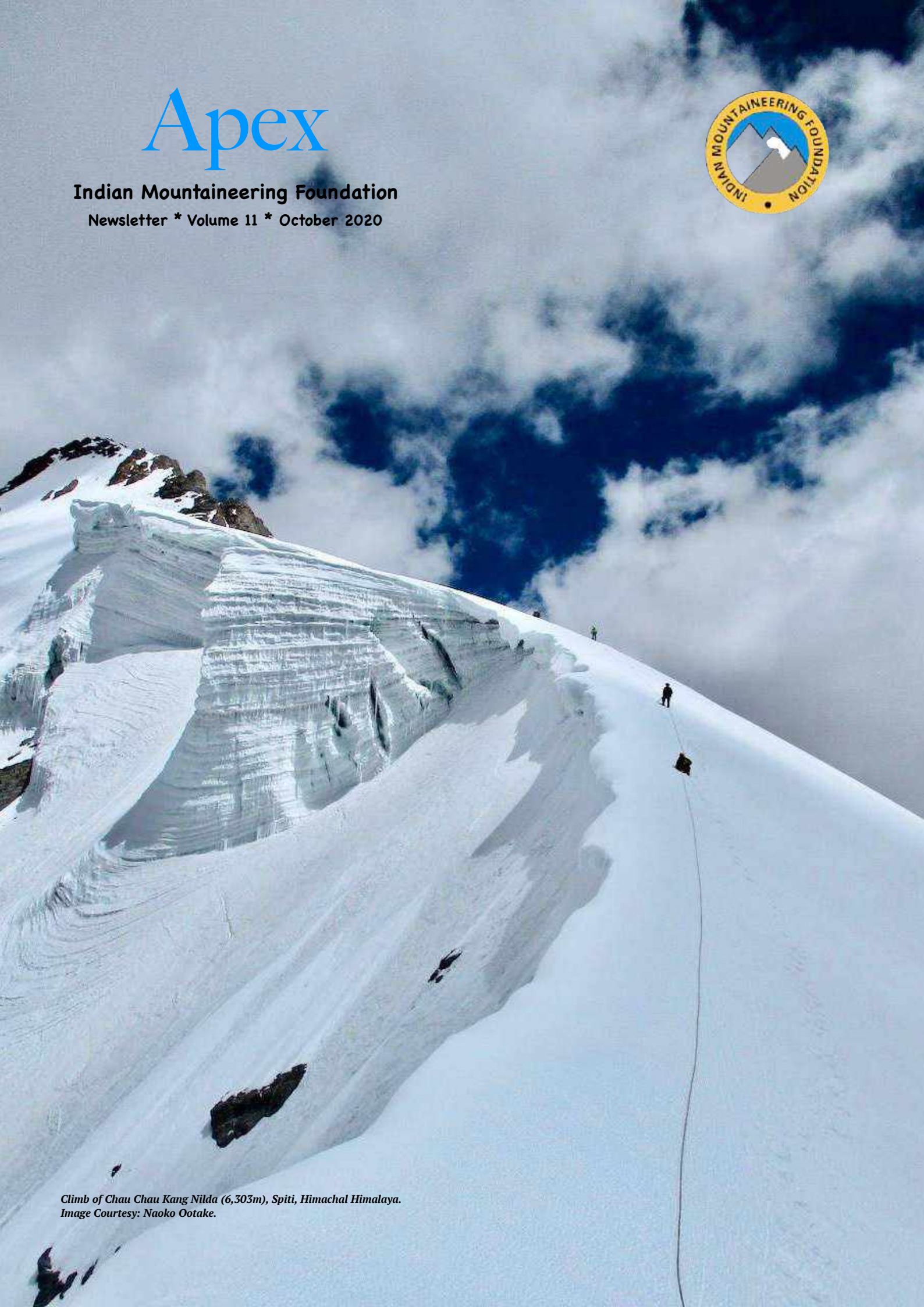


Apex

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*Climb of Chau Chau Kang Nilda (6,303m), Spiti, Himachal Himalaya.
Image Courtesy: Naoko Ootake.*



Early morning view of a nomadic settlement of Changpas in Changthang - Ladakh Himalaya.
Image Courtesy: Manish Lakhani



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IMF in the Times of COVID

Dear Reader,

As the Corona Virus pandemic continues, I take this opportunity to wish all our readers good health and well being !

