
HARISH KAPADIA

India 2001

There were celebrations galore for mountaineers and mountain lovers in India. The year 2001 began with Millennium Celebrations and ended with plans for the celebrating the International Year of Mountains 2002.

Millennium celebrations began when the Himalayan Club invited three surviving 'Tiger Sherpas' to a special gathering in Mumbai. This was a fitting honour to the last three living recipients of the Himalayan Club Tiger Badge. They were Ang Tsering (nearly 100 years old), Nawang Gombu and Tobgay Sherpa. The Himalayan Club had a tradition of awarding the Tiger's Badge to those Sherpas who had achieved outstanding successes in the mountains. The badge was awarded only to a select few, judged by many criteria. HC records of the Sherpas, (instituted by H W Tobin with the founding of the Club in 1928) were maintained as one of the chief occupations of Tobin's successors as Honorary Local Secretaries in Darjeeling.

Ang Tsering was on the expedition to Everest in 1924 when Irvine and Mallory were lost near the summit. In fact he is the only surviving participant of that expedition. He was also on Nanga Parbat when Willy Merkl died in a storm. He was awarded the German Order of the Red Cross, personally signed by Adolf Hitler. Nawang Gombu is the most honoured and celebrated Sherpa in India today. He has climbed Everest twice and was the first person to do so. He is an Honorary Member of the Alpine Club, and has received many National Awards and honours. Tobgay Sherpa has been an instructor at Mountaineering Institutes, both at Darjeeling and Uttarkashi. There are many mountaineers who learnt their early mountaineering from him.

Another tradition was upheld when the British members of the Himalayan Club gathered in London on 27 April 2001 for the 'London Reunion', which has been an annual event for decades. Bob Pettigrew, the honorary local secretary, gave the lead and Sir Chris Bonington proposed the toast. Harish Kapadia, Hon Editor of the *Himalayan Journal* was the speaker.

The Nanda Devi Sanctuary

The Nanda Devi Sanctuary has been in the news during the year. Last year, a large Indo-Tibet police expedition had climbed the main peak of **Nanda Devi** by entering the Sanctuary. One climber died on the ascent.

Immediately following them, a British trekking group spent a few days in the sanctuary. This year, 2001, Mr N N Vohra, President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, took pains to organise an expedition to investigate whether the Sanctuary should be opened for mountaineers, trekkers and researchers. It may be recalled that the Nanda Devi Sanctuary has been closed since 1983. Local villagers are also not allowed to enter the Sanctuary for traditional grazing rights. The team from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation was given clearance by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Chief Wildlife Warden, and the Government of Uttaranchal. This was required by the law as the area is a National Park under the Act of Indian Parliament. This team studied the area and submitted a detailed report to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, which was forwarded to various departments in the Government. No final decision has yet been taken to open the Sanctuary for trekkers and mountaineers. But from press reports it appears that limited access to scientific expeditions may be allowed.

Following the IMF trekking team, a large expedition of the Indian Army entered the Sanctuary to clear the old garbage lying there from 1970s. They also reached the summit of **Nanda Devi** and **Dunagiri** peaks but no further details are available. It must be mentioned that at least two expeditions to the newly-formed Uttaranchal State, who were attempting peaks bordering the boundaries of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary, faced serious permit problems locally. Generally, to climb the peaks on the walls of the Sanctuary from outside has been permitted and many expeditions have made ascents in the past – on **Changabang** from the N and **Nanda Devi East** from the E. However the new state's authorities stopped a Korean and an American expedition who were attempting **Kalanka** and **Dunagiri** respectively. After long delays, the Korean team had to change plans and attempt **Nilkanth** peak. Future expeditions to the Uttaranchal States (consisting of Garhwal and Kumaun regions) and particularly to the peaks on the rim of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary should be careful in assessing the situation when they apply.

Nun-Kun Peaks

Due to the troubles in the state of Kashmir, no expeditions were permitted to the popular peaks **Nun** and **Kun** during the year. Similarly, no climbing has been allowed in the entire area of Kishtwar. Both these areas of southern Zaskar and Kishtwar have been affected by terrorism in Kashmir.

