo-climbed 60°–80° ice slopes to the beginning of the difficulties. Ten pitches of excellent and severe mixed ground led to a rock barrier, where overhanging loose terrain at ca 6,300m stopped their big effort and forced a retreat.



David Goettler on the south pillar of Purbi. Hans Mitterer

In the meantime the rest of our group fought up Purbi Dunagiri's east ridge meter by meter. The extremely high rock difficulties and problems with the altitude by most of the members forced us to operate with fixed ropes. The ridge turned out to be much more difficult and severe than we expected. After 100m of hard rock climbing, fixing, hauling, and jumaring, we stood in front of the "chandelle," as we called the key passage of the ridge at 6,200m. We couldn't find a way over this compact, overhanging, and fragile rock pillar, so once again had to retreat with the summit in sight. In addition, increased snowfall and icy storms heralded the beginning of winter (it was mid October).

So, after four weeks, we turned our backs on base camp and the huge mountains. We reached no summit but returned to civilization healthy, full of new experiences, and as friends.

MAX BOLLAND and JAN MERSCH, *German Alpine Club (DAV)*



The route on the south pillar of Purbi.
Max Bolland

Trisul II, attempt. An 11-member expedition from Calcutta, led by Amitava Roy, attempted Trisul II, a 6,690m peak situated above the Bidalgwar Glacier. This peak was first climbed by a former Yugoslavian expedition in 1960 (by the Japanese in 1978 and for a third time by former Yugoslavs in 1987) and has probably not been attempted for 15 years. From the glacier the team established two camps (almost certainly on the south ridge, the route of the first ascensionists and probably not attempted again since that date) and were in position for a summit attempt, when an avalanche destroyed the site of Camp 2 at 5,600m (their high point) and buried lots of equipment.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor,*
The Himalayan Journal

CENTRAL GARHWAL

Devban, second ascent? An Indo-Tibet Border Police Expedition led by Y.S. Sandhu made what was probably the first ascent of this 6,852m peak south east of Kamet since Frank Smythe climbed it in 1937, although in the meantime several false claims have been made. The strong ITBP team reached the top on September 19. The summiters were Mohammed Ali, Tashi Motop, Jyot Singh and Vijender Singh. Approaching from the east, they climbed the south ridge.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

Editor's note: Peter Oliver and Frank Smythe climbed Devban (formally Deoban) from the Bank Plateau to the south. Unconfirmed repeat ascents via this route were reported in 1980 and 1997, both by Indian Military expeditions.

Arwa Tower and Arwa Spires, various new routes. A French expedition led by Antoine de Choudens (with 11 members) climbed the recently discovered Arwa Tower (6,352m) by two different routes. First they established base camp on May 4 at the foot of this peak, and climbed the south face. Then another team climbed the northwest face. The East Summit of the Arwa Spires (6,132m) was also climbed in a three-day push via the original British route. (See "Arwa Tower, Spire, and Crest," earlier in this Journal for a more complete report.)

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

Arwa Spires, first ascents of north face and the central and west summits. The 6,193m-high granite top of the Arwa Spires was first climbed in 2000 by two Scotsmen, Andy and Pete Benson. They reached the East Summit via the east ridge, but three attempts to ascend the north face of the Spires failed. In 2002 three Swiss mountain guides, Bruno Hasler, Stephan Harvey, and Roger Schäli, climbed the north face of the Arwa Spires by two independent routes to the central and

west summits. They were the first to reach either of these summits and were nominated for the “Piolet d’Or 2002.” for their two first ascents. See “Arwa Spire” lead story earlier in this Journal for a more complete account.