These are unprecedented times for the human race world over, and India is no exception as we fight this deadly onslaught on humanity, For us to reach the new normal, we have to remain steadfast in our resolve to follow the laid down protocols scrupulously. 'Social distancing', ' Hand washing' and ' Mask wearing ' remain the key need of the hour.

For the entire adventure community, as also for the IMF, these are challenging times. At the IMF, we perforce have had to cancel almost all of our pre-planned events and postpone others, including our training activities, at least for the time being.

As things stand today, it is heartening to see an overall improvement in the situation from the earlier scenario to Unlock 4, where partial Outdoor adventure activities have resumed. While mountaineers and trekkers are raring to get to the mountains, and a few expeditions and treks have also recently been successfully completed, there is no room for complacency. In fact, with the sudden spurt in cases, patience and undue haste in the resumption of Outdoor activities needs to be deliberated upon with caution. For those venturing into the mountains, which too is a welcome sign, IMF Mountaineering and Mountain Outdoor Activities Advisory 2020, available on the IMF website, and respective Central and State Government advisories must be followed at all times.

In these testing times, our hearts also reach out to the widely affected Mountain Communities, who rely primarily on Adventure Tourism for their sustenance and survival. These hardy hill folk, living in remote areas, have lost their primary source of income and are most affected for lack of Tourism. IMF is deeply committed to ensuring their survivability through these challenging times !

The release of Volume 11 of Apex is a welcome change in the times of Covid-19, refocussing our attention to the Mountains. Apart from Climbing Expeditions, this volume covers interesting Photo Features, Treks and Explorations, Events in the Indian Himalaya and the IMF.

I would like to compliment the Editorial Board of Apex, for bringing out this concise Volume, so relevant to the times and, of course, delightfully rejuvenating !

Happy Reading !

Brigadier Ashok Abbey
President IMF

Shivling (6,543 m)

West Ridge
Uttarakhand Himalaya



View of Shivling main summit from the basecamp at Tapovan (4,463m)

In Sept.–Oct. 2019 Nihar Soley and Brijeshwar Singh attempted to climb the West ridge of Shivling in Alpine style. Nihar Soley recounts the climb, the challenges and the adverse weather conditions faced by the team. The western ridge was first climbed in 1974 by the Indo Tibetan Border Police team, led by Hukam Singh. Since then, at least ten other routes have been climbed on the peak.

Our team of 6, which included 2 climbers, a friend and 3 HAPs, started our trek from Gangotri and reached Tapovan, our basecamp, in 2 days with one night spent at the GMVN guest house in Bhojbasa. The trek was gradual and very beautiful alongside the newly formed stream of the river Ganges, through forest & hills, entering into barren land of Himalayas & ending at Tapovan (4,460m) with a striking view of Shivling.

We approached from the west ridge of Shivling, the route that was taken by the first successful Indian expedition, led by Hukam Singh back in 1974. The west ridge is the lowest-angle feature on the mountain, but still involves serious mixed climbing, and is overhung by a huge serac barrier. The ridge then leads to the col between the two summits and then onto the main summit.

Above the basecamp we hiked via the right lateral moraine of the Meru glacier towards south, keeping Shivling on the left. We kept hiking on the ridge alongside the Meru glacier, followed by a bouldery scramble on the gradual upslope to finally reach to a point at the base of the west slope of Shivling and its glacier. This was Camp 1 at 4,950m.

Brijeshwar and I moved above C-1, while the rest of the team remained stationed at C-1 for the rest of the climb. There was a steep climb above C-1, first on a rock face up to 300 meters and then through an ice gully for 200 meters. The other climbing route that goes from the glacier was risky as it was the fall line for all the loose rocks and ice. At the top, Camp 2 was located on the west ridge, at 5,500m.



Camp 1 at 4,950m.



Ascending towards Camp 3.



Approaching the serac.

Above Camp 2, we found several strands of old ropes leading the way up the ridge towards the summit. Overall there were 3 stages of the ridge and, from one stage to another, there was a near vertical face of 30–40 feet, followed by a moderate climb over rock slabs. Camp 3 was located at the top of third stage at 5,950m, on the ridge that was hardly 5 feet wide and at a 40° angle with exposure on either sides. We made an 'L' shaped section by digging ice on the ridge with an ice axe and could barely make some space for a tent. We had to set up more anchor points for tent and ourselves, to avoid getting blown off by the strong wind.