Arganglas Valley

A major International expedition climbed in the Arganglas valley in the areas near the Siachen Glacier. The team consisting of two British, two American and four Indian mountaineers explored a vast unknown area and made several first ascents. Arganglas is an area where, perhaps, the largest number of unclimbed peaks exists. The two American mountaineers, Mark Richey and Mark Wilford climbed a challenging route on the peak

Yamandaka (6218m), the most challenging climb in the Indian Himalaya during the year, if not in the last few years.

Tirsuli West Peak

Another major climb was the reported first ascent of **Tirsuli West**, one of the last unclimbed virgin 7000m peaks in Garhwal. The expedition was from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttarkashi and was led by its vice-principal Major K S Dhami. The Institute has now been at the forefront of training mountaineers in India and its instructors have made some major ascents on various expeditions.

Statistics

During the year, expeditions visited several areas in the Indian Himalaya. There were no major expeditions to Sikkim, Kishtwar and Zaskar. Out of 138 expeditions, 60 were to routine peaks, which are not covered here. Of these, 19 were foreign expeditions and 41 from India.

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation

During the year, in November 2001, elections for the President and the Governing Councils for the Indian Mountaineering Foundation were held in New Delhi. The current President, Shri N N Vohra, was elected unanimously for the two-year term. 12 other members were elected and Shri H C S Rawat and Ms Rita Marwah were appointed Vice-Presidents of the Foundation. Shri N N Vohra is an experienced bureaucrat and a senior official, who has served in the various high capacities with the Government of India. With his knowledge of the functioning of the Government, he has been instrumental in solving various matters and getting help to promote mountaineering in the country. With Mr Vohra at the helm Indian Mountaineering will be in safe hands.

Major expeditions in the Indian Himalaya in 2001

Garhwal – Kumaun (Gangotri Glacier area)

Shivling (6543m)

Expedition : French/Brazilian

Leader : Ratouis Emmanuel (3 members)

Period : April - May

This was an expedition consisting of climbing guides from the French Alps. They climbed the W Ridge of Shivling in 20 hours from base camp. All four climbers reached the summit. The leader, Emmanuel, made a ski-descent, completing a wonderful climb and descent. The other summiters were Marchand Severin and Razel Jean Claude.

Shivling (6543m)

Expedition: Swedish
Leader: Krister Jonsson (3 members)
Period: May - June.

Though the expedition suffered from bad weather, they managed to make an excellent ascent on the W Ridge to the summit of this difficult peak. Two members reached the summit on 5 June after a three-day push. Summiters were Magnus Eriksson and Christian Edelstam. Later, on 9 and 10 June, in two days, the leader made a fast solo ascent to the summit. All the ascents were made via the W Ridge.

Shivling (6543m)

Expedition: German
Leader: Bogdan Brakus (11 members)
Period: May

This experienced team climbed to the summit by the W Ridge. They established advanced base camp at 4850m, Camp I at 5100m and Camp II at 5850m and made all the climbs from there. According to the expedition, the climb was very serious and they had to undertake climbing on vertical séracs of 75m at heights above 6000m.

On 23 May, two members reached the summit: Beand Tritsches and Johann Hirschbichles. On 24 May the leader, with Michael Schoff and Karl Eisenberges, reached the summit, while on 25 May, two members, Jorg Hanel and Christian Mqurchqer, reached the top. This was a quick climb by a very experienced team.

Meru Central (6450 m)

Expedition: Russian
Leader: Valeri Babanov and Zdanovitch Igor (2 member team)
Period: September

This strong team attempted the Shark's Fin on the N Face of Meru Central. They made a base camp at 4300m and advanced base camp at 4900m. This is a technically difficult route and they faced several rock falls, avalanches and continuous bad weather. Finally on 22 September, the leaders reached the summit in a big push.

This was their second attempt on the peak this year. Earlier, the same team had attempted the same route in April-May but had failed to proceed beyond 5850m. Their dedication, later in the year, paid dividends.

A jury, presided over by Sir Chris Bonington, awarded GHM's Piolet d'Or to this expedition for the most outstanding climb in 2001.

Meru (6261 m)

Expedition: American
Leader: Peter Takeda (3 members)
Period: May-June

This expedition had multiple aims in the Gangotri area. First they attempted Meru, which they failed to climb due to technical difficulties. Two camps were made up to 6000m. As a consolation, they climbed **Kedar Dome** reaching the summit on 14 May. The summiters were Charles Bird, Jonathan Degenhardt, Mahesh Dixit (LO) and Arvind Bist (LO of a nearby expedition).

