

Apex

Indian Mountaineering Foundation
Newsletter * Volume 9 * July 2019



*Matt crossing slushy snow slopes at 5300 m, Chiling I & II in the background behind clouds.
Image Courtesy: Alesander Mathie.*

SE Shukpa Kunchang towards West (Argan Kangri). Image by Print Simson, Courtesy: Kristjan Erik Suurvali



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Unnamed Peak (6751 m)

First Ascent
Southwest Ridge & West Face
Ladakh Himalaya



*Image courtesy: Priit Simson
Peak 6751 from South. Picture taken from Phurdukpa glacier.*

Kristjan Erik Suurvali recounts his team's first ascent of the highest unclimbed peak in the Kunzang range, East Karakoram, J&K Himalaya.

This mountain has been variously been referred to as Kunchang Kangri, Phurdukpo Kangri I, Unnamed Peak I Kungzang and Mandaltang I. Clearly the mountain has no common name.

Our team left Rongdo village on 9th of July (3200 m) to start the 60 km trek towards the mountain. We trekked three days to base camp (5300 m), making overnight stops in Doksa summer village (4045 m) and Hot Springs (4607 m). BC was established next to the moraine of the Sagtopa glacier (5387 m). Our main objective was the highest summit in the region referred on the "Ladakh and Zaskar North" map by Olizane as being 6721 m and 6751 m on Indian and US maps.

On July 15th we crossed of the southeast Shukpa Kunchang Glacier and established intermediate camp at 5778 m. The glacier was in good shape, covered with strong snow and snow bridges over crevasses, not providing any particular difficulties. Most porters returned then and we

continued with nine porters, sharing load carry ourselves.

The next day we climbed to the col between SE Shukpa Kunchang Glacier and Phurdukpa Glacier, crossing the col at the point 6041 m. The lowest point of the col was at the 5981 m, but heavily corniced and crevassed from the North side, so we had to climb a bit up and find a suitable point to make a 180m rappel. It was the first known crossing of this col, so we named it "Estonian Col". Our intention was to fix the col with ropes, so as to ferry food and equipment to ABC from BC. Our intention was to make several climbing and exploratory trips from ABC.

Unfortunately the col appeared too steep and crevassed for our remaining 9 porters to make repeated crossings. In addition, we did not have any spare fixed rope to leave there. Therefore we failed to carry out our initial plan for longer climbing trips and concentrated from there on only to the unclimbed peak 6751 m.



Col route finding. We descended to the Phurdukpa glacier on the right. (image by Priit Simson)



View from high camp towards east (south-east),

Climbing up last rock steps to summit.

On the 19th we moved to the unnamed glacier and, in the worsening weather, established intermediate camp at 5553 m. The next day, our team moved from the glacier to the mountain itself and, next to the rock island, we set up 2nd camp at 5935.53 m. On the 21th we established high camp on the SW ridge at the 6298 m. On the morning of July 22nd the weather was not very promising. It started with snowfall so we had to postpone summit attempt from 2 AM to 4 AM. At 4 AM it was still snowing lightly and winds were noticeable, but we climbed first snow slopes on firm snow. There was an ice step, about 30 meters high (grade WI 3), before entering the couloir leading to under the summit pyramid.

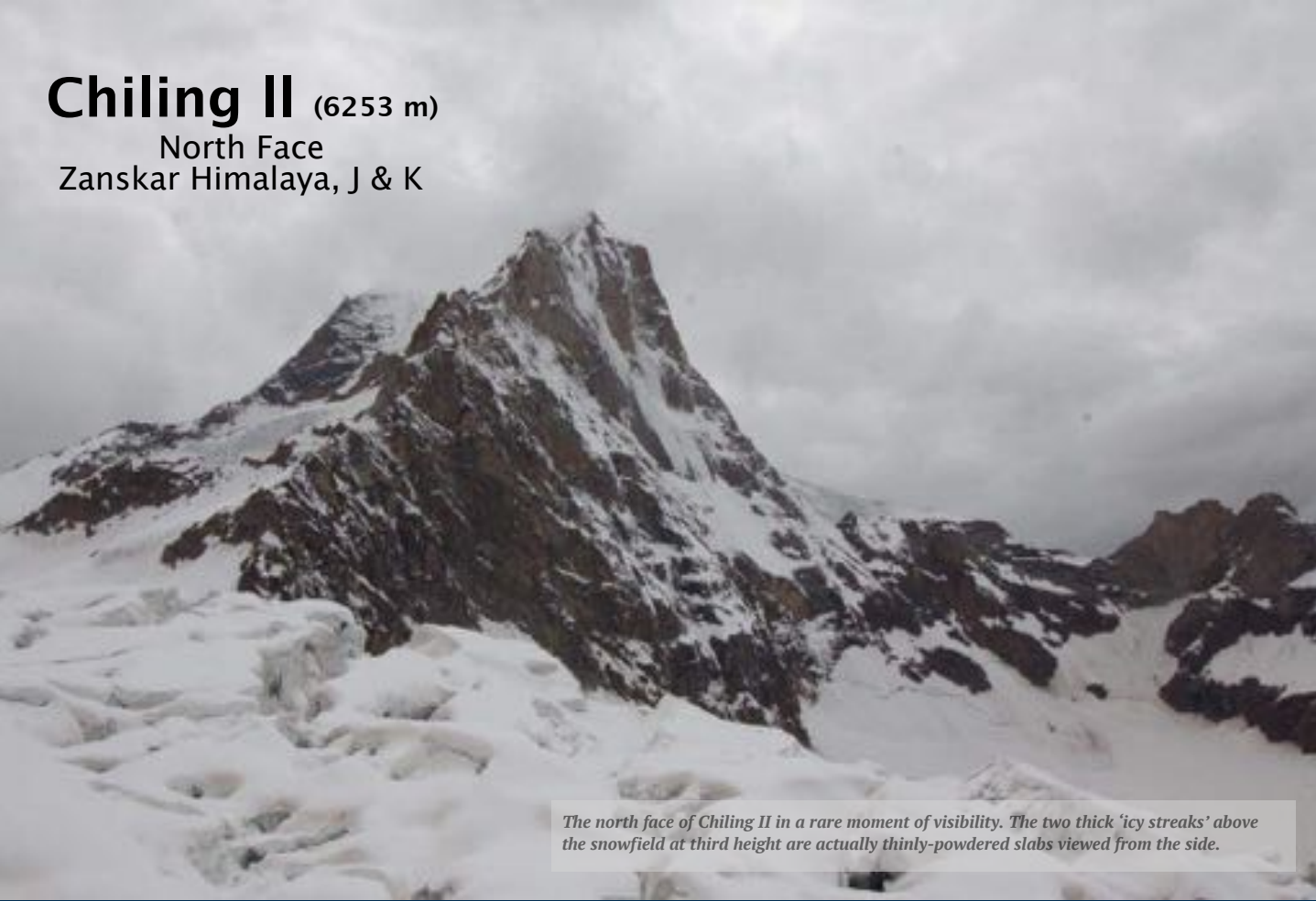
The summit pyramid itself consisted mainly of loose rocks and we took utmost care not to drop any stones onto each other heads. Summit was a short knife-edge snow ridge at the height 6801 m. Due to continuously cloudy weather and snowfall, return to the Rongdo valley was more dangerous. Snow-bridges on SE Shukpa Kunchang glacier were softer and Passang Temba Bhutia who was rope-leader on glacier took about five falls into the crevasses.

We measured mountain true height to be 6801 m and this will make it the world's 294th highest mountain, with prominence over 500 meters, and 1041 meters instead of 991 meters.

– Kristjan Erik Suurvali

Chiling II (6253 m)

North Face
Zaskar Himalaya, J & K



The north face of Chiling II in a rare moment of visibility. The two thick 'icy streaks' above the snowfield at third height are actually thinly-powdered slabs viewed from the side.

Alexander Mathie and Matt Harle undertook a highly challenging expedition to summit Chiling II peak from the North Face. They had to turn back in poor weather conditions.

In 2017, I stumbled upon a short expedition report from an American team who had very nearly made the first ascent of the East Ridge of Chiling II. The pictures showed blue skies, crisp snow, and a soaring granite ridgeline that rose over 1000 m out of an elevated glacial bowl to Chiling II's 6253m summit. Deep umber with patches of paper-white neve, the ridge fell away steeply on either side. The precipitous granite walls of the southeast face defined the ridges left edge, but to the ridge's right lay an even richer jewel: an austere, untouched north wall whose lower slopes fell away even further than the bottom of East Ridge, to the floor of Chiling glacier. And then, in June 2018, Matt Harle and I checked our four duffel bags into the hold and boarded our plane to India. Just five days later we arrived at the head of the Lalung valley, a stone's throw from Chiling II.