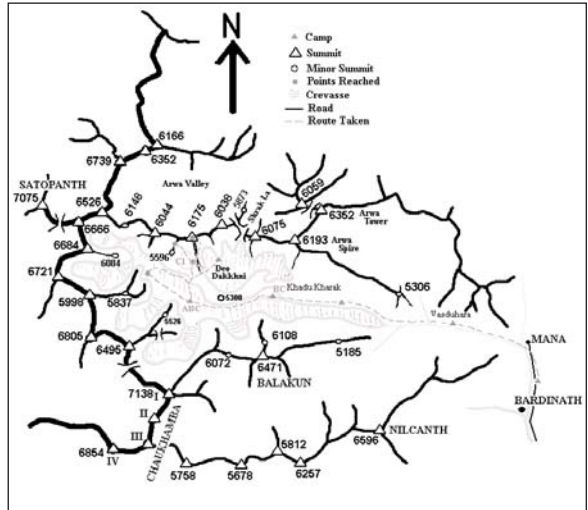
HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

Arwa Tower, new route. A Swiss expedition led by Frederic Roux climbed the north face and the east ridge of Arwa Tower in 17 hours on October 7. The summit was reached by the leader with Gabriel Basson and Benoit Jean-Paul Darbellay. They had excellent weather and climbed in the best style.

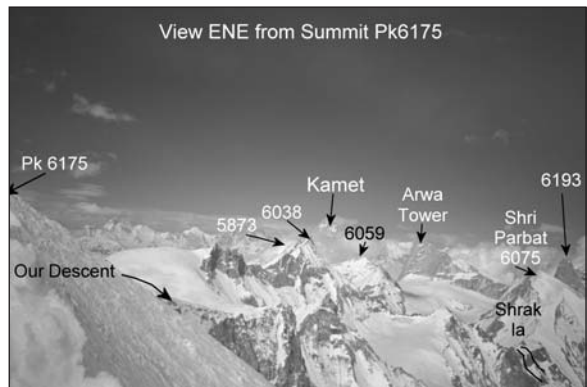
HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

Peak 6,175m, first ascent, medical research, map errors, and documentary. The aims of our expedition were threefold: to complete a first ascent; to carry out medical research into the prediction of altitude sickness; and to make a documentary of the climb with a local Northern Irish media company. Information and photographs of the Bhagirath Kharak valley were scarce. The valley lies immediately south of the Arwa valley, made famous by Mick Fowler’s ascent of the Arwa Tower (AAJ 2000). Our reference sources were Shipton’s 1934 expedition and Harish Kapadia’s 1997 crossing of the Shrak La (pass).

After setting up base camp and overcoming the usual logistical problems, we established an advance camp on the glacier and attempted to identify our peak. It became clear that there was an error in one of the accounts, in particular the published location of the Shrak La. Harish Kapadia identifies the Shrak La as lying between Pk 6,044m and Pk 6,175m. His published photograph (*Himalayan Journal* Vol.54) does not match this pass in any way. In fact, high vertical cliffs and a hanging glacier defend the col. It



A preliminary map of the Bhagirath Kharak valley and region. Roger McMorrow



The view from near the summit of Peak 6,175. Roger McMorrow

would be extremely difficult and foolish to cross here, especially as a much easier pass lies a short distance to the east, between Pk 6,038m and Pk 6,075m.

Shipton in 1934 used the Shrak La to cross into the Arwa valley. While there he ascended a peak from the pass, describing it as an “interesting ridge climb” that allowed him to get a “hang of the geography of the Arwa glaciers on to which we were about to descend.” It is not possible to definitively identify this peak, as his altimeter was not working correctly. It is likely he climbed either Pk 6,075m or Pk 6,038m, which border the col. Suffice to say that Pk 6,038m has what appears to be an interesting ridge and would provide excellent views of the Arwa glaciers. The col’s location is important, as the mountain to the right of it is called Shri Parvat. This means Pk 6,075m is Shri Parvat, and not Pk 6,175 as labeled in Kapadia’s texts.