The next day the weather turned bad and we decided to wait it out. We made our summit attempt the day after as the weather cleared. The summit approach was guarded by an 80m serac barrier. The first section of the serac was broken and formed a structure of debris and ice. The top section of the serac, from where it was a straight 90° climb up, the route went through a massive crack on the main ice-wall.

When we reached above the serac, we faced severe weather conditions forcing us to turn back and descend. In the next couple days we descended in very poor weather facing multiple hazards like avalanche, whiteout and blizzards. We reached basecamp and thereafter made our return home.

Chau Chau Kang Nilda (6,303 m)

Spiti, Himachal Himalaya



Naoko Ootake gives the details of her team's climb of Chau Chau Kang Nilda (6,303m) in Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, by the Southwestern ridge. The peak was first climbed by J.O.M. Roberts in 1939, later by Indian teams in 1966 and 1981, and has since seen more ascents.

The Aizu Alpine Club team decided to climb Chau Chau Kang Nilda (6,303m) in Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, during August 2019. We left Japan in anticipation of visiting this region where the Tibetan Buddhist culture remains strong.

We reached Kaza in the Spiti area and acclimatised, and then decided to head for basecamp from Langza village. Villagers run a long waterway from the Chau Chau Kang Nilda to the village, for conveying valuable household and agricultural water. The water from the melting of the glaciers of Chau Chau Kang Nilda is crucial to their survival. Also, they consider Chau Chau Kang Nilda as a sacred mountain. We went straight to base camp. However, one member of our team fell ill, and decided to stay back in Kaza.

We arrived at the base camp at an altitude of 5,100m on the afternoon of August 27th. There was no snow around the base camp, and there were some shrubs. Blue sheep nearby sometimes grazed on these plants. Also, we found some fossils of sea creatures.

From August 29th, I started some climbing and went up to the location of our Advance Base Camp at 5,600m, to adapt to high altitude. On September 1, we (6 members and 5 HAPs) set up the Advance Base Camp on the southwestern ridge of Chau Chau Kang Nilda, where there were traces of past mountaineering camps. There is no clear trail, and it is hard to walk due to rocks. Water was mostly made by melting snow, though during the daytime we could use the thawed water which flowed on the nearby slope. Next day, all of us went back and forth up to around 6,000m for acclimatization and landing. There was a little snow on the slope.



**Base camp to ABC –
Rocks were unstable and difficult to climb.**



Advance Base Camp at 5,600m.



Ascending the slope near the summit, which was lower than the true summit.

On September 3, I left the ABC early at 3 o'clock, while it was still dark. The temperature was as low as -5°C . At dawn, the southwest and west edges merged. I wore a harness and a crampon at an altitude of 6,000m. At this point, one of the members felt unwell and went down to the ABC with two HAPs. The rest of us laid ropes on the snow slope towards the summit. The final rope leading to the summit was fixed for about 550m. The slope was about 50 degrees on average. As the temperature rose and the snow became softer, the crampons worked well and it was easy to walk.

At 12:40 PM, I finally reached the summit. It was a little lower than the true summit. We respected the beliefs of the people of Langza village and did not step on the true summit. At that time, there were many clouds and the surrounding mountains could not be seen clearly. We stayed at the summit for about 40 minutes and then rappelled down, descending back to ABC. We reached the camp by around 17:30 in the evening. It had been PM a long day.

Returning back to Kaza, we also carried all the garbage generated by us, taking care not to pollute the water source and surroundings.

Bhagirathi-II (6,512 m)

Garhwal Himalaya
Uttarakhand



The 3 Bhagirathi sisters as seen from Gaumukh (4,023m) - from left Bhagirathi II (6,512m) - north-west face seen here, Bhagirathi III (6454m), Bhagirathi I (6856m). River Bhagirathi seen emerging from Gaumukh in the foreground.

Subodh Chandola recounts his team's October 2019 ascent of Bhagirathi-II, the second highest peak in the Bhagirathi trio of peaks. Their challenges included bad weather, water scarcity and steep stretches with loose rocks. The first ascent was by Austrians Edi Ellmauthaler and Toni Messner in 1933. The first Indian success on this peak came in 20 October 1966.