Over the next ten days, Matt and I tried our best to ignore the consistently poor weather patterns, and established an advanced basecamp at 4800m, some 10km further up the glacier. We made a reconnaissance trip up to 5300 m on the glacial col between the Lalung and Chiling valleys, and a further acclimatisation climb to 5600 m on Lalung II's easterly slopes. After the weather deteriorated yet again, we descended to base camp to rest before an attempt on Chiling II's north face. The weather on Chiling II continued to remain poor, with a few hours of clear skies before the clouds scudded in and the snows began.

Matt and I planned for a slow, heavy ascent of the face, which we anticipated would take us three and a half days. Our planned descent of the east ridge we hoped to complete in a day and a half. We packed five days' worth of food and gas and assembled as substantial a rack as we could bear, concerned about the difficulties that the steep mixed terrain on the headwall might pose.

Accessing the north face from ABC proved to be no easy task. With the temperatures being too high to refreeze the snowpack overnight, even at 5300 m, we postholed through knee-deep slush for hours and then wove a labyrinthine trail through the gaping crevasses to the north of the Chiling icefall. At times, the only way forward was to down climb into a crevasse, across to a groaning snow bridge and then out the other side.



Load ferrying up Lalung glacier to ABC.



Enjoyable climbing in the goulotte system, low on the north face of Chiling II. Shortly after this, torrential spindrift and deteriorating weather forced a retreat.



The long slog out of the isolated Chiling glacier and back into the Lalung valley.

In the darkness, early next morning, we crossed the bergschrund and established ourselves in the system of icy goulottes low on the north face. To our right, a vivid orange wall of rock, overhanging across its 200 m width, hissed softly as spindrift from the previous day's snow gathered momentum. Low down, the neve was surprisingly good quality and made for straightforward climbing. But as we reached a steeper section, the sun came up on the face, we found out why: it had been compacted by a daily deluge of spindrift, which was now trying to drown us.

Descending to a sheltered belay, we regrouped and swiftly decided that upwards progress was foolish in conditions like these. A handful of rappels later we were back on the snow cone below the north face, where we deliberated about trying again the next day. Earlier this time. Common sense prevailed though, and, having depleted our food and gas, we opted to run away.

The north face of Chiling II is a stunning objective and promises steep, challenging mixed climbing (and challenging conditions!) all the way to the top. I, for one, plan to return soon.

– Alexander Mathie

Lalana Peak (6265 m)

Lahaul region
Himachal Pradesh Himalaya



View of Lalana peak from the approach

Indranil Kumar describes his team's climb of Lalana peak (6265 m) in the Himachal Himalaya. The team faced a tough and dangerous route, with steep boulder zones, a glacier full of crevasses and a daunting Ice Fall.

In August 2018, I led our team's expedition to Mt. Lalana (6265 m), situated to the west of Bara Shigri Glacier, in the Lahaul region of Himachal Pradesh. If you start from Batal, Mt. Lalana is the first peak to the right of Bara Shigri Glacier. This peak was first successfully climbed by an all women Bengali team in 1970 and they named it as Lalana, a Bengali word meaning Woman.

We reached Manali on 11th August, where our friends joined us. On 13th we took the long trek to Batal, full of hazards. Lalana becomes visible on the way from Manali to Batal. Next day we moved to occupy Base Camp (3919 m), crossing Karcha Nala en route. Nowadays there is a wire on Karcha Nala, making it a simple crossing. It was a beautiful Camp Site with a small lake.

On 15th August, the Independence Day, we began our load ferries. Our target area was the snout of the Glacier. We trekked along the true right bank of the Nala. At first it was a normal boulder zone, but very soon we had to traverse high gradient boulder zones, and had to be very cautious. We reached at top of the snout, but could neither find any proper place for a campsite nor water. Then we came down to the river bed. And here we pitched a tent, though it was not a proper place for Camp. From here we got a chance for a closer look at Mt. Lalana. Temperature was around 5–7 degrees.

Next day we took rest. On 17th, nine members of the team started out to occupy Camp-I, with myself and another member staying back to maintain the Base Camp. At noon they reached Camp-I (3978 m), almost to the top of the snout point. Mohar and Pitambar returned in the evening with the news that it would take almost 8 hrs. to reach Camp-II, and another 15 hrs of hard ice fall climbing to the Summit Camp, there being a lot of crevasses in the route.



En route Camp 1 through the boulder zone



Up the Crevasse-filled Hanging Glacier



The highest point the team could reach on the Ice Fall, and had to turn back from.

Next day it was quite bad weather, however we started out to occupy Camp II, climbing through a steep boulder zone. A stream from Lalana Glacier meets Sigri glacier. We climbed through the true left of that stream. It was almost 70 degrees gradient, with some rock fall zones. We crossed the boulder zone and entered into the Glacier, finding it fully crevasse zone. Big crevasses divided the whole glacier. At 1.20 PM we reached and occupied Camp-II (4380 m), on hard glacier. It was raining with strong winds blowing.

On a recce of the hanging glacier, we found it was all crevasse zone with about 70-80 degree gradient. Early next morning, the weather was clear. Three climbers started out for route opening through the Ice Fall. Crevasses were everywhere and seracs were breaking off on both sides. They had stop and start several times, trying to search for possible routes. After 3 hours of trying to open the route through the Ice Fall, the climbers reached a dead end, with a long rock wall to their left and a stream to their right. They had to turn back from 4645m, failing to find any possible route upward, which was truly heartbreaking for all of us.

Lalana peak is a tough climb, with multiple crevasses all along, requiring a long programme for route finding and rope fixing, and a large quantity of equipment. We descended back to Base Camp, determined to plan another expedition to this majestic peak and repeat the feat of that first formidable team of women.

- Indranil Kumar

Trans Himachal 2018

Himachal Pradesh Himalaya

Peter Van Geit gives a fascinating photo-illustrative account of his explorations in the remote regions of Himachal Pradesh. He and a team-mate trekked across 40 high altitude Passes.



A 75 days/1500 kms alpine-style journey across 40 high altitude passes in Spiti, Pangi, Chamba, Kinnaur, Shimla and Kangra districts of Himachal and Zaskar during summer 2018. Minimalist, self-supported, partly running and mostly solo exploration of many lesser known passes, many only used by shepherds including Chobia, Chaini, Kugti, Pratap Jot, Thamsar, Kaliheni, Lar La, Padang La and Buran to name a few. Jumping districts and valleys across the Pir Panjal, Dhauladhar and Baspur ranges traversing 1500km through picturesque valleys.

Several weeks went into planning the route, analyzing maps including OSM (Open Street Maps), SOI (Survey of India), Google Earth, Olizane and various reference blogs. Credit goes to Sathya Narayanan who inspired me through his solo trekking explorations and wonderful blog before he went missing last August and my close friend Maniraj who identified many trails. Navigation (and photography) was done with my OnePlus 6 mobile and offline OpenTopoMaps. A total elevation gain of 2+ lakh meters was achieved, with 7 passes above 5000 meters and 21 passes above 4000 meters. Being an ultra runner and minimalist (carried only 6 kg luggage), most of the pass crossings were done in just 1–2 days after initial acclimatization, covering 30–40 kms every day, traveling on HPRTC buses in between sections. The journey took us through colourful alpine meadows, high altitude desert, vast glaciers, wild stream crossings, huge moraines, steep landslide-prone valley slopes, a few technical climbs and wilderness navigation near a few unused trails.

We camped overnight in tents but many times stayed in shelters with shepherds and mountain tribes, and in many welcoming homes at remote, hospitable villages. Food was kept basic / minimal with no cooking to reduce weight. No technical gears were carried except for a pair of hiking poles. The journey was one of stunning natural beauty, hospitality beyond words and overwhelming vastness of remote out-of-this-world landscapes. We indulged in lip smacking local cuisine, encountered hikers and wildlife in the remotest corners of the Himalayas, listened to beautiful music on local instruments. More details on the passes, route, preparation, photos and videos of my journey can be found at ultrajourneys.org



Traversing beautiful alpine meadows dotted with pink and yellow flowers in the remote Saichu Valley in Pangri beyond the last village of Tuan. These higher altitude meadows of Saichu are grazed by many herds of the shepherds who migrate each summer from Chamba valley through one of the many passes across the Pir Panjal range. Here on the way to explore an unknown jot (5260 m) trying to cross over from Saichu to Miyar valley.



Descending from the Kugti pass (5040m) with a shepherd and his dog, guiding his 500 sheep into the beautiful cloud laden Chamba valley below.

Kugti is one of the several passes across the Pir Panjal range used by shepherds for their annual migration to graze the high altitude meadows.

Here we are crossing over from Rapay village along the Chenab river in Lahaul to the picturesque Kugti village in Bharmour, Chamba.

The Kugti pass requires traversing of moraines and landslide prone slopes on either side of the pass.