Meru North Peak (6450 m)

Expedition: Japanese
Leader: Hiroyoshi Manome (3 members)
Period: September-October

This small expedition from Japan was attempting the NE Face and the N Pillar route. They established camps and reached 6050m. Several falling stones and objective dangers were experienced. However, an avalanche destroyed the cache of their equipment, carrying down all the plastic boots. The attempt had to be given up.

Meru South (6660 m)

Expedition: Spanish
Leader: Jordi Coromings (6 members)
Period: September-October

The expedition established various camps by 17 September. Advanced base camp was at 4900m and the final Camp 3 was at 5900m. From this camp, the first attempt was made between 30 September and 2 October reaching up to 6100m, while the second attempt on 6 & 7 October reached 6400m. They encountered serious danger from falling stones and gave up the climb.

Bhagirathi III (6454 m)

Expedition: German
Leader: Walter Holzler (3 members)
Period: April-May

The expedition had the intention of attempting the SW Pillar. They made a base camp at 4450m at Nandanvan and Camp 1 at 5000m. However, continuous bad weather and snowfall made the peak rather dangerous and the route almost impossible to attempt. They gave up the climb.

Manda I (6511 m)

Expedition: Korean
Leader: Hyoungh Duk Kim (2 members)
Period: September

The team climbed the W Face on the N Ridge on the way to the summit on 17 September. The leader and porter Laxman attempted the summit. While Laxman stayed below the summit, the leader made a solo climb of the peak.

Bhrigu Parvat (6041 m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Dr. Anjan Chaudhary (9 members)

Period: September - October

The peak is situated near the Manda group and was approached from Kedar Kharak. Arun Kanti Das and Tanmoy Chakraborty reached the summit on 2 September.

Bhrigupanth (6772 m)

Expedition: The Netherlands

Leader: Melvi Redukar (3 members)

Period: October

The expedition attempted the peak, approaching it from the Gangotri temple. They made an advanced base camp and reached the col between **Bhrigupanth** and **Thalay Sagar**, wishing to attempt both the peaks. Bhrigupanth was climbed by the SE Ridge and Face on 10 October by all 4 members. The leader, with Andreas Amons, Mike V Berkel and Car J D Gevel reached the summit. No attempt was made on Thalay Sagar.

Sudarshan Parvat (6507 m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Dipankar Ghosh (12 members)

Period: May

This expedition from Hooghly (West Bengal) successfully reached the summit on 12 May via the E Face. The summiters were Prosenjit Mukherjee and Joysingh Sahi.

Chaturangi IV (6304 m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Stimit Srimany (10 members)

Period: June

This expedition from West Bengal climbed Chaturangi IV on 27 and 28 June. On 27 June, the summiters were Asis Mukherjee, Ashok Banerjee and Sanjay Mukherjee. The summiters on 28 June were Tarun Mondal and Jayanta Chandra.

Manda II (6568 m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Avijit Das (8 members)

Period: June

The expedition approached this peak from Gangotri, Gaumukh and beyond. Establishing three camps, the summit was reached on 21 June via the E Ridge. The summiters were Arnab Banerjee, Avijit Das, Arka Ghosh, R K Gamb-Isane and Kaushik Pal.

Gangotri I (6672 m)

Expedition: Indian (IMF Ladies Expedition) (8 members)

Leader: Lata Joshi

Period: September - October

A ladies' team, selected by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, climbed this high peak south of Gangotri temple. They set up a base camp at 4420m on 16 September at Rudugaira Kharak. They set up three more camps till 5790m. On 26 September in two teams of eight and four climbers respectively, the summit was reached by the normal route in dense fog and cloudy weather. The summit was reached by the leader with Sushma Thakur, Asmita, Manju Negi, Reena Kaushal, Vinita Verma, Deena Ramola, Dr Bhawana S Jadhav and three high-altitude porters.