The expedition to Mt. Bhagirathi-II was planned to prepare and select the SSB team for Mt. Everest & Mt. Lhotse Expedition 2020. The team consisted of 14 members (9 climbing and 5 Admin), including 4 Mahila (Lady) Constables in the climbing team.

We started our trek from Gangotri on 3rd October 2019, stopping at Bhojghasa (3,792m) for the night, and then moving onwards crossing the Gangotri glacier, reached the base camp at the beautiful alpine meadow of Nandanvan (4,503m), where the weather started turning bad. The water stream which flowed near Nandanvan had gone dry, which was a problem. The small nearby ponds lasted for a few days only. Thereafter we had to fetch water from Chaturangi Glacier which was quite far away.

After a day of settling down in the base camp and preparing loads for higher camps, the team members and HAPs proceeded towards Advance Base Camp (4,800m) for acclimatization as well as load ferry. There was no water source available at the ABC location, and so we decided to use the ABC only for dumping of loads for higher camps and not for camping. Next day again we ferried loads to ABC and also did a recce and load ferry to Camp 1 (5,332m), before returning to basecamp.

There was another day of load ferry to ABC and Camp 1. Next day, I along with the HAPs moved to occupy C-1, which is right at the base of Bhagirathi II and we managed to get a lovely view of our objective from here. The rest of the team stayed on at basecamp.



Load ferry from ABC (4,800m) to Camp 1 (5,332m), at the base of Bhagirathi II.



En route Camp 2 through moraine and a steep boulder covered with fresh snow.



**Camp 2 (5,900m).
The view from C-2 was stunning.**

For the next two days, we carried out load-ferry from Camp 1 to Camp 2 (5,900m), while the remaining climbing members ferried loads from Base camp to Camp I. In the beginning the route from C-1 to C-2 was through a moraine with fresh snow, but during the last stretch towards C-2 we had to negotiate a steep boulder which was covered with fresh snow, fixing about 100m of rope.

Camp 2 was to be our summit camp, and we moved to occupy it the next day under a bright sun. The view from C-2 was stunning and we could catch a glimpse of Bhagirathi-I, Bhagirathi-IV and Vasuki Parvat. Early next day, we proceeded for the route opening / rope fixing. We opened almost half of the route which was a mixed face of rock, loose rock, snow and ice, and returned back to C-2. Meanwhile, the other climbing members had occupied C-1. Two members of the team, however, felt unwell and stayed back at the base camp.

Early next morning we continued our rope fixing/route opening and fixed the rope very near to the North - East ridge of the summit. The other climbers ferried the last of the loads to C-2 that day and joined us at C-2 next day. We had decided to go for the summit push by midnight, so had an early dinner and went to sleep. At about 2130 hrs it began snowing, which worried us greatly.



Early morning summit push from Camp 2.



Fixing the last 100m of the rope towards summit on a stretch of snow and ice.



View from near the summit: Vasuki Parvat (6,792m) in the foreground & Satopanth (7,075m) to the right. Mukut Parbat (7,242m), Abi Gamin (7,355m), Kamet (7,756m) & Mana (7,272m) to the left, in the background.

Fortunately by the time we began our summit push, at midnight, it had stopped snowing and the weather quite good. The fresh snow and low temperature had held the loose stones together and so it was a lot easier for us to negotiate that stretch. At 0615 hrs we reached the point where we had finished our rope fixing work the day before. We fixed approximately 100m of the rope from this point on a stretch comprising of snow and ice.

We were on the top of the summit ridge of Bhagirathi-II at 0925 hrs on 15th October 2019. The panoramic view of the nearby peaks from the summit was majestic. In the east we could see Mukut Parbat, Kamet, Abi Gamin and Mana peaks. Satopanth, Vasuki Parvat, and Bhagirathi-I appeared to be very close by. Towards the south-west we could spot Shivaling and Meru while towards the west was Nandanvan, Gangotri Glacier, Gaumukh, Bhojbasa and Chirbasa.

Descending was a little risky and tough since the soft snow had melted due to rise in temperature and so the loose rocks that were bound together by the snow in the night were now free and it was quite slippery. Winding up C-2 and C-1, we reached base camp and then onwards to Gangotri.