Bright red alpine flowers in the high altitude meadows (4200 m) of the Miyar valley, while descending the Pratap Jot pass (5100 m) onto the moraines of the Kang La glacier. Pratap Jot is one of the several passes across the Pir Panjal range separating the Miyar and Saichu valleys.

Around 10 shepherds and their 3000+ sheep graze the beautiful meadows of Saichu valley every year crossing one of these passes. The 25 kms long Kang La glacier seen here, connects Lahual/Pangi with Zaskar, Ladakh. Walking across this vast moraines landscape of huge boulders and rocks on top of melting ice is quite challenging.

Your best friends in the mountains – the Gaddis!

Here preparing hot chai, fluffy rotis and yummy aloo gravy for two starved (and half frozen) travellers, after an icy crossing of the Rupin pass with heavy snowfall and haze.

The shepherds leave home at the start of summer in May and cross several high altitude passes to graze their large herds of 300–600 sheep and goats in the remotest corners of the Himalayas returning only 6 months later in Sept–Oct.



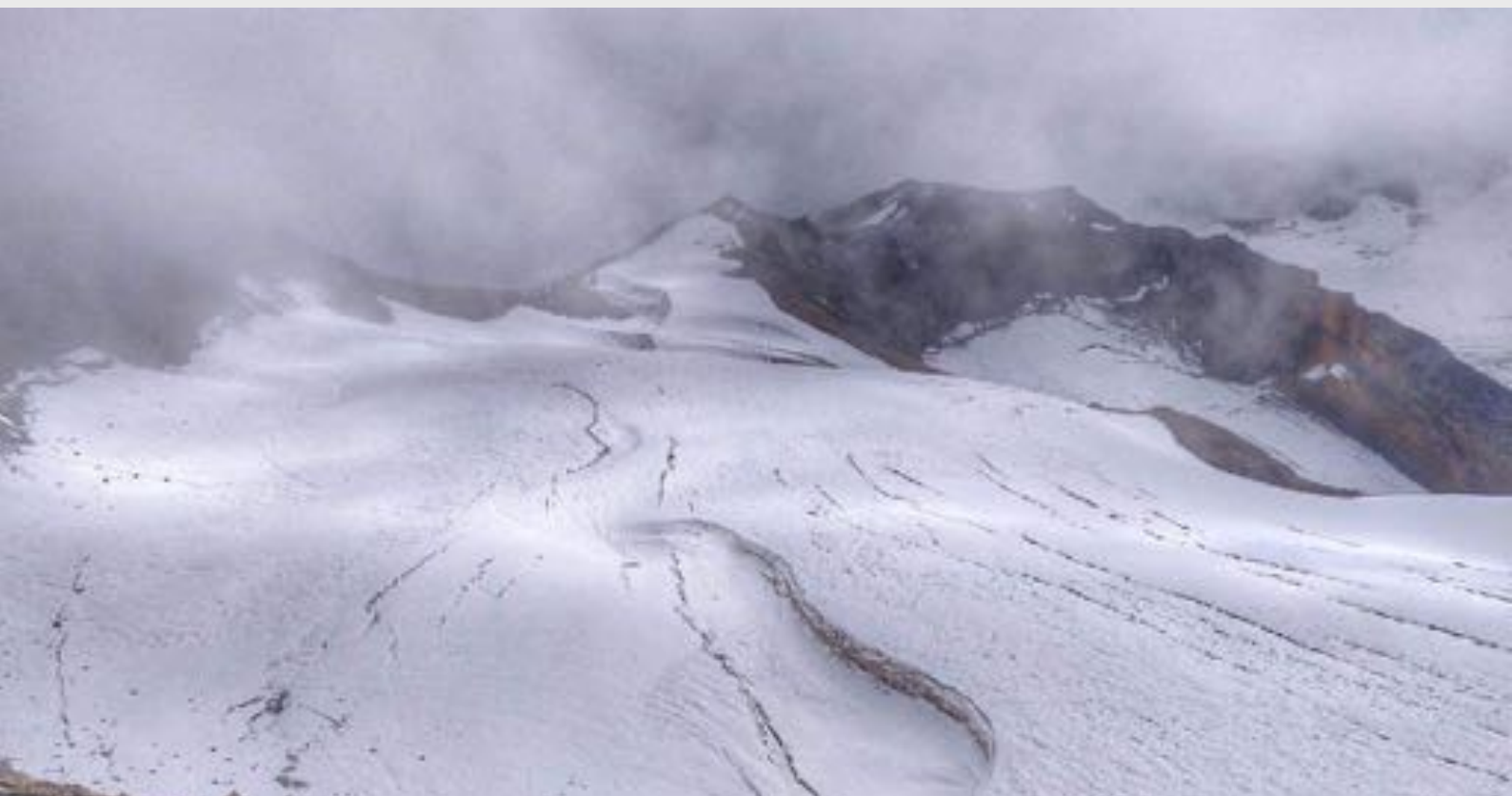
Every few weeks they descend to the nearest village to resupply rice, atta and other food items. They use home woven blankets and clothing to stay warm in their temporary shelters in the alpine meadows between 3000 to 4000 meters altitude. The warmest hospitality can be found in the most remote corners of our planet.



A heavily crevassed glacier as seen from the top of the Chobia pass (4966 m), the shepherd gateway across the Pir Panjal range separating the valleys of Lahaul/Pangi and Chamba.

As per the shepherds, the Chobia pass is the 2nd most treacherous pass (after Kalicho) to cross the Pir Panjal range leaving around 20 out of 500 sheep death during the annual crossing of this pass. From the Pangi side at Arat village along the Chenab river, one has to traverse steep landslide prone valley slopes, a vast section of moraines and negotiate deep crevasses in the glacier (following a trail of sheep poop) before ascending a final steep rock to reach the narrow pass.

On the Chamba side on the way to Seri Kao village all bridges were washed away during flash floods in Aug 2018 requiring scaling steep trail-less slopes on one side of the valley unable to cross the forceful stream currents.



Fresh snow on top of the glacier near the Pin Parbati pass (5300 m) in September 2018, first crossed in 1884 by Sir Louis Dane in search for an alternate route to the Spiti valley. The pass connects the fertile and lush green Parbati valley on the Kullu side with the barren high altitude desert of Spiti near Mud village. At the Parbati valley side, one encounters many shepherds and hikers on the way to the Mantalai lake and one can indulge in the scenic hot springs of Kheerganga. On the Pin valley side the eye gets treated to the mesmerising colours of the valley slopes of the Spiti rock desert.



Tso Mesik, one of the many ghost towns one encounters along the remote Tsarap river valley while hiking from the Gata loops (Manali–Leh highway) in Lahaul towards Phuktal gumpa in Zaskar, Ladakh. What appears to be once thriving settlements with beautifully constructed homes, surrounded by fertile farming fields have been abandoned for many years. Residents seem to have left in a hurry leaving everything behind.

Was survival of the harsh life in this barren high altitude desert too tough, did a natural calamity (2014 floods?) force them to leave, did the comforts of the city life tempt them to migrate or did their life lines (water streams) dry up due to global warming and melting glaciers?



An Ibex skull on the Lar La pass (4670m) deep inside the Zaskarian mountains in Ladakh on the way from Phuktal to Zangla.

The entire journey involves crossing two other passes including Rotang La (4900 m) and Padang La (5170 m). On the way one passes through Shade village, one of the most remote settlements in Zaskar, being 2 days away from the nearest road head. Between Lar La and Padang La I encountered yak herders grazing remote alpine meadows in this barren desert, producing 100 liters of milk from as many domesticated yaks every day, producing butter and cheese.

The same is transported using donkeys, horses and yaks to Shade village to survive 6 months total isolation during winter. All animals are carefully kept in enclosures at night safe from nocturnal attacks by the illusive snow leopard.



Menthosa peak, at 6443 m, the 2nd highest peak in Lahaul and Spiti, as seen from an unknown pass (5300 m) while crossing over the Pir Panjal range from Saichu to Miyar valley in Pangi. Menthosa is situated in the Urgos Nallah, a tributary of the exceptionally beautiful Miyar Nallah.

Here, climbing up steeply from the beautiful alpine meadows of the Saichu Nallah, beyond the last settlement of Tuan, across vast stretches of moraines towards Great Himalayan Range to enter Miyar valley.



One of the most intense experiences during my journey. While descending from the Chobia pass, the most dangerous in the 40 crossed.

I got trapped in a sudden dense fog whiteout in the late afternoon at 4100 meters and lost the trail used by shepherds.

Further descent was impossible, being blocked by steep rock faces on all sides. Having lost my tent the previous day in the beautiful Miyar valley, I spent that night wrapped up in a small tarpaulin sheet, braving the cold rains, while trying not to slide down the inclined slope.