Central Garhwal

Tirsuli West (7035m) and Shambhu Ka Qilla (6160m)

Expedition: British

Leader: Colin R. Knowles (6 members)

Period: April - May

The six-member team reached base camp via Malari and going up a subsidiary gully of Kunti Bhannar. They then proceeded south along Shepherd Pass to make a base camp at 3600m on the Siruanch glacier. After observation of the route, Tirsuli West was not attempted owing to objective danger on the face from a hanging glacier. Instead they climbed **Peak 6160m**, 5km north of Tirsuli West. They followed the S Face and reached the summit on 16 May. The summiters, along with leader, were Angela Benham, Roland Arnison, Christopher Drinkwater, Andrew Phillips and Titch Kavanagh. This peak was named 'Shambhu-Ka-Qilla' (Shiva's Fortress).

This expedition also had problems with the newly formed Uttaranchal State Government. Despite clearance from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, they had difficulty in gaining access to the mountain.

Tirsuli West (7035m) and Shambhu Ka Qilla (6160m)

Expedition: German

Leader: Ralf Messbacher (7 members)

Period: May

The expedition reached the base of this unclimbed peak and traversed smaller peaks up to 6320m while trying to reach the West Ridge of Tirsuli West. However, the peak was not attempted beyond this because of continuing bad weather, avalanche and loose rock danger. The expedition generally suffered from rather poor weather.

Nanda Ghunti (6390 m) from both sides

Martin Moran led this six-member British expedition. They climbed in May-June. Martin Moran has been a regular visitor to the Indian Himalaya and almost every year he has made noteworthy ascents and explorations in the range. The present expedition had the original intention of attempting **Trisul**. But this was given up due to continuous bad weather.

On 19 May, the recce of the route on Nanda Ghunti was undertaken and Camp I was established on 25 May at 5400m. Andrew Nisbet and Mike Brennan climbed Nanda Ghunti on 2 June via the S Face – a new route. The route is steep but takes a direct line to the summit. They climbed a curving couloir between two pinnacles (50-55 degrees) to gain the upper slopes. They graded the climb AD+.

The summit of Nanda Ghunti was also climbed via the North Ridge – the normal route – on 2 June, the same day as the other team. The leader, with Tom Rankin, Ian Lee Bapty, Des Winterbone and H Singh (HAP), reached the summit. This is a long, strenuous approach from Hom Kund over Ronti Saddle, which has a big cornice on its N side. The route starts with a 50° gradient on the North Ridge. The rest of the route is easy.

Lampak South (6181 m)

Expedition: Indian
 Leader: Swaraj Ghosh (7 members)
 Period: August - September

Lampak group of peaks stand on the Lampak glacier near Joshimath. Not many expeditions attempt these peaks. This team from Howrah, West Bengal, climbed Lampak South (or Lampak II). The summiters were Swaraj Ghosh, Anal Das, Sibrata Banerjee, B Biswas, N P Rao, Gautam Chatterjee and B Jetty.

Nilkanth (6596m)

Expedition: Japanese
 Leader: Daisuke Narumi (4 members)
 Period: September

The expedition intended to attempt the North Face via the west ridge. They tried to overcome a dangerous icefall on the face. However, many avalanches stopped their progress. One member was unwell and hence they called off the expedition.

Nilkanth (6596m)

Expedition: Korean
 Leader: Ja Eok Gook (7 members)
 Period: August

The expedition originally intended to attempt **Dunagiri**, which is on the outer walls of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. They proceeded with full clearance going towards this peak. However, they were denied permission locally

from the state of Uttaranchal. They had to change their objective to an attempt of Nilkanth, at the last minute. They set up Camp II, but due to stone fall, avalanches and crevasses, the attempt was called off. Their heart was certainly not in it.

Nilkanth (6596m)

Expedition: Slovenia

Leader & Members: Marco Prezelj, Matija Jost, and Dr. Zarko Guzej

Period: October

A strong Slovenian expedition was the only team which successfully climbed Nilkanth this year. They climbed the summit via the West Ridge on 14 October and they had an excellent spell of weather throughout. They approached the summit from Hanuman Chatti, Baenakuli along the Khirao Ganga to Panpatia glacier in the north.

Kalanka (6553 m)

Expedition: American

Leader & Member: Carlos Buhler and John Roberts

Period: September

This expedition also faced problems of delay locally from Uttaranchal State Government. The peak is situated on the rim of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary and they were to attempt it from outside the sanctuary. They approached the mountain along the Bagini glacier planning to attempt the stupendous N Face. Finally, after further bureaucratic hassles, they made a recce on 11 September and established Camp 1 at 5660m. However no attempt was made on the wall and the team also faced problems of acclimatisation.