- Subodh Chandola

Charang La, Kinner Kailash

Kinnaur, Himachal Himalaya



The venerated Kinner Kailash, 6050m, in Great Himalayan Range, Himachal Pradesh,

Great Himalayan Range: Kinner Kailash circumambulation

A unique route in the Tidong valley of remote Kinnaur region of Himachal Pradesh across the Great Himalayan Range (GHR), also venerated among locals as circumambulation of the Kinner Kailash peak (6,050m) over Charang La (5,266m), was undertaken in Alpine style by our 4 member team in early June 2013. The route also connects the two remotest villages of Kinnaur viz. Charang (3,600m) and Chitkul (3,450m) with each other. What looked to be promising weather in June, did offer us a window of exploration that lasted 5 days in this less explored high country. The axis of the Great Himalayan Range in south-easternmost outlier of Himachal Pradesh borders the Trans-Himalaya divide and is oriented N-S as it cuts across the narrow vale of Sutlej.

– Anshul Soni

Expedition leader: Anshul Soni.

Photos by: Anshul Soni, Himalayan Panoramic Studio, Himachal Pradesh India.



Charang La is at the head of Shurting Khad, flowing down the northern slopes of the Great Himalayan Range. Without any fair idea about the snow conditions and route, we embarked on an Alpine-style attempt to cross the pass. Moving above the isolated Charang village in the remote Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, we found ourselves guided by the cairn-led path which shepherds use. Remote and precipitous, the initial trail was fairly well marked till Lalanti campsite which lies on the lofted valley seen straight ahead.



Phawrarang (6,493m), where Rang means Mountain in local Kinnauri dialect, literally translates as the Mountain of Big Animals. The mountain feeds Tidong river from its north, east and west faces and can be attempted via Shurting Khad.



Grand view of Rangrik Rang (6,553m) named after the protector Bon deity of Charang village, Rangrik Tungma, first ascended by the 1994 Indo-British expedition, is the highest peak on the Kinner Kailash Range, a sub-range on the Great Himalayan massif.



Surveying Lalanti campsite (4,200m), a high ground of fair meadows, surrounded by a cirque of glacial fed streams. There's no trail here, and we walked hereafter on the left banks of the Shurting stream. We had to wade through multiple glacial fed streams, doubling both time and effort.



Shurting camp at Charang La base, with its lowest saddle straight ahead. Clouds started to loom over our head and a sleet shower filled our campsite for better half of the night. Soft snow would further challenge our already precarious steps next day.



A glacial stream crossed our route above the base camp during the last days crossing over Charang La. We started off early from base only to wade through an extremely precipitous route ahead. The altitude rose, so did the clouds and with it our passions.



During our last reconnoiter before the final push, an already loose scree further aggravated by fresh sleet meant that only on the least risky path did our destiny lay to the top. And there was no looking back from here.



Breaching the terra incognita, a patch of blue welcomed us at the top of Charang La (5,266m) on the southern outlier of Great Himalayan range, Himachal Pradesh.



Looking northwards from Charang La in the direction of our approach to the pass, we could see a storm in the offing. The route to Chitkul village (3,500m) lay ahead of us on the other side.



We continued onwards to Chitkul, another remote border village, eastwards to the Tibetan high plateau. A patch of clouds rushed in from the Uttarakhand side. This was the first and last crossing over the pass that year, as we barely missed the ravaging storm in south-western Himalaya with cloud bursts lasting multiple days in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Nepal, better known as 2013 North Indian floods.

– Anshul Soni

Chi Lupo : The Shertukpen Honey Hunters

Arunachal Himalaya

They dangle precariously off a thin ladder from the rocky face of the mountain while trying to gather as much as they can. And in the process, they also need to be careful of the honeybees that swarm in large numbers. This motley group of people is trying to revive an age-old tradition. They are the honey hunters of the Shertukpen community of Arunachal Pradesh in northeast India, collecting honey for the community and village.

Kezang D Thongdok, an enthusiastic independent film maker hailing from the beautiful Rupa valley in Arunachal Pradesh, belongs to this Shertukpen scheduled tribe. Honey hunting is an integral part of the custom and tradition of this community. Honey has been in use in the community since time immemorial as food and a delicacy. Honey is also valued for its medicinal properties. But this ancient tradition is slowly on the verge of extinction. Kezang brings this fascinating tradition of honey gathering by the “Chi Lupo” the Shertukpen Honey Hunters.