Our own expedition established a camp at the foot of Pk 6,175m on April 11, and on the morning of the 13th used the southeast ridge to ascend over easy mixed ground and gain the right-hand side of its upper face. This was sustained Scottish III all the way. At 4 p.m. on April 13 Michael McCann, Gustau Catalan, Alan Manning, Sara Spencer, and I reached the summit. We set about a difficult abseil descent taking 14 hours (throughout the night), following a gully on the south face of the east ridge.

Data was gathered from all participants in relation to the medical research study. The film crew, Connor Kane, Alan Manning, and Angus Mitchel, also had a successful expedition achieving all their objectives. The Bhagirath Kharak glacier is a remote valley that has not seen much activity. It has many beautiful unclimbed and unnamed peaks. These are quite accessible and have many potential routes with a vast range of difficulties.

ROGER MCMORROW, *Ireland*

CENTRAL GARHWAL—GANGOTRI

Chaukhamba II, first ascent of the southwest face. One summer day in 2002 my friends and I decided on the Garhwal as our fall expedition destination. Researching it, we chose Chaukhamba II, the most remote summit of the region. With the help of a small photo of the pillar we intended to climb, more preparations followed until at the end of August, Patrick Wagnon, Christian Tromsdorff, Greg Sauget, and I packed up and were off. After a long guiding season we were all eager to go on an adventure to discover a new region and perhaps an unclimbed route in the particularly fascinating area of the Garhwal, a cultural and spiritual sanctuary at the source of the Ganges.

We got off to a slow start. Ten days of bad weather at the beginning of September dumped more than one meter of snow at 4,300m. Luckily the Indian agency had prepared our voyage so well that the patience of our staff and the creativity of the cooks made the waiting bearable. Tapovan (4,300m), a two-day walk from the road head at Gangotri, is the communal base camp for all climbs in this region. It’s also a meditation area. At the foot of Shivaling we shared our camp with climbers, pilgrims, and sadhus meditating in the caves.

Although our local porters refused to cross the glacier, our staff from the agency (cook, etc.) offered to take their place. Because of them, three days later we installed our advanced base at 5,300m at the end of the long flat Gangotri glacier.

It was only there that we caught sight of the west pillar of Chaukhamba II. All the information we had for this route had been gathered from a small photo. Now, we could see it. Just

to get to this point had already been a complicated logistical affair. After acclimatizing, we decided to climb the west pillar in a style that was half big wall and half alpine.

During our first attempt we realized that we were carrying way too much; 200m up the haul bag broke. An ascent in this style wasn't going to work. We descended and modified our chosen itinerary in order to be able to travel lighter and therefore faster. We needed to adapt the route to alpine style, so we changed our line to the right of the pillar on the south west face. On October 3 we set off from advanced base. The climb, on a 50°–60° snow slope with occasional ice cliffs, wasn't too difficult (approximately alpine grade D). After a bivouac at 6,400m, we continued the second day up a long slope to the summit (7,070m), where we spent the night.

But that was only part one. We still had to descend. Down-climbing 1,600m of 50°–60°+ some rappelling didn't really appeal to us, so we decided we would traverse the ridge to Chaukhamba I and descend its gentler snow slopes. We made this decision from what we could see of the route, realizing we would be venturing a little into the unknown. While traversing the ridge, it started to snow. At around 6,700m, we found a short-cut. It seemed that three or four rappels would take us to a col, from which we could easily descend to advanced base. Late that evening we arrived at the unnamed col and spent our third night above 6,000m. The following morning, lethargic from the previous day, we only left our bivouac at noon. The clouds were already on their way. Half an hour later we were in a storm. To make matters worse, the itinerary down to the glacier wasn't as straightforward as it had seemed. Seracs made it dangerous and bad weather made it difficult to find the correct route. But around 5 p.m., in 30cm of fresh snow, we finally arrived at our camp, where our staff were waiting for us, all ready to go for the 15-hour trek back to Tapovan the following morning.