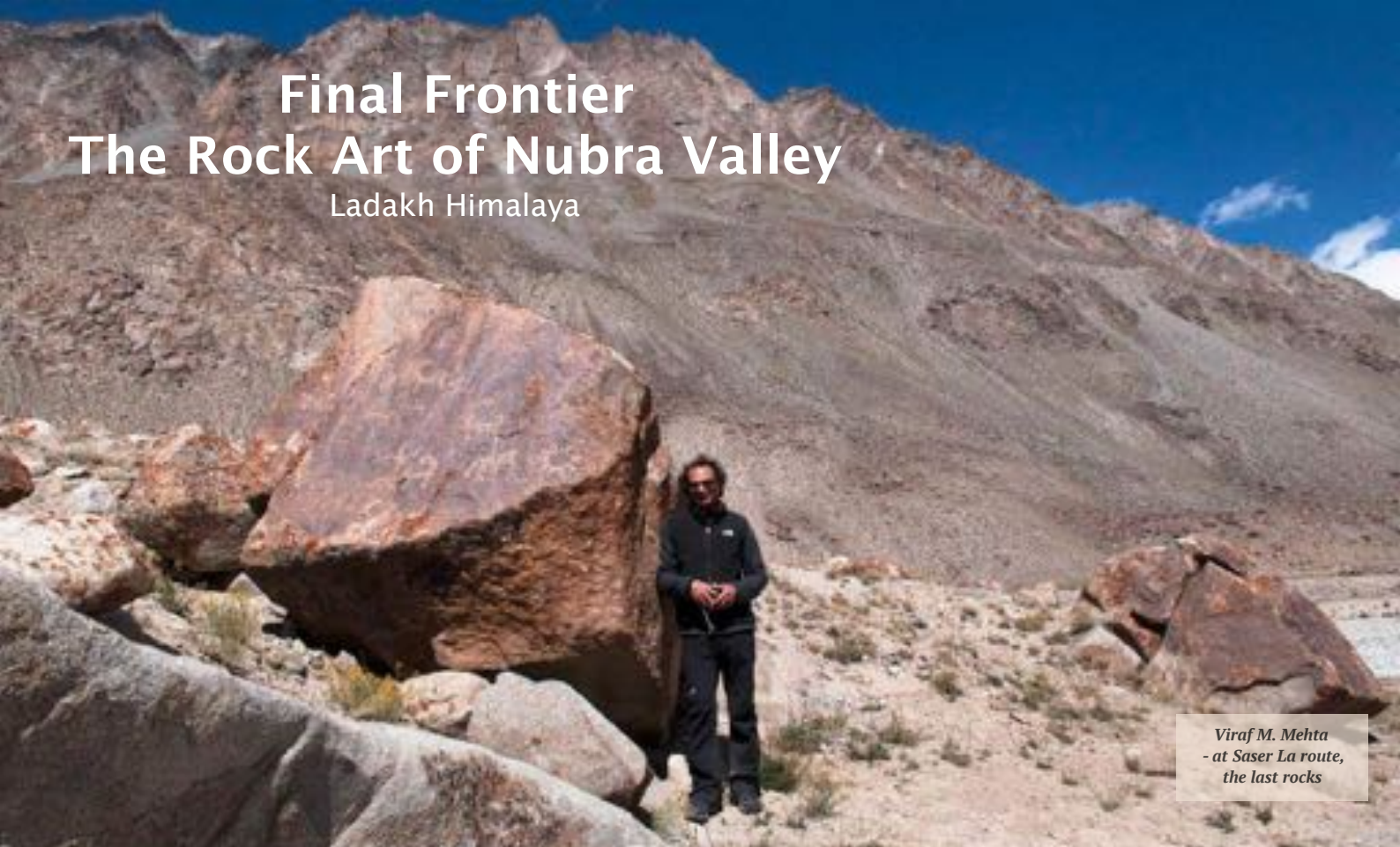
Next morning, the sunshine cleared up the fog and I was treated to a stunning view of the green Chamba valley below. An hour later, and 500 meters lower, I was enjoying a hot cup of chai and aloo rotis in the first shepherd shelter on my way out.

–Peter Van Geit

Final Frontier

The Rock Art of Nubra Valley

Ladakh Himalaya



*Viraf M. Mehta
- at Saser La route,
the last rocks*

Viraf Mehta is a social anthropologist whose early schooling in Darjeeling led to a life-long passion for the mountains that has taken him to several Himalayan regions, especially the Trans-Himalayan ones. Over the past two decades he has made over 40 visits to almost all corners of Ladakh to explore, document and conserve its ancient rock art heritage. He publishes articles and gives talks on the subject to varied audiences. Viraf is based in Gurgaon and works as an independent consultant on corporate social responsibility and human rights.

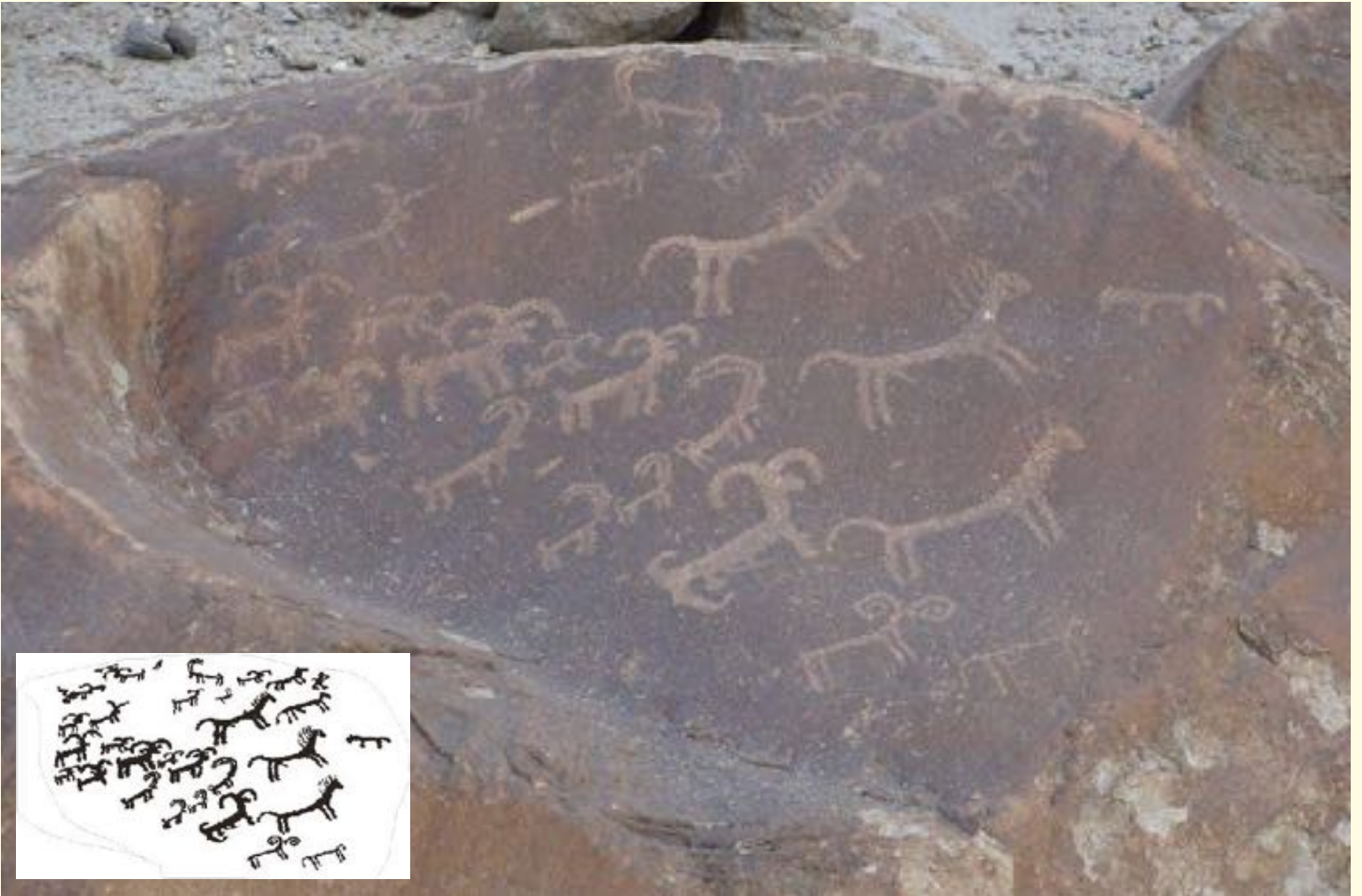
The Nubra (L'Dumra) Valley lies North of the Ladakh range, sharing borders with Pakistan (Baltistan) and China (W. Tibet) to the East. The Valley is drained by the Shayok River, and the Nubra or Siachen river is a major tributary, and which is an extension of the infamous Siachen Glacier, the world's longest glacier—and highest battle-zone. Although the geopolitics of the region continue to keep key areas of the Nubra valley out of bounds for domestic and foreign tourists, the Turtuk-Takshi-Thang area bordering Pakistan, was opened up to tourists in 2010, and we remain hopeful that areas beyond Panamik, and other valleys are opened-up for tourists in the not too distant future.