The Shertukpen community is located in the eastern fringes of the Himalayan ranges. A group of 12 villages in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh constitute the Shertukpen community. These hamlets are beautiful beyond words. Surrounded by the lofty ranges and green forests, you will find the green fields swaying to the crisp and unpolluted winds. Agriculture is their major livelihood. They mainly harvest maize and millets along with horticulture products like oranges, kiwi and apple.



“The younger generation is no longer interested in honey hunting”, laments the 80 years old Chumbi Megeji, one of the best honey hunters in his time. He has been honey hunting from a very young age and villagers come to him for his blessings and advice. Like most of the communities in Arunachal Pradesh, the Shertukpens revere nature as their mother, as the ultimate provider and nurturer. Cohabitation with nature is their way of life. These days honey hunting is a biennial event. The community goes for honey hunting once during October and November when the rhododendrons are in full bloom and again during the months of June and July.



A honey hunting expedition is an event of much excitement among the villagers. They get ready for the expedition for days. Only the best honey hunters are chosen and the leader of the hunting team is someone with a great deal of experience. The equipment needed for the expedition, consisting mainly of the basket, tongs and spatula for the collection of the honeycomb, is made indigenously by the villagers. The inside of the basket is made waterproof by indigenous rubber. After obtaining the blessings of the gods and forests, the honey hunters are now ready for the expedition.



The hunting team then begins the long arduous journey through the forest towards the mountain slopes. They pass through the dense jungle, cross brooks, streams and meadows, carrying the baskets and equipment on their backs. The landscape along the route is spectacular and with luck you can get a view of Mt. Gorichen (6,488m), called Sa-Nga Pho locally, the highest peak of the Panchakshiri range and the third highest in the North-Eastern Himalaya, considered sacred by the local Monpa tribe. Located in the Tawang district, Gorichen is a rock and ice peak, first climbed by an Indian Army expedition in 1966.



After reaching the base camp, they stop for the night and begin preparing the rope ladders or Jong La, as it is locally called, for climbing the hills to fetch honey from the top of the mountain the next day. Branches and wild vines are cut down. The vines are also used for making the framework of the ladder. The hunters plait the vines into a long, tight rope shaped in a helical way, cutting the stems into pieces to be used as the steps of the ladder. The footholds are then tied securely using knots made from the vines and to secure the steps from sliding. The ladder is made as long as the height of the mountain! Once the ladder is ready, it is time for singing and merrymaking.



They reach the mountain face next morning, fully covering themselves and also their face with a net to save themselves from the sting of the attacking honeybees. Then a small fire, 'Sangsing' the Holy Fire, is lit at the foot of the mountain causing a lot of smoke. The smoke slowly rises along the mountain and makes the honeybees move away from their hives, thus making way for the honey to be harvested. Meanwhile the leader of the hunting party along with a few members climbs up on the mountain. Once they are on top, they throw down a rope, and the hunters below tie the ladder to the rope to be pulled up. This ladder will then be thrown down and used by the leader to climb down on the mountain face to collect honey.



The leader climbs down the cliff. The basket, tongs and spatula are supplied to him from down by the others using a rope. He hangs on to the ladder like an acrobat, with one hand gripping tightly at the ladder, and hits the honeycomb with the tongs. He collects honey and the broken parts of the hive in the basket and prods at the comb with the spatula, collecting more honey into the basket, while the multitude of honeybees swarm and buzz around him.



After the honey is collected, they pour it in tin cans. With the honey, also come chunks of the hive and some ill-fated bees and larvae. The hunting goes on for the day, after which the hunters carry back their hunt in the village. The honey is further purified and stored. The honey is then shared among the villagers.



The honeybees are revered in the Shertukpen community, symbolising fertility and procreation. Thus honey bees and honey both form an intrinsic part of the customs and day-to-day activities of the Shertukpens. With the effort of a few responsible people from the community the tradition that was fast fading, is now being revived.

- Kezang D. Thongdok

The Changpas of Changthang

Ladakh Himalaya



Changpa nomads of Changthang – The Pashmina People

They are also known as Pashmina people. The Changpa nomads – with whom I've been traveling, and photographing their lifestyle for more than a decade and a half. They live in the Changthang region of Ladakh which is part of the Trans Himalayan range.