Now back in Chamonix, I should reiterate how climbing in remote areas like this requires a lot of foresight. Even though the actual ascent wasn't very technical, we wouldn't have succeeded in climbing this summit if we hadn't been flexible. Since we didn't have a lot of prior information, we had to be ready to adapt our plan to the circumstances and be prepared and willing to make changes.

YANNICK GRAZIANI, *France*

Januhut, attempt. The Austrian team of Josef Jochler and Christian Zenz were the first party to attempt this 6,807m peak. Following the usual Gangotri-Tapovan approach, they established base camp on May 19, then reached the head of the long Gangotri Glacier in early June. However, they had plenty of porter problems due too-heavy snow cover on the glacier and, later, bad weather intervened, causing some cold injury to the fingers of one member. No serious attempt was made on the peak

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

Swachand, first ascent of west face and second ascent of peak. This year's post-monsoon season in the Gangotri region of the Garhwal was greatly affected by a mid-September dump of three to four feet of snow. Climbing expeditions focusing on east- or north-facing snow or ice routes were unable even to start their routes. Our project, the unclimbed 1,400m west face of Swachand (6,721m), caught the sun in the afternoon, allowing the snow to consolidate.

Swachand is situated in a side valley approximately 25km up the Gangotri Glacier from

Tapovan. It is a few kilometers from the main trekking and approach route, and certainly is a tantalizing view in the distance. Swachand has only been climbed once: in 1938, via the Maiandi Glacier and the snowy southeast side to the south ridge, by the Austrians T. Messner and L. Spannraft. The much steeper west face was first attempted by Malcolm Bass and Julian Clapp (U.K.) in 1998, however they were not successful because of abnormally warm weather and stonefall.

John Millar, Conor Reynolds, and I spent several days watching the face from a few different angles, acclimatizing, watching for avalanches, and planning our route. A few days before we were to attempt the climb, Conor developed a bad boil the size of a ping-pong ball on his back. He had to quit and descend to go seek medical help and antibiotics. Thus, it was just John and myself.

Early in the morning of October 3, John and I started out from ABC ready to climb. Up the first snowfield, and onto the ice-shield at the base of the wall. We hunkered in a bergshrund and roped up for the first rock band. After four good M5 pitches we were on the “dragon” snow patch and just managed to frontpoint to the top of it by dark. It took at least an hour to hack out a sizeable platform for our tent, but the refuge was welcome. The nights and mornings were cold (-15° to -20°C)!

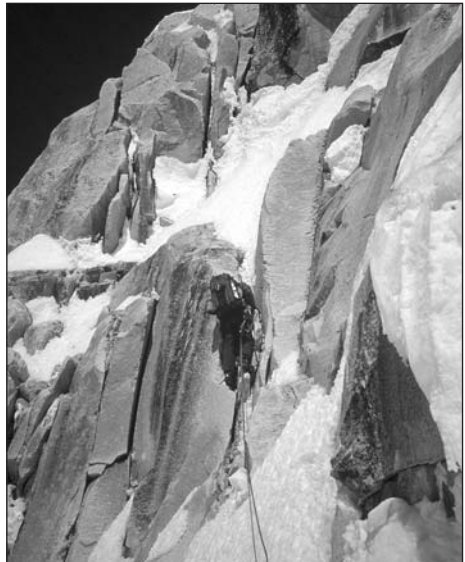
The following morning John found a WI5 chimney to get us up to an ice ramp, which led in the direction of a larger left-diagonal weakness that proved a bit of a funnel for rockfall. In the only significant rockfall that we saw while climbing, I was hit hard in the foot, enough to cause some swelling and to hamper my ability to frontpoint. I grimaced and followed, while John led all the pitches for the next day-and-a-half.

The second pitch of day three was definitely the crux of the whole route. John led a full 60m M6 WI5 pitch. I struggled to follow the pitch carrying the heavy second’s pack. We started swapping leads again and reached the upper snow/ice face at sunset.