Kamet (7756 m)

Expedition: Polish

Leader: Jerzy Tillak (8 members)

Period: July - August

The expedition, comprising a team of strong climbers, had planned to attempt the West Ridge. They reached 7390m on 26 August having approached the peak from Gamsali and Niti. Among the higher camps, Camp IV was at 6600m and Camp V at 7120m. They encountered very high winds and loose powder snow, which forced them to give up the climb.

Kamet (7756 m)

Expedition: Indian (Senior citizen expedition)

Leader: Ashwini Kumar (67 years)

Period: September - October

This was an expedition of retired police and other officers. However the leader is reported to have died on reaching the lower slopes of the mountain. No further details are available.

Kamet (7756 m)

Expedition: Indian (West Bengal)

Leader: Debasashi Kanji

Period: August - September

This team is reported to have attempted this high peak. No further details are available.

Chaukhamba I (7138 m)

Expedition: Indian (14 members)

Leader: Brijes Dey

Period: May

This team from Calcutta attempted the N Face of this high mountain approaching from Badrinath and Mana. They found the huge face very avalanche prone and many large crevasses barred their way. The attempt was abandoned.

Chaukhamba I (7138 m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Ujjwal Ganguly (9 members)

Period: September

This team attempted the normal route on the North Face. They were trapped in an avalanche at Camp 3 (6350m). Palash Mukherjee and Serabjit Sadhu were killed and their bodies not recovered. The expedition was given up.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Tagne (6111 m)

Expedition: British

Leader: Andrew Vine (4 members)

Period: July

This was a team of young students and they made the ascent of Tagne on 20 July via the S Ridge. The leader reached the summit with Narendra Singh. Tagne is situated near Chandra Tal in Lahul. The expedition also climbed **Peak 6030m** via the E Ridge on 26 July. Stephen Jolly, Alan Gear and Jon Ellis reached the summit. Their approach route was from Chandra Tal to Topko Yongma where they made their base camp and approached the summit from the S Tagne glacier.

Behali Jot North (6290 m)

Expedition: Japanese

Leader: Shoji Sakamoto (9 members)

Period: June

The team made a mass ascent of Behali Jot North on 3 different days. All climbs were via the SE Ridge. On 13 June, Takao Momozawa, Akitoshi Hayakawa and Hidejiro Katsuno reached the summit. On 14, Shizuo Takegami, Kaori Iguchi, Pasang Bodh and Prakash Bodh reached the summit, while on the 15, Shoji Sakamoto, Norifusa Akakura, A K Sharma (LO) and Prakash Bodh reached the summit. This was the first ascent of the North peak.

Fluted Peak (6122 m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Gautam Banit (11 members)

Period: August - September

This peak, situated near Karcha Parvat on the border of Lahul and Spiti, has been climbed several times. Niraj Kumar, Madhabi Barman, Subrata Roy and Bablu Sen climbed the peak on 27 August. The peak is situated on the borders of Lahul and Spiti on the Karcha nala.

Fluted Peak (6122 m)

Expedition : Japanese

Leader: Yachiyo Yamanaka (3 members)

Period: August

The expedition made two camps, the last one being at 5350m. The leader climbed to the summit on 16 August with Tokie Suzuki and Nobuo Iihama, Hiroshi Fukino and three high altitude porters.

Unnamed Peak 6184m (Lahul)

Expedition: Japanese

Leader: Yasutada Sawairi (12 members)

Period: July - August

This peak is situated NE of peak **Phabrang**, whose normal approach route is up the Thiroi nala. However this expedition came from Jankar Sumdo in the E and followed the right flanking glacier from here. The peak is opposite the Gangtang glacier. The team was led by a 71-year-old leader. They attempted the summit on 8 August, reaching 5750m. Unfortunately, on most of the other days the weather was bad and they faced constant danger of rock fall. The summit attempt was given up.

Gangtang (6162m)

Expedition: Japanese

Leader: Tsuneo Suzuki

Period: August

This well-known peak was attempted by senior citizens from Japan in two different expeditions from two different directions. The above expedition attempted the SW ridge. They approached it from Keylong via Biliang Nala

and set up a base camp at 4650m. The leader was a veteran mountaineer, 65 years old, and the members consisted of senior members, between 66 and 72 years old, including two ladies over 64 years. The summit was climbed on 5 and 8 August, by 6 members with two Sherpas and four high altitude porters.