Spread along the eastern parts of Ladakh bordering Tibet are spectacular highlands of Changthang raising well above 14,000 feet. The region is known for its beautiful lakes trapped in the middle of mountains that reach out for the skies. The landscape is brown and barren and yet charming in its silence and loneliness. In this high-altitude desert, you can travel for hours without seeing one tree on the surface. But the scraps of grass that grow in parts of these landscapes, support a diverse variety of life that includes a large number of bird species and a few resilient mammals like Kiang – the Tibetan Wild Ass. Also thriving in these arid cold desert landscape, are a community of shepherds that have learnt to survive the extreme temperatures with a nearly self-sustained lifestyle. And the shepherds who live here are known as Changpa, people who live in the North.

There are only about 5,000 Changpa left, and many of the Changpa families now have a home set up in Leh, mostly inhabited by family elders and school-going children. A few of them are working as tourist guides or drivers, and some work at BRO projects. Yet, there are instances of a few Changpa returning to their roots to continue the shepherd life, preferring it to working for someone else in an urban setup. The wool from Pashmina goats fetches a premium and the economics of rearing them is generally deemed good, which can help preserve the Changpa way of life in the days to come despite the harsh and difficult environment that they live and work in. What follows here is a pictorial illustration of their life and environment.

July!

– Manish Lakhani

Manish Lakhani is a professional travel documentary and nature photographer. He is the brand ambassador of Sony camera system, SkyLum Software and official photographer for NiSi filters.



The Changpa nomads of Changthang rely on their animals for livelihood, nourishment and survival. Their Pashmina goats yield fine wool that sells at a premium and is used for producing Cashmere shawls. These goats feed on the nutritious high-altitude grass that produce valuable wool. The yaks yield butter, and the yak wool and skin for important insulation that protects them from the extreme cold winters. Life here is challenging, but living here for hundreds of years has taught them how to survive and flourish in these tough conditions.



The Changpa live in small settlements with about a score or more families together. They stay in these semi-permanent dwellings for a few months until the season's supply of grass and water remain available. With change in seasons, they migrate to another grassland, usually a few days' walks away. If situation is conducive, they return to the same settlement after a year's cycle. Once a migration is complete, the families settle into a place and a routine. The morning begins with bringing the goats out from the pen and herding them into the mountains where the grass is abundant. The herders spend the entire day walking in the mountains, directing the goats to places where the feed is good.



Just before dawn and the day's grazing, goats are milked in the pen. They are tied together tightly, facing each other for milking. The whole process of tying them and milking takes no more than fifteen to twenty minutes. It takes them to milk about fifty goats to fill a single bucket with milk. Even during summer months, the mornings are very cold and arrival of sun brings a very welcome warmth. The Changpa people continue to stay in these mountains even in winter months, when the temperatures can drop to -30°C or below.



Some locations of Changpa settlements can be very picturesque, flanked with snow peaks which are more than 6,000m tall. A few of these locations are fertile marshlands covered with a thin layer of grass and streams crisscrossing the landscapes. They are also remote, and can be hours away from nearest permanent settlement. Visiting them and staying with them meant pitching my own tents next to their dwellings, which allowed me to spend the days with them and interact with them closely to learn their way of life.



The traditional Changpa accommodation, called rebo, are tents made of yak hair. Weaving these tents is an art – it is slow and laborious work and can take months to complete. But once complete, they last long and are passed on from generation to generation. They are rarely put away as they get old. When any part of the rebo wears off and requires repair, a rectangular portion is cut off and a newly woven segment is stitched into the tent. The tents are woven with spaces large enough to let a small fly pass through, which means it allows plenty of sunlight and wind. Yet, surprisingly, the tents are unusually warm and cozy. When it rains, it just flows off the tent's surface and not a single drop enters inside. Yak hair is magic!



The Changpa people are Tibetan Buddhists by practice, evident from chortens (stupa) and prayer flags that you see all along the landscape, and most families are very devout. People often invite monks and nuns at home for religious ceremonies. The rituals are often very elaborate and last for hours. While some prayers are offered on specific events in a family such as birth and death, they are also conducted for longevity, health and prosperity of the house.



Historically, Changpa have depended very little on outside world and have evolved a lifestyle that sustains them with resources available in the highlands. Their primary diet was based on barley, which grows in lower regions of mountains. Unusual as it may sound, salt was available from the high-altitude lakes in the region, Lake Tso Kar used to produce necessary salt in old days and it used to trade with barley from lower valleys.