On the fourth morning, four pitches up ice, snow, and sugar-over-ice brought us to the summit ridge. We were hoping for some easy going at this point, but the traverse to the summit was far from that: big cornices and very windy. We simul-climbed up the ridge on firm corniced snow with one fiddly rock step, at a rate of two breaths per footstep, to arrive on the summit at about 4:00 p.m.

We only spent a couple of minutes on top. It was a sharp summit dropping steeply in all directions, and we were worried about the descent (never underestimate 1938 climbers). The first 300m down the south ridge were sharp and required focused concentration. Finally, we got to safer terrain, did a few rappels, and camped down a little lower for the night.

On the fifth day we were out of food after breakfast. We slogged back up the upper Maiandi Glacier to the col south of Swachand,



John Millar in action on the west face of Swachand.
Guy Edwards



The Edwards-Millar route on the west face of Swachand. Guy Edwards

then dropped down toward the Swachand Glacier. After a few rappels, some down-climbing, and lots of kick-stepping, we reached the base of the face. In the last moments of visibility before some very threatening storm clouds were upon us, we found our tracks from five days before. In a whiteout and with thick and determined snow falling, we managed to follow our old tracks back to the security of fuel, food, and a bigger tent: our advanced base camp. We collapsed relieved and de-stressed.

We were very lucky. Six inches of snow fell that night, plastering every slope. The next morning lots of fresh avalanche debris was visible and new slides and sloughs were coming down everywhere. Patience and good posture are necessary when climbing at altitude. Thus we named the route *Mulabhandha*, meaning “sphincter clenching,” a yoga-Sanskrit term.

GUY EDWARDS, *Canada*

Editor’s note: Guy Edwards and John Millar were killed on the Devil’s Thumb, Alaska, in late April 2003, presumably by avalanche. See the epilogue to The Fickle Face earlier in this Journal.

Meru Shark’s Fin, yet another attempt. British climbers Jon Bracey, Julian Cartwright and Matt Dickinson approached this attractive rock face from the Gangotri Glacier and established base camp on September 16. The team was quickly reduced to two members, making logistics on the face difficult, so although the weather was good, they were unable to reach the summit.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

Bhilangna Valley, Satling peaks, first ascents. A British team made several first ascents in the Satling group of peaks at the head of the Bhilangna valley in early spring 2002. With rock as good as Chamonix granite, virgin walls up to 600m high, ice couloirs, and dozens of miniature aiguilles, the Satling offers a veritable feast of alpine climbing at altitudes between 5,000m and 5,850m. The “Sat-ling” or “Seven Phalluses” were first spotted by the British team that climbed Thelay Sagar’s south face in 1992. Remarkably, no climbing expedition had been up the valley in the intervening 10 years, even though the often-climbed peaks of Shivling and Meru are only 15km distant over the Gangotri watershed.

Having established an advance camp at 4,980m on the Satling Glacier, Mark Davidson, Martin Moran, and John Venier climbed two rock peaks; The Rabbit’s Ear (5,530m, D- with one pitch of UIAA V) and The Cathedral (5,360m, D with five pitches of UIAA IV, V, and V+). Meanwhile Keith Milne and Gordon Scott, who were part of the 1992 British team, climbed the

north couloir of The Fortress (5,541m). The ascent took 10 hours and featured three pitches at an overall grade of Scottish IV/V (TD-).

The main objective in the range is the triple-headed peak of 5,850m, which was provisionally named Brahmasar (Brahma's Head). Davidson, Moran, and Venier made a bold attempt to climb its west ridge, which featured an ice and mixed approach followed by some immaculate rock climbing on a slender arête. After 15 pitches of climbing, including several of grade V and one of VI (TD overall), they were repulsed 60m under the summit when faced by a series of delicate traverses late in the day.

Meanwhile, Milne and Scott circumnavigated the peak to gain an easier approach from the Dudhganga Glacier on its southeast side. They climbed the South Summit at D- with two pitches of IV, but commented that, viewed from every angle, the final 100m to the highest Central Peak would give difficult climbing. Brahmasar also sports a magnificent 800m north ridge.