Given its strategic location, it is not surprising that the Nubra valley is repository of some of Ladakh's most significant prehistoric archaeological and rock art (petroglyphs) heritage that reflect a wide span of time from perhaps prior to the metal age to more recent historic times, and including the ancient trade and religious routes that passed through Nubra, particularly those that went across the Saser La and Karakoram Pass, en route to Yarkand Kashgar and Khotan. Recent researches by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have demonstrated that human activity along this route dates back to 10,000 years BP.

Whilst rock art of both, the prehistoric and historic period of Ladakh has been described over a century ago by Moravian missionaries, the number of known rock art sites has dramatically increased from less than 50 at Ladakh's re-opening to tourists in the mid—1970s, to over 400 at the time of writing. This has been possibly through the dedicated efforts by a small group of Ladakhi and other Indian and foreign researchers over the past two decades. There are approximately 25–30 known rock art sites in the Nubra region, from the upper Nubra river to the lower Shayok river as it exits Ladakh and flows into the Baltistan area of PoK. This presentation focuses on a selection of rock art found north of Panamik along both banks of the Nubra River and along the Saser la route, and covers the following primary locations: Khimi – on the (true) right bank of the Nubra river, Sasoma and the road to Saser La.



The village of Sasoma lies along the left bank of the Nubra River some 15 km north of Panamik and its famed hot springs. Beyond Sasoma are the last inhabited villages of Changlung and Warshi after which one reaches the snout of the Siachen Glacier Military Base Camp. The rock art at Sasoma is found on the weathered brown cliffs and boulders that lie at the base of the ancient winding route that leads to the Saser La (5450m) and beyond to the Karakoram Pass, the gateway to Sinkiang and Central Asian trade routes.



The weathered cliff walls bear artistic representations of a herd of Blue Sheep and Ibex with maned horses. Inset: a sketch depicting the etched images.



The approximately 40 km of seasonally motorable road to Saser La from Sasoma begins in a series of dramatic loops that merges with a more ancient and direct route at a point that affords majestic views of the Nubra river valley below. A few kilometers ahead, along the edges of a narrow gorge through which a powerful stream flows, is an ancient camping site with numerous boulders and rock shelters that have numerous petroglyphs, revealing a wide span of human activity. The image above is of undeciphered geometric shapes on a weathered boulder at the turn-off to the modern day road to Saser La.



Travelling further towards the Saser La one encounters the vast and windswept camping ground of Skyampoche and spectacular views of the glacier leading to huge massif of Mamostong Kangri. A few kilometres ahead at over 4300m, are two large rocks upon which petroglyphs are still visible despite their antiquity and their exposure to brutal weather conditions. These finds are significant when one notes that they are in the vicinity of the oldest known evidence of human activity, reliably dated to ten thousand years ago. The image above shows a horse-rider on the weathered and damaged surface of a large boulder along the ancient trade route.



Natural rock formations provided travellers with shelter from the harsh environment. Petroglyphs carved within the rock shelter provide evidence of the handiwork of ancient and modern travellers.



Two petroglyph-bearing rocks at 4313m record the last images found till date along the road to the Saser La. The rocks bear images of a variety of animals being hunted by humans armed with bow and arrow.

Planning an Expedition in the Indian Himalaya

A Familiarisation for Foreign Climbers & Expeditions

The Indian Himalaya offer some of the finest mountaineering in the world. A combination of spectacular peaks, magnificent and varied terrain, excellent public transport, unrivalled and rich tapestry of culture and history, and the presence of an astounding biodiversity, some of them extremely rare – including almost 10% of the entire plant species in the World, make them a focus for mountaineers, trekkers and explorers throughout the world.



**CB 13 & 14
Spiti, Himachal Himalaya**

Broadly the Indian Himalaya consists of Arunachal, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal, Jammu & Kashmir and Eastern Karakoram.

Though there are no 8000 m peaks in India, except the Kangchenjunga, there are several peaks above 7000 m and, what is absolutely amazing, is that some of them are still unclimbed.

Another large number of highly challenging peaks between 6000 m to 7000 m are still virgin. When climbing in Indian Himalaya, mountaineers have plenty of scope for exploration and to claim a First Ascent.

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation, as the regulatory and promotional body for climbing in the Indian Himalaya, has been offering attractive and ongoing schemes to mountaineers, in an initiative to provide exciting climbing opportunities to climbers of all levels, helping them achieve personal goals and realise aspirations.

How to Book your Peak with the IMF

A foreign expedition team wanting to climb a peak or peaks in India, can apply to IMF on the prescribed application form, which can be downloaded on IMF website at <https://www.indmount.org/IMF/expeapp> (along with the fees) minimum 90 days prior to the planned expedition. IMF accepts applications for provisional booking of peaks up to three years in advance. These applications may be made online through the IMF website or through Tour Operators listed with the IMF.

As soon as a proposal is received from the expedition team, the IMF books the peak(s) provisionally, subject to the availability on first-come first-serve basis and informs the party accordingly.

The Step by Step guide to applying for an expedition, as well as the Regulations for Foreign expeditions, are available for help and information on the IMF website, at <https://www.indmount.org/IMF/expeapp>.

For more information and in case of any queries, write to vinodchauhan@indmount.org with a copy to helpdesk@indmount.org or webadmin@indmount.org.



Fast Track Permits and Select Featured Peaks

The Himalayan range in India runs along the International border areas, resulting in Government restrictions on climbing expeditions to peaks in certain sensitive regions. The areas and peaks not featured in this list, are listed as “Open Peaks” and mountaineers only need to apply to the IMF and book the peak for an expedition.

About 113 peaks, ranging from 7000 m to 5000 m and lower, in the Indian Himalaya are listed as Open Peaks and are available for Fast Track Permits by the IMF, through the online application process.



Fast track permits to peaks located in Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir can take as little as one week to be granted, while a permit to climb a peak in Uttarakhand may take almost a month.

The complete list of peaks open to climbing in the Indian Himalaya can be accessed at this link: <https://www.indmount.org/IMF/getPeaks?type=op>. Highlighted below are three magnificent peaks featured on this list, providing exciting climbing opportunities.

Nanda Ghunti (6390 m), Garhwal Himalaya, Uttarakhand



Location: Outer rim of Nanda Devi Sanctuary, Chamoli District, Uttarakhand. Skyline appears between Pindar and Alaknanda Valleys.

Accessibility: Dehradun to Sital by road, then trek.

Basecamp: Homkund

Difficulty: Moderate to Major (Mountaineering Expedition).

Best time to climb: Post monsoon

Summit Latitude: 30.34833

Summit Longitude: 79.71833

Climbing History:

Nanda Ghunti (meaning the Veil of Goddess Nanda Devi) was first surveyed in 1907 by T.G Longstaff. Then, in 1931, the peak was surveyed again by the legendary Eric Shipton from the west ridge. The first serious attempt to reach Nanda Ghunti peak was made by the British mountaineers B.R. Goodfellow and J. Buzzard. The first ascent of the mountain was made by Andre Roch and Rene Ditteret in 1947 via the east ridge.

Mountain Information:

P L Wood described Nanda Ghunti in 1945 thus – “On a clear day you can see Nanda Ghunti from Ranikhet just to the left of Trisul, 52 miles away. It is the most prominent peak on the western rim of the Nanda Devi Trisul group and looks rather like a cathedral with its long ridge running east and west and its 'tower' at the western end.”

The North Ridge of Nanda Ghunti is a long strenuous approach from Homkund over Ronti Saddle, with a big cornice on its North side. It is a steep start (50 degree) but otherwise comparatively easy to climb. The south ridge has some steep and narrow gullies that offer a direct opportunity for a summit bid, following a curving couloir between two pinnacles (50 degree – 55 degree angles) to gain upper slopes, which can be best done under the moonlight early in the season when the gullies are snow-filled. Nanda Ghunti, though shorter in height to Trishul, it makes a full-blown expedition.

Pinnacle / Lingsarmo Peak (6955 m), Ladakh Himalaya

Location: Third highest peak in Nun–Kun Massif, at the head of Shafat glacier, Zaskar range.

Accessibility: By road from Srinagar to Kargil, then via Kargil Zaskar road to Shafat Village.

Basecamp: Gulmotongas

Difficulty: Moderate to Major

Best time to climb: June–July till September

Summit Latitude: 34 00 16 N

Summit Longitude: 76 04 50 E



Climbing History:

Early explorations of the massif included a visit in 1898 and three visits by Arthur Neve, in 1902, 1904, and 1910. In 1903, Dutch mountaineer Dr. H. Sillem investigated the massif and discovered the high plateau between the peaks. In 1906, the Pinnacle Peak, was first ascended by a noted explorer couple Fanny Bullock Workman and her husband William Hunter Workman.