Every year, during the annual Korzok Gustor festival, Changpa families gather in remote villages, in beautiful alpine meadows, to celebrate, often dressed in their best and eager to meet their relatives spread across the landscape. The festival involves many celebrations, rituals including vigorous masked dances performed by the monks, known as Cham Dance, and equestrian competitions. The rider will ride his horse at great speed and try to hit the target in a ritualistic show of skill.



It's a spectacle watching the animals come down the mountains towards their settlement every day. They look like an endless flow, that may begin as early as 5pm and continue to arrive for next 2-3 hours until the daylight begins to fade. Often in a settlement, sections of land is allocated to families for grazing and follow a well worked plan on how the grasslands should be shared within the community to permit a sustainable use. Each flock has to be carefully managed by a shepherd, who watches over the flock carefully to ensure that the animals don't stray away. Animal that has strayed is often in danger from the predators, which can be feral dogs that often roam the region, wolves and occasionally the elusive snow-leopard.



Changpa have lived for hundreds of years in these lands, carving out a unique way of life required to survive in this harsh and arid region. Buddhism has a significant influence in the way of life of these people, which is evident from chortens (stupa) and prayer flags that you see all along the landscape. In today's connected world, a few Changpa have tried to find a life outside the region, working in the town of Leh or searching for other opportunities. Changpa children are now being schooled with boarding at a few locations and are also going to schools in Leh. Some of them may set up their life in faraway places when they grow up.

Planning an Expedition in the Indian Himalaya

A Familiarisation for Foreign Climbers & Expeditions

The Indian Himalaya are Calling : 5 reasons why you should listen

The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), extending over 2,500 kms between the Indus and Brahmaputra river systems, a geographical coverage of over 5.3 lakh sq kms, stands at a whopping 16.2% of India's total geographical area. The ranges include the **Greater Himalaya** or **Himadri**, **Lesser Himalaya** or **Himanchal**, **Outer Himalaya** or the **Shivaliks**, the **Trans-Himalaya** comprising of the **Eastern Karakoram** (a sub-group of Karakoram, comprising the **Siachen, Rimo and Saser Muztaghs**), **Ladakh** and **Zaskar** ranges, and the **Eastern Himalaya** or **Purvanchal** range.

These ranges extend almost uninterrupted throughout, covered by snow-clad peaks, glaciers of the higher Himalaya and dense forest cover of mid-Himalaya – a veritable smorgasbord of thrilling opportunities, calling out to adventure lovers with varying skill sets and interests.

And here are 5 reasons, out of a Million of them, why you should listen!

1. **More than 70% of the Himalaya lie within India**
2. **Sheer Variety of Climbing Options**
3. **Virgin Peaks and Unclimbed Routes**
4. **New Infrastructure and Better Connectivity**
5. **Fast Track Permit Process by the IMF**

The Indian Himalaya are an extraordinarily fascinating and unsurpassable amalgam of heart-stopping beauty, intensely thrilling adventure, rich culture and deep mystical experiences. And the IMF invites you to embark on the Exploration of a Lifetime!

To read the full article, please click on the link below:

<https://indmount.org/IMF/download?filePath=/imffs01/imfdocs/2020/newsSection/107/supportDoc.pdf>

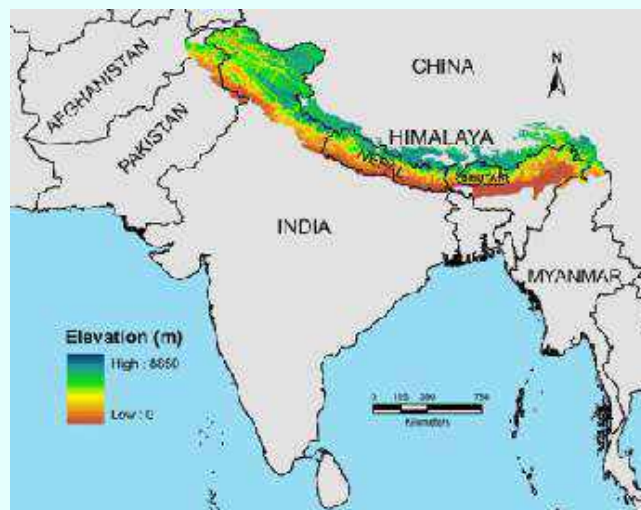