Gangtang (6162m)

Expedition: Japanese

Leader: Tatsumi Mizumo (5 members)

Period: August

The second Japanese expedition also consisted of senior members who were between 50 and 67 years old. They climbed to the summit by the N Face to the E Ridge. They approached the mountain from Jankar Sumdo and set up a base camp at 4050m. Four members with three Sherpas and two high altitude porters reached the summit on 5 August.

Dharamsura (6420m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Aloke Kumar Das (12 members)

Period: August

Amitava Roy, Goutam Ghosh, Arupam Das, Susanta Basak and Sherpa Pasang reached the summit on 22 August. This peak is located on the Tos nala in the Kullu area.

Baralacha Peak (6111m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Kalpana Mukherjee (6 members)

Period: August - September

The expedition approached this peak across the Baralacha Pass. There are several climbing opportunities around the Pass and this peak was first climbed two years earlier by a team from West Bengal. The leader reached the summit on 5 September with Taponayan Ghosh and Partha Majumdar.

Unnamed Peak (6248 m)

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Sudhir S Raut (3 members)

Period: August

This peak lies on the ridge continuing from the Shingo la pass, which is a popular trekking route. The base camp was set up at Chuminakpo (4660 m). The team climbed along the right of the Shingo nala and set up Camp 2 at 5410 m. From here, they followed steep slopes to a col. The summit was about 200m from the col and was reached in poor weather. The summiteers were the leader with Nitin Gandhi and Paresh Rathod. They reached the top on 15 August.

Chau Chau Kang Nilda (6304m)

Expedition: Indian (West Bengal)

Leader: Dipankar Ghosh

Period: September - October

This small peak in Spiti lies NE of Kaja. The peak was successfully climbed by four climbers with three handicapped persons.

KASHMIR - LADAKH**Chittapani (5280 m)**

Expedition: Indian

Leader: Shaukat Ali Mir (6 members)

Period: July

This small but lovely peak lies in the Kashmir valley. It was heartening to note that despite the troubled times, the Kashmiris themselves have continued a love affair with nature and mountains. Shokat Hussain, Mohammed Amin, Mohammed Altaf, Tariq Ahmed Kachroo and Champak Singh reached the summit on 18 July.

Ascents In the Pangong Range (Ladakh) Aug-Sept 2001

Ascents Of **Kangju Kangri** (6725m), **Unnamed Peak** (6580m), **Kakstet Kangri** (6461m) and **Unnamed Peak** (6134m).

This was a large expedition from 8 Mountain Division (Indian Army). It was led by Lieutenant Colonel A Abbey, who is an experienced mountaineer and the current Principal of the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in Uttarkashi, Uttaranchal State.

Dates and Routes climbed:

Kangju Kangri, 6725m, via the S Face on 30 August 2001.

Unnamed Peak, 6580 m, via the S Face, SW Ridge on 02 Sept 2001

Kakstet Kangri, 6461m, via the SE Face, SW Ridge, on 03 Sept 2001.

Unnamed Peak 6134 m, via the NW Face on 03 Sept 2001.

The remote Pangong Range lies S of the famous Pangong Tso Lake and N of the Ladakh range, in Ladakh. This was a young team of soldiers from the crack 8 Mountain Division of the Indian Army. Base Camp was established on the Chushul-Tangtse axis.

On 21 August a base camp was set up at Tatsang Lungpa (4900m). Camp I was established at an altitude of 5560m, next to a small glacial

lake, on 23 August. Camp II, for the ascent of Kangju Kangri, was established on the lateral moraine of the Kangju Glacier, at an altitude of 6020m on 27 Aug 2001. For the ascent of Pt. 6580m, Camp II was shifted to an altitude of 6010m on 1 September on a different axis. The Camp was further shifted on 2 September, below the Shimdi La and established at an altitude of 5400m for the ascent of Kakstet Kangri and Pt. 6134m. Climbing as separate sub teams of the same expedition, the team made four ascents of Kangju Kangri 6725m, Unnamed Peak 6580m, Kakstet Kangri 6461m and Unnamed Peak 6134m.