Mountain Information:

The historic first ascent by the Workmans had been via the South East ridge. The 2010 all-woman expedition to Lingsarmo (Kate Harris, Rebecca Haspel and Alison Criscitiello) had reached Kun base camp and entered the Shafat glacier making Camp 1 (5490 m) just under Rabbit Rock. They had climbed the Swiss face, bivouacking part way up, and fixing six ropes on the steep section. Above the face Camp 2 was established at 6130 m. After traversing the plateau north, Camp 3 (6270 m) was placed closer to the high peaks. Thereafter the team reached the Kun – Lingsarmo col and followed the South West ridge of Lingsarmo toward the summit. Where the crest steepened, they made a rising traverse across the south flank, reaching the top.

Mulkila IV / M4 (6517 m), Lahaul, Himachal Himalaya



Location: At the head of Milang glacier, surrounded by Chandra and Bhaga rivers.

Accessibility: Manali to Darcha by road, then trek

Basecamp: Milang Glacier

Difficulty: Tough, technical peak

Best time to climb: June to mid-October

Summit Latitude: 32 33 00 N

Summit Longitude: 77 25 00 E

Climbing History:

Mulkila was first climbed in September 1939, as part of an Austro–British expedition by Fritz Kolb, Ludwig Krenk and Robey Johnson. There have been very few ascents of The Silver God Mountain, including Royal Air Force and Indian Air Force expedition led by Wing Commander N.W. Ridley, who climbed Mulkila IV in 1979. In 1972, Tony Smythe got to within 400ft of the summit via the face between the two ridges (South west face).

Mountain Information:

The mountain is considered technically quite challenging, with rock climbing in brittle rock in the summit area. The main bulk of Mulkila rises between two limbs, with a formidable northern facade. All approaches to the mountain have been via the southern glacier branch. Camps I and II are established at 5000 m and 5800 m. There are two visible ridges to the summit, both presenting formidable challenges, being composed of steep, loose rock and gendarmes.

Virgin Peaks in the Indian Himalaya: Select Featured Unclimbed Peaks

There are some truly exciting opportunities to claim a First Ascent in the Indian Himalaya, which is unexpected in this day and age when almost every nook and corner of this planet has been accessed, explored and mapped. This could be due to sheer remoteness, political obstructions or simple ignorance.

The list of unclimbed Virgin peaks, with many of them above 7000 m, can be accessed on the IMF website on this link: <https://www.indmount.org/IMF/getPeaks?type=vp>. Some of the peaks from this list are highlighted below:

Apsarasas II (7239 m), East Karakoram, Ladakh Himalaya

Location: On the border between Xinjiang, China and the Siachen Glacier region. There are at least three main summits of near-equal height, usually labeled I to III from west to east over a distance of 5 kms.

Accessibility: By road from Leh across Khardung La, through Panamik and Warshi villages, then trek.

Best time to climb: June to September

Summit Latitude: 35 31 00 N

Summit Longitude: 77 15 00 E

Information: The Apsarasas peaks were named by Grant Peterkin of Bullock Workman Expedition in 1911–12. Apsarasas I (7245 m) was first climbed in 1976. In 1988, an Indian army team climbed the Apsaras I peak. Apsaras II and Apsaras III are unclimbed virgin peaks.



Tughmo Zarpo (7017 m), East Karakoram, Ladakh Himalaya



Location: Saser group, East Karakoram.

Accessibility: By road from Leh to Darbuk, trek onwards beyond Shyok village.

Best time to climb: Mid-July to mid-September

Summit Latitude: 34 53 00 N

Summit Longitude: 77 48 00 E

Peak 7080 (7080 m), Sikkim Himalaya

Location: North of Pauhunri mountain, Indo-China border, N. Sikkim

Accessibility: From Gangtok to Zero Point Yumthang Valley.

Best time to climb: September – early October

Summit Latitude: 27 57 00 N

Summit Longitude: 88 51 00 E



IMF Mountain Film Festival 3rd Edition

9th - 10th February, 2019 | IMF Campus | New Delhi

When Adrenalin Met Art

The IMF Mountain Film Festival (IMFMFF) has evolved over the last three years, as a great opportunity for the Adventure community in India to see a number of short adventure films, all originating from India. Through this festival the IMF showcases the amazing adventure opportunities across India and also offers adventure film makers a platform to share their story, as a competitive event bringing the best adventure films shot in India, especially the Indian Himalaya.

The 3rd edition of the Festival was held at the IMF campus in New Delhi, on 9th and 10th February, 2019. The films exhibited covered a number of adventure disciplines including mountaineering, kayaking, mountain biking, ice climbing, snowboarding, trekking, bouldering and rock climbing. Also in the list were movies on the Environment and Mountain stories. The films had been shot across India at various popular adventure destinations including Kumaon, Garhwal, Himachal, Zaskar, Gulmarg, Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, the Western Ghats and Kerala.



35 short films were selected for the competition and screening.

13 of the selected films won Awards in various categories. The Grand Prize and Best Mountaineering Film went to Papsura, with a cash prize of Rs. 50,000/-.

Apart from the main categories, two Jury Special Prizes and two People Choice Awards were given out.

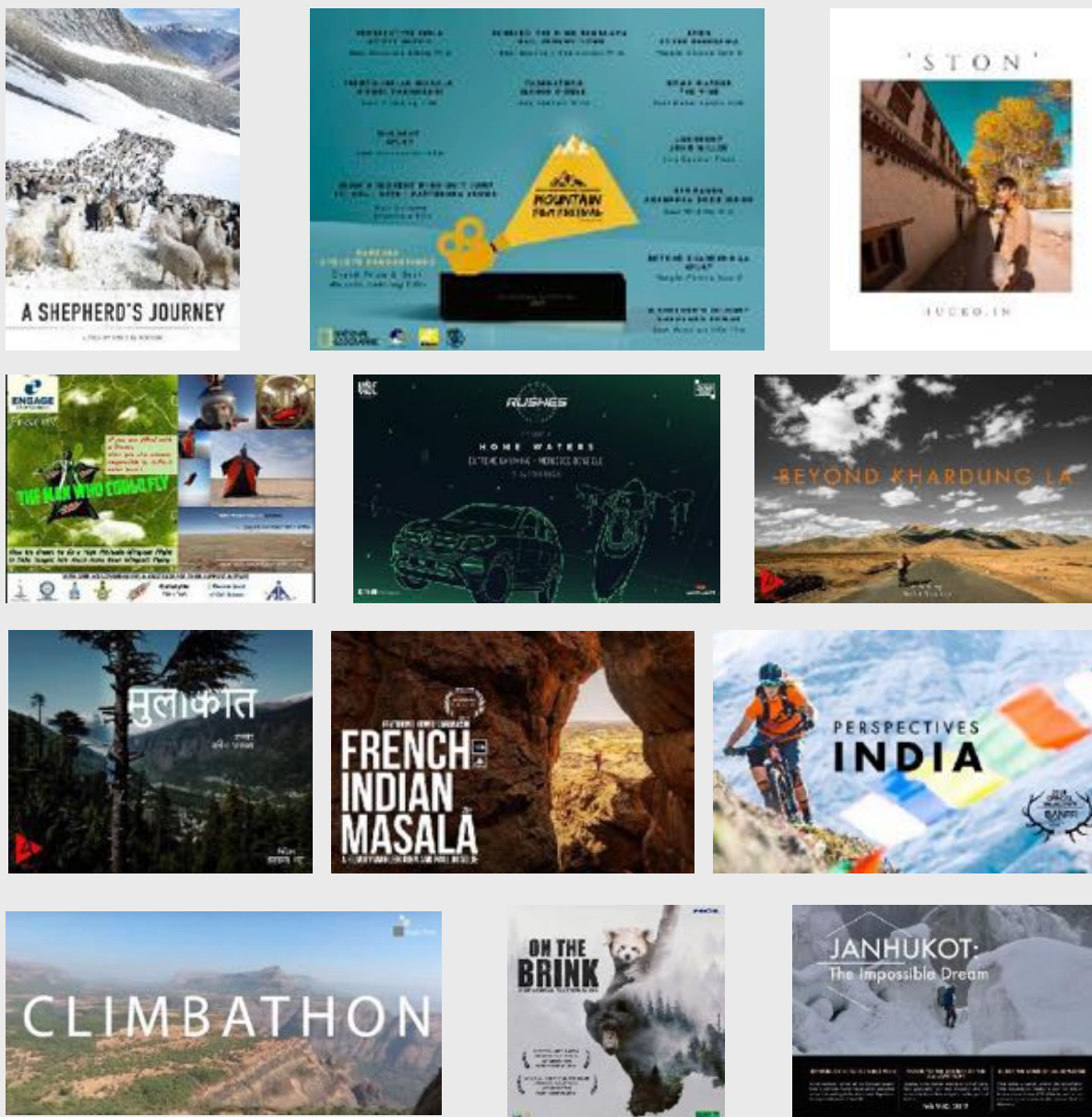


This film depicts a duo taking on the Himalayas-Papsura peak by ascending a new route in Mount Dhaulagiri. The film is a challenging and gripping story that manages to depict the treacherous, unforgiving and the sublime of emotions that go into a climb. All of this is beautifully set against a backdrop of majestic views and for this, Papsura is awarded the Best Mountain Film and Grand Prize of the festival with a cash reward of Rs.50,000.