Weather conditions in early May were excellent and a good cover of winter snow simplified the approaches. The glaciers and snow peaks of this area have considerable scope for ski-touring at this time of year. Technical difficulties on the granite faces look to be of a high order.

MARTIN MORAN, U.K.

WESTERN GARHWAL

Peak 6,075 m, first ascent. In early September a nine-member all women team from the IMF led by Chandraprabha Aitwal approached an unclimbed 6,075m peak in Kakora Gad from Harsil on the Gangotri Road. After acclimatizing at Kana Tal, base camp was established at 3,100m. The team placed two camps on the mountain and reached the summit in one long day on the 19th September. Altogether six members, Sushma Thakur, Kavita Burathoki, Reena Kaushal, Sundri Devi, Babita Gosawi and Ekta) plus three High Altitude Porters and Mr Narendra Kutyal, reached the top. This team also climbed an unnamed peak of 5,645m north east of their base camp on September 21. The leader with Reena Kaushal, Sushma Thakur, Kavita Burathoki, Mr. Kutyal and a High Altitude Porter reached the top.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

HIMACHAL PRADESH

LAHAUL

Ramjak, first ascent. An Indian Mountaineering Foundation expedition led by Sangay Dorjee Sherpa made the first ascent of Ramjak (6,318m). This peak has attracted many climbers in the past, including attempts by IMF expeditions in 2000 and 2001. At least three other attempts on this peak by different parties had also failed. The 2002 expedition left Delhi on July 22 and established base camp at 4,620m on the 27th, after fording several ice-cold streams on the approach. Camp 1 was established on August 3 after negotiating difficult terrain, crevasses, and exposed slopes. Finally, on August 4 the leader reached the summit along with Mul Dorjay, Nima Dorjay, and HAP Dawa Wanchuk

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

EAST KARAKORAM

Teram Shehr Ice Plateau traverse. The Indian–Japanese East Karakoram Expedition, consisting of five Indian and five Japanese mountaineers, undertook a long traverse of the Eastern Karakoram valleys between May 8 and July 9. We achieved a lot, covering almost 550km with various repeated load ferries. We carried almost 2,500kg of food, equipment and personal gear, first on 55 mules, later with personal ferries by 11 members and 15 Sherpas and porters. We lived continuously on the snow for almost 35 days, braving rather cold temperatures. There were no injuries, accident or sickness except to one porter.

The team traversed an historic route in the Shyok Valley and returned via the Nubra Valley (the Siachen Glacier). Five passes were reached or crossed, two large glaciers were fully traversed and a vast unknown ice plateau was explored. Above all, the first ascent of virgin and difficult Padmanabh (7,030m) was achieved.

The team traveled the Shyok River valley from Shyok village (Tankse-Darbuk) to the Karakoram Pass, following the ancient winter trade route between India and China and becoming the first expedition to achieve this in the last five decades. It was also the first time in the history of independent India that a team involving foreign mountaineers was permitted to visit the Pass. A lone British photographer had reached the pass in 1997. This was also the first time that Japanese had stood on the pass in the last 93 years.

The team traversed the entire Central Rimo and Teram Shehr glaciers by crossing Col Italia, the high pass between the two glaciers. It was the first time the pass had been traversed since the original crossing in 1929. Most of the Indian members had previously reached the pass in 2000 but had not crossed it.

The high and vast Teram Shehr Ice Plateau was explored and various cols surrounding the Plateau were investigated. The Plateau is a unique feature in the Karakoram, with ice and snow at a height of about 6,200m surrounded by high peaks on all sides. Harish Kapadia and Ryuji Hayashibara were the first people to reach the Plateau, seen so often in photos taken from peaks such as Rimo.