Eighteen members, including the leader, crossed the 5630m-high Shimdi La and recorded the first known traverse of the range, finishing at the S bank of the Pangong Tso. The expedition accomplished its objectives in excellent shape and form, all in a time frame of fifteen days.

Ramjak (6318 m)

Expedition: Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Leader: Lt Col S Upadhyay (9 members)

Period: August

Ramjak is an unclimbed challenging mountain with a sharp ice dome as the summit. The peak is located near Shingo la, which is a popular trek route from Himachal to Zaskar. At least three expeditions have failed on this peak in the past, and one Indian climber died on its slopes. The first to try the peak from the west was a ladies' team from Mumbai, which attempted it in 1994 from the Bagrari glacier. In 1996 another team from Mumbai attempted the peak, where Dinesh Shertate died at 5400m owing to medical complications.

This year the Indian Mountaineering Foundation expedition reached the area in early August and trekked on the well-known route from Darcha-Palamo and set up base camp little short of Chuminakpo, at 4620m. After a recce, Camp 1 (4880m) was set up beside a glacial stream running down from the glacier. The next three days were spent in recceing the place for Camp 2 which was ultimately set up on 11 August. The following day they reached a rock wall and fixed ropes (400m) through a gully and after surmounting the wall at 5800m, they saw a long ridge running to the summit. However, the summit was too far and they were deterred by the terrain. The expedition retreated.

Chaukula (6529 m)

Expedition: British

Leader: Michael J Ratty (5 members)

Period: August

Michael Ratty has been attempting this peak for a few years. This year, his team succeeded in making an ascent from the S Face on 13 August. Trevor Willis and Christopher Mothersdale reached the summit. Their LO was

sick and had to be evacuated. This peak is situated in the Rupshu district and is one of the prominent high points in the area. It has religious significance and is situated near a monastery. The monastery had requested the expedition not to carry any meat on the mountain, which they obliged.

EAST KARAKORAM

The Arganglas International Expedition 2001

A team of mountaineers from India (4), UK (2) and USA (2) climbed in the Nubra Valley of Ladakh. The area is situated near the Siachen Glacier in the East Karakoram. The team made the first ascents of three peaks, explored five glaciers and attempted two peaks. No mountaineering party had ever visited this area. A large number of peaks are located around these glaciers, which were photographed and recorded.

Sir Chris Bonington and Harish Kapadia were joint leaders of the team. They had organised two expeditions jointly in the past in the Indian Himalaya. The Arganglas region, near the Siachen glacier, is home to the Argans, a community comprising the offspring of Yarkandi or Kashmiri Muslims who used to frequent the trade routes to Central Asia, (a region that has leaped back into the international spotlight after September 11) and the local Ladakhi women with whom they cohabited.

For armchair adventurers all around the world, sharing the joy of this expedition was just a click away. Pictures from a digital camera were being uploaded and latest information on the expedition was provided on www.bonington.com, thanks to Bonington's son Rupert who runs a multimedia company in the UK.

The base camp was set up in a dry lake bed at the foot of the Phunangma Glacier (4800m/15,750ft). Two advanced base camps were set up on the glacier. Teams then divided in smaller teams and operated as small independent parties from there. There is phenomenal potential here for alpine style climbing on peaks up to 6800 metres.

Abale (6360m/20,865ft) and Amale (6312m/20,708ft) and other peaks

In between companionable bridge sessions, other members had been occupied with their own climbs and explorations. Shroff and Muni along with Samgyal Sherpa climbed a virgin peak which they named as Abale (6360m) ('grand father') with its corniced summit in the Nono glacier just before the heavy snows and clouds came swirling in. Satyabrata Dam, a naval officer from Mumbai, and the liaison officer Capt. Lingwal and Sherpa Wangchuk climbed another peak, Amale (6312m) ('grand mother') The British climbers, Bonington and Jim Lowther were forced back because of bad weather from their attempt but reached an unknown pass Konto La.

First ascent of peak Yamandaka (6218m) by its North Face and descent by the Shingskam Topko

The hi-tech gizmos could not really minimise some of the risks or the thrills of the unknown, as the two Americans or two Marks – Mark Richey and Mark Wilford – discovered. They had a tough, but successful, climb of the N Face of Yamandaka where they had to spend three nights perched on tiny ledges chopped into the ice with just enough room to try and sit or lie down.