Each year running across the Himalayas requires a sufficient amount of skill and fitness. To attempt 50 days of running and traverse 500km in the short duration of 75 days really is taking it over the most well and proven stride. Running the High Himalayas is a truly inspiring film that is a must-watch for all those who are interested in running. For this, it is awarded the Best Mountain Film and Grand Prize of the festival with a cash reward of Rs.50,000.





IMF Announces Mountain Film Festival all-India Tour



Select award winning films and other notable films will be part of the India Tour of IMFMFF 2019. The movies will be made available in a 2 hour capsule to various organisations to be screened all across India. This opportunity will ensure that adventure lovers across India would be able to view the festival movies. Details of the screening schedule will be uploaded on the IMFMFF Facebook page and on the IMF website: www.indmount.org.

Organisations / clubs / institutions interested in hosting a Screening in their respective cities can write in at mountainfilmfestival@indmount.org.



24th National Sport Climbing Championship, Bengaluru



The 24rd edition of the National Sports Climbing Championship was held at Bengaluru, in association with GETHNAA, Government of Karnataka, from 27th to 29th January 2019. About 120 of the country's best sport climbers vied for top honours in the Lead, Speed and Bouldering categories. The winners were as follows:

	Lead	Speed	Bouldering
Men	Adarsh Singh	N K Pema Bhutia	Bharat Pereira
Women	Pratiksha Arun	Shivpreet Pannu	Pratiksha Arun
Junior (Boys)	Maibam Chingkheinganba	Maibam Chingkheinganba	Sahil Khan
Junior (Girls)	Anisha Varma	Anisha Varma	Jayanti Gadamssetty
Sub-junior (Boys)	Sachin Saroj	Sachin Saroj	Akshay Bhawe
Sub-Junior (Girls)	Lakshmi Mathangi	Lakshmi Mathangi	Nirmayee Neve

3rd IMF All India Bouldering & Speed Climbing Championship 2019, New Delhi



The 3rd edition of the IMF All India Speed and Bouldering Championship was conducted at the IMF campus, New Delhi from 20th to 21st April 2019, hosted by the IMF North Zone Committee. Over 200 Sport Climbers vied for top honours under 12 categories. The winners were as follows:

	Bouldering	Speed
Men	Maibam Chingkheinganba	N K Pema Bhutia
Women	Pratiksha Arun	Shivpreet Pannu
Junior (Boys)	Aman Varma	Ajaydeep S Charak
Junior (Girls)	Anisha Varma	Anisha Varma
Sub-junior (B)	Yash Sharma	Suraj S Thakur
Sub-Junior (G)	Diksha Bodke	Tanwi Agarwal

IMF All India Sport Climbing Competition 2019 (3rd Lead & 4th Bouldering), HMI Darjeeling

The IMF All India Sport Climbing Championship (3rd Lead and 4th Bouldering) was conducted at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling from 21st to 23rd June 2019. The competition was organised by the IMF East Zone Committee, and sponsored by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Govt. Of India. 218 Sport Climbers vied for top honours. The winners were:

	Bouldering	Lead
Men	Adarsh Singh	Adarsh Singh
Women	Prateeksha Arun	Shivani Charak
Junior (Boys)	Arun Deep Singh	Aman Verma
Junior (Girls)	Anisha Varma	Anisha Varma
Sub-junior (B)	Thanglalmom Thomsong	Rahul Drupa Singh
Sub-Junior (G)	Arshpreet Kaur	Lakshmi Mathangi



IMF conducts India's first ever Risk Management Meet

The IMF Risk Management Unit organised the first ever Meet on Risk Management on 11th February 2019, at the IMF Campus, New Delhi, in a pro-active initiative to build awareness on the rising number of accidents resulting from mountaineering, high altitude trekking and allied sports.

The conference was attended by several members of the adventure community. Various aspects of Risk Management were discussed as well as Case Studies of some recent mishaps. Key speakers included K. Krishnan Kutty, Vaibhav Kala, Sarabjit Singh Wallia, Prateek Gupta, Jiten Mehra and Maninder Kohli.



IMF has launched an Appeal for Action through the Risk Management Social Newsletter, requesting the adventure community in India to share information and reports on adventure-related Accidents and casualties, in order to help build a repository of data, which would be analysed and help build Advisories and Guidelines.

Any information may be shared with Dr. Hari Mohan at nharimohan@gmail.com or sent on WhatsApp to him at [+91-9810310203](tel:+919810310203).

The next Risk Management Meet will be organised by the IMF in February 2020.

Wilderness Advanced First Aid (WAFA) course scheduled for August 2019

The IMF approved WAFA course is regularly conducted by the Hanifi Centre, which conducts WFA, WAFA, WFR and CPR courses in India with the support of and in collaboration with Aerie Backcountry Medicine, Montana, U.S.A.

The course content for each of these courses are regularly updated by Aerie under the umbrella of the Wilderness Medicine Society (that sets standards in the US), in collaboration and consultation with NOLS and other providers of wilderness medicine training in the US to stay abreast of the latest research in this field. The curriculum is evidence based, and vetted on a regular basis. Aerie instructors (USA) and Aerie-India instructors are all outdoor professionals, and have been in this field for more than two decades.

The details of the next WAFA course are:

Venue: **IMF Campus, New Delhi**

Course Dates: **1st to 4th August 2019**

Course fee: **Rs. 9000/-**

Online booking on: <https://imf.ccavenue.com/>

IMF approved certification valid for **2 years** will be issued for the course. All participants get the Wilderness Medicine manual certifications accredited by Wilderness Medicine Society (WMS) and American Heart Association (AHA).

IMF plans to conduct 4 simultaneous Expeditions in the Everest Massif area, in 2020

The IMF is planning to conduct a World Record expedition in the Everest Massif, in 2020. Four climbing teams will undertake simultaneous expeditions to Everest (8848 m), Lhotse (8516 m), Nuptse (7861 m) and Pumori (7161 m) in a first of its kind multi-team expedition ever, to be undertaken under the aegis of Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports.



The Selection Camps for Everest Massif Expedition 2020, are already underway, being conducted at the prestigious Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttarkashi, and the Jawahar Institute of Mountaineering, Pahalgam).

94 trained mountaineers from across the country are undergoing rigorous training and selection programme out of which a total of 40–45 mountaineers will be selected for the next phase of selection, which will be a Pre Everest Expedition to 7000 m peak in the post-monsoon period.

Clean Himalaya Campaign: Swachhta Bharat Pakhwada

The IMF is organizing a “**Clean Himalaya Campaign**”, as part of the Ministry of Youth Affairs’ initiative for the **Swachhta Bharat Pakhwada**, from 1st to 15th Aug 2019. Five cleaning expeditions, in major high altitude trekking routes in the 5 Himalayan States of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, will be organized.

Each expedition team will comprise of 05 experienced mountaineers from IMF and 10 volunteers from Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), who will not only physically clean the region but also **create awareness about waste management, sanitation and other environment related issues**. The IMF and NYKS members will be selected from the region where cleaning is proposed to be conducted and will report to the District Headquarters or the starting point of the cleaning campaign by 31st July 2019.

Regular updates from the expedition team in terms of videos and photos will be uploaded on social media to generate awareness about the campaign. The IMF Facebook page can be visited and followed here: <https://www.facebook.com/indmount.org/>

New routes opened and Permit validity increased in Ladakh

With the objective of giving fillip to the tourism sector and enhancing the economic activity in the “Land of High Passes”, the government has opened up more tourists/trekking routes in the Ladakh region.

Tourists will now be allowed to travel the Merak – Lema Bend axis, Chushul – Kartsangla – Mahe, Durbuk – Shahikul – Tharuk – Sato Kargyam – Parma – Erath – Chusul and Loma – Hanley, Korzok – Nurbo – Sumdo – Parangla – Kazaand and Agyam – Shayok – Durbuk.



Trekkers will be able to choose the trails of Phyang – Dokla – HunderDok – Hunder, Basgo – Ney – HunderDok – Hunder, Temisgam – Largyap – Panchathang – Skuru, and Saspol – Saspochey – Rakurala – Skuru.

Also the government has increased the validity of permit system for tourist visiting Ladakh region to 15 days from the previous limit of 7 days.