The first ascent of Padmanabh (7,030m) was made on June 25 by two Japanese members, Hiroshi Sakai and Yasushi Tanahashi (see Sakai's report below). Both had previously climbed Nanga Parbat but rated this peak more difficult in some aspects. Padmanabh is the highest peak on the Teram Shehr Plateau and the first major unclimbed peak in the Siachen Glacier to be ascended for many years. The team returned via the Siachen Glacier to the Nubra Valley.

The international team was the first to climb on the war-torn Siachen glacier since 1986 and the Japanese were the first mountaineers from their country to visit the glacier from the Indian side since the conflict began in 1984. Many Japanese teams had climbed on the Siachen Glacier between 1972 and 1983, approaching it from the west.

The Indian portion of the team was Harish Kapadia (Leader), Motup Chewang, Lt. Commander S. Dam, Huzefa Electricwala, and Rushad Nanavatty. The Japanese portion was: Hiroshi Sakai (Deputy & Climbing Leader), Tadashi Fukuwada, Ryuji Hayashibara, Dr. Hirofumi Oe, and Yasushi Tanahashi. A liaison officer from the Indian army, Capt. Madhab Boro, accompanied the team. Our expedition was organized by the Japanese Alpine Club and The Mountaineers Bombay, Mumbai, India. The expedition is grateful to the Indian Army for permission and support to undertake this venture. We are specially thankful to Lt. General R. K. Nanavatty, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, General Officer in Command, Northern Command,

Indian Army, without whose strong support we would not have been able to climb in this area or complete the expedition under the difficult situation that developed.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor,
The Himalayan Journal*

Padmanabh, first ascent. Almost all the unclimbed 7,000m peaks surrounding the Siachen Glacier were scaled in the 1970s by expeditions entering the region from Pakistan. Padmanabh remained virgin. The



Padmanabh 7,030m (center) from midway between Col Italia and base camp. Hiroshi Sakai

period allocated to climbing during our traverse of the Teram Shehr Ice Plateau (see above) was 15 days from a second base camp at 5,650m back to the same camp. On June 14 an advance party went up an easy glacier and reached a col on the south ridge at 6,250m. Their reconnaissance led to the conclusion that an attack camp should be set up near the col. The mostly granite south ridge has an average angle of 45°-50°. We thought this would yield to relatively easy climbing. However, the south ridge comprised small but complicated snow ridges, which appeared one after another. In some places the angle reached 70°-80°. Route preparation up to 6,750m required four working days, and 16 rope lengths were fixed to this point. Two teams consisting of Japanese and Indian mountaineers worked together to open the route.

On June 25, the 12th day after commencing the climb, we attempted the summit. Three members comprising Commander S. Dam, Yasushi Tanahashi and myself departed from our attack camp at 3:50 a.m. Unfortunately S. Dam soon had to drop out as he was unable to keep pace with the other two. We reached our previous high point at 8:30 a.m. Every pitch from there was extremely hard, even though it was less than 300m to the summit. We moved steadily pitch by pitch against a strong wind and the clouds that prevailed on the upper part of the south ridge.

About 11 hours after leaving camp we reached a treacherous snow wall. I led this wall, climbing vertical granulated sugar snow that was very difficult to negotiate. We kicked and stamped down the snow to make it more solid but all our efforts were in vain. We continued our struggle as the wall became even more precipitous. The last 30m ended with a cornice. To overcome it, we first had to dig a trench two meters deep and then excavate a tunnel. If conditions as critical as this had carried on for another five minutes, I would have given up and descended. Tanahashi led the final (26th) pitch, which took us to the foot of an ice tower resembling a cream puff. We stood atop Padmanabh at 3:10 p.m. after over 11 hours of continuous climbing.

A few days later Motup Chewang, Rushad Nanavatty, Dr Oe and Tadashi Fukuwada (each of whom worked hard and climbed quite high while preparing the final route) were poised for another attempt on the summit. However, due to the onset of bad weather, they gave up the attempt.

HIROSHI SAKAI, *Japanese Alpine Club*