From the day they arrived in BC below the Phunangma Glacier, Mark Wilford and Mark Richey were at once captivated by the obvious and direct line on the N Face of **Peak 6218m**. The wall was estimated to be about 4000ft high and a steep mix of rock and ice. On 8 September the two Marks crossed the Phunangma glacier and set camp at the base of the face, beneath a huge boulder.

From 9 to 12 September the Marks climbed over 20 pitches of 60 metres each of technical rock and ice on the face. All rock-climbing was done with crampons in full winter conditions. A fair amount of direct aid was employed including two pendulums. They sack-hauled on most of the pitches and the second jumared with a heavy pack. Several sections of frighteningly loose, stacked blocks had to be negotiated. At one point, a television-sized rock, set loose by hand pressure, nearly severed the lead rope. The ice-climbing was mainly confined to the initial four pitches of 45-degree snow and ice and then the final three pitches of water ice up to 70 degrees including the final overhanging cornice. They braved snowfall on all days except the 11th and topped out in a full blizzard, which dumped nearly a foot of snow. They made three bivouacs on the face; the first two were excellent platforms and they were able to erect a small tent. The final open bivouac on the face was a narrow ledge chopped into a 50-degree ice slope. Heavy spindrift during the night kept them from much sleep. They also spent one night just below the summit.

Owing to heavy snowfall, their original plans of descent down the NE Ridge to the Phunangma Glacier seemed excessively dangerous. Instead, they opted for a descent down the S Face of the mountain to a glacier system on the opposite side of the range. In fact, the gentle disarming glacier ultimately funnelled its way down into a steep and terrifying gorge leading all the way to the Nubra valley. By the time they realized this, they were too exhausted to retrace path, already day seven on five days of food.

Finally, after ten hours of brutal descent, they stood atop a huge waterfall longer than their rope. Beyond, the smooth canyon walls disappeared out of sight. Unwilling to make this final commitment, they searched for an escape. One side of the canyon presented a slight weakness. Wilford led up a wall of huge blocks literally cemented in place with mud. As Mark put it, 'It was the most frightening pitch I have ever climbed.' Two more vertical pitches of rock and 500 ft of scrambling led them finally to the Canyon rim

and their seventh night out in the Shingskam Topko Valley. The following morning, they descended to the Nubra valley where they met a very relieved porter sent down to look for them. That day, expedition companions were ready to send out the search helicopter. Back at ABC, they had built a lovely temple and prayed for their safety. (See article 'Yamandaka' by Mark Wilford on page 43.)

Argan Kangri (6789m) the highest peak on the glacier was one of the prime aims of the expedition. However bad weather and poor snow conditions did not allow an attempt on this peak until the last days of the expedition. The expedition also reached Konto La (5920m/19,422ft) a col between Karpo Kangri (6540m/21,460ft) and **Peak 6640m** at the E head of the Phunangma Glacier.

Explorations in the Rassa and Yah Glaciers

Harish Kapadia and Satyabrata Dam, with three porters, formed an independent team and explored the above two glaciers in the area, containing a large number of unclimbed peaks. Later they traversed W to enter the Yah Glacier, which is near the shapely peak of **Nya Kangri** (6480m/21,260ft). Covering ground on rocks and soft snow and across crevasses, the steep pass Yah La (5770m/18,930ft), was reached on 23 September but it was not possible to descend on the other side towards the Sumur Lungpa as intended. The party retraced their route back to the Arganglas valley and joined the main team the next day.

To end, I cannot help but narrate an anecdote that happened during my lecture in London at the Himalayan Club dinner last April. Sir Chris Bonington, proposing a toast, described the fun we had during our joint expeditions. 'It is not only cheese and biscuits on our trips, we have Mr Gandhi supplying tasty Indian food and Mr Gandhi supplying Mumbai *bhel* and Mr Gandhi supplying south Indian *dosas*.' He thus continued his mouth-watering descriptions of food supplied by the local Gandhi Stores in Mumbai, which had arranged food for our expeditions very efficiently. After dinner, an elderly lady came up to me and asked in all seriousness, 'By any chance, was Mahatma Gandhi from a family of food suppliers?'