For credits and information: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/govt-opens-up-new-routes-for-tourists-in-ladakh/articleshow/67150498.cms?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=TOI&utm_content=om-bm&fbclid=IwAR0113idMkOJkAT0uk-JaiQQOCzdnJDPSikJKBMnF_QMkXNIPT7RXRbWCxs&from=mdr

Sikkim to host the World's highest Mountain Biking Race



Sikkim is all set to host the highest mountain biking race in the world, between 26th and 29th of June.

The race, called the Epic 17k, is being organized in collaboration with the North District Administration of Sikkim. While during the first edition in 2018 the participants were locals only, this year riders are coming from different parts of India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

The stretch would be of 330-kilometre with four stages. Covering this distance would take four days, beginning from Mangan to Lachung on the first day. On the second day, the riders will compete between Lachung and Yumesamdong, and then back to Lachung. Lachung to Thangu awaits on the third day, and Thangu to Gurudongmar Lake will be covered on the final day of the race. The winner of the race will win prize money of Rs 2,50,000/-.

For credits and information: <https://www.thebetterindia.com/143102/epic-17000-mountain-biking-race-sikkim/>

All-weather road from Manali to Ladakh to be opened soon

Ladakh, one of the most popular tourist destinations in Kashmir, will now be accessible in all weather conditions via all-weather road connectivity from Manali in Himachal Pradesh.

The region will be accessible by a double-lane motorable road from Manali, through the Zaskar area of Kargil. BRO's Project Vijayak has built this road network by cutting through tough mountains, making it the third axis after Srinagar-Leh and Manali via Leh routes connecting Ladakh to the rest of the country. The Lahaul Valley has been widened by BRO, using high-end machinery.



Next, the Darcha-Padum link will be improved and widened further by next summer, when work on the roads will resume again.

For credits and information: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/things-to-do/ladakh-to-soon-get-all-weather-road-from-manali/as66845692.cms>

Sikkim's Longest Tunnel Inaugurated



In a significant development last year, the Government of Sikkim inaugurated the 578-metre long Theng Tunnel, which is expected to improve connectivity in both North and East Sikkim, especially since the 2011 earthquake had extensively damaged the link road.

The tunnel bypasses a treacherous stretch of road between Gangtok and Chungthang, which frequently remains closed due to land slides and shooting boulders.

The tunnel will be able to handle vehicles travelling at 40 km/h and 500 vehicles per day, since it's located in a high seismic zone. It will be equipped with a fire fighting system, a control room, emergency exits and LED lights throughout!

For credits and information: <https://www.thebetterindia.com/144625/sikkim-longest-tunnel-theng-bro/>

The World's Highest Railway line planned between Delhi and Ladakh



Indian railways plans to connect New Delhi with Ladakh region through the world's highest railway line that will run along the India-China border. This railway line is expected to offset connectivity issues during bad weather.

This 465 kms rail line will have a highest road point of 5,360m and will include 74 tunnels, 124 major bridges and 396 minor bridges. The route will connect important locations between Bilsapur and Leh, towns of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

Once finished the line will halve the duration taken to cover the distance between Delhi and Leh, from currently 40 hours to 20 hours.

For credits and information: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/soon-worlds-highest-railway-line-will-take-you-to-ladakh-from-new-delhi-in-just-20-hours/articleshow/66360236.cms>

The world's largest Solar Plant planned for Ladakh

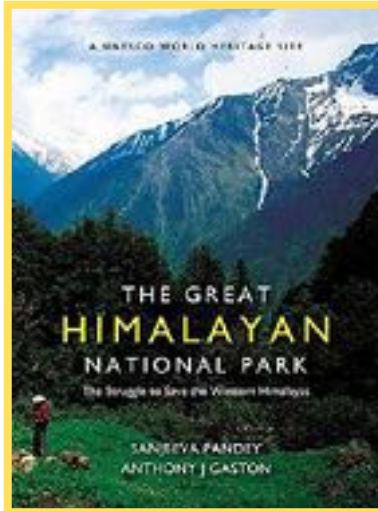
The Ladakh region will soon host the world's largest single-location Solar Photo Voltaic plant. The Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), is promoting 5,000 MW (mega watt) and 2,500 MW solar power projects in Ladakh and Kargil.

The power generated from the 5 GW PV plant in Leh district will be transmitted, via a 900 km line along the Leh-Manali road, for consumption by Kaithal district in the state of Haryana. It will be supplemented by another 2.5 GW solar project in the Kargil district.



The two plants will not only provide electricity to light up the plains and reduce dependence on diesel generators for a population that remains cut off for around half the year, they will also help keep the glaciers cool by saving 12,750 tonnes of carbon emissions. The two solar power projects in Ladakh and Kargil are slated to be completed by 2023.

For credits and information: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/ladakh-will-soon-be-home-to-worlds-largest-solar-plant/articleshow/67507422.cms>



The Great Himalayan National Park The Struggle to Save the Western Himalayas

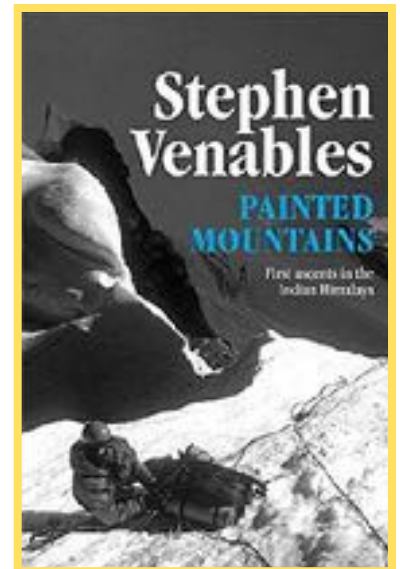
Sanjeeva Pandey and Tony Gaston, both highly acclaimed conservationists, co-author this historical and ecological overview of the Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, a UNESCO Heritage site, one of the most important protected areas in the Himalayas and one of the World's great biological realms. In addition to descriptions of the ecology, the book includes local history and culture, and a review of current development in the region. The book is a plea for continuing conservation of the rich legacy of Himalayan plants and animals in the area, the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of Western Himalayan biological diversity. An absolutely unmissable read!

by Sanjeeva Pandey & Anthony J. Gaston
Niyogi Books Pvt Ltd * December 2018 * Rs. 1,179.99/-

Painted Mountains First Ascents In The Indian Himalaya

Renowned British mountaineer Stephen Venables brings out his newest offering detailing his First Ascents in the Indian Himalaya. "Painted Mountain" details the stories of two very different expeditions: the first ascent of 6,000-metre Kishtwar-Shivling in the Indian Himalaya alongside Dick Renshaw, before embarking on an Indo-British Expedition led by Harish Kapadia to Rimo: the Painted Mountain. Venables details the highs and the lows, the dropped equipment, the toll of extreme conditions and the shining successes of reaching a summit – all while retaining a sense of humour and an unwavering enthusiasm for the thrill of the climb. Venables' get-up-and-go attitude makes this a delightful read.

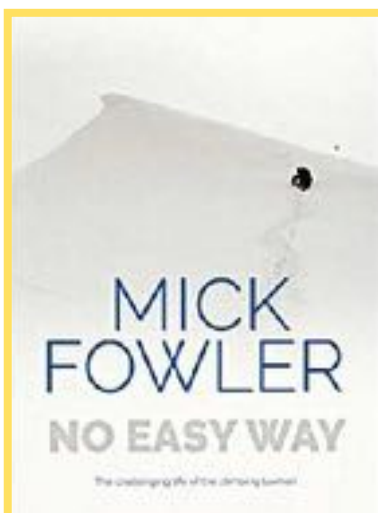
by Stephen Venables
Vertebrate Publishing * November 2018 * Rs. 1,024/-



No Easy Way The Challenging Life of a Climbing Taxman

In No Easy Way, his third volume of climbing memoirs following Vertical Pleasure and On Thin Ice, Mick Fowler recounts a series of expeditions to stunning mountains in China, India, Nepal and Tibet. Alongside partners including Paul Ramsden, Dave Turnbull, Andy Cave and Victor Saunders, he attempts striking, technically challenging unclimbed lines, with a number of ascents winning prestigious Piolets d'Or, the Oscars of the mountaineering world. A must read for adventure lovers!

by Mick Fowler
Vertebrate Publishing * October 2018 * Rs. 1,419/-



Apex

Indian Mountaineering Foundation

Newsletter * Volume 9 * July 2019



Image courtesy : Peter Van Geit

Dreaming beneath the milky way at the base of the Phirtse La pass (5560m), the highest of the 40 passes covered, which connects Tangze village in Zaskar with Sarchu in Lahaul, the Southern most section of the Zaskar valley, dotted with many beautiful small settlements like Testa, Kuru, Tangze, Kargyak, small fertile patches in the barren desert of Ladakh. On the other side one descends into the beautiful Lingthi valley encountering shepherds and wild yaks on the way to Sarchu where it joins the Tsarap river.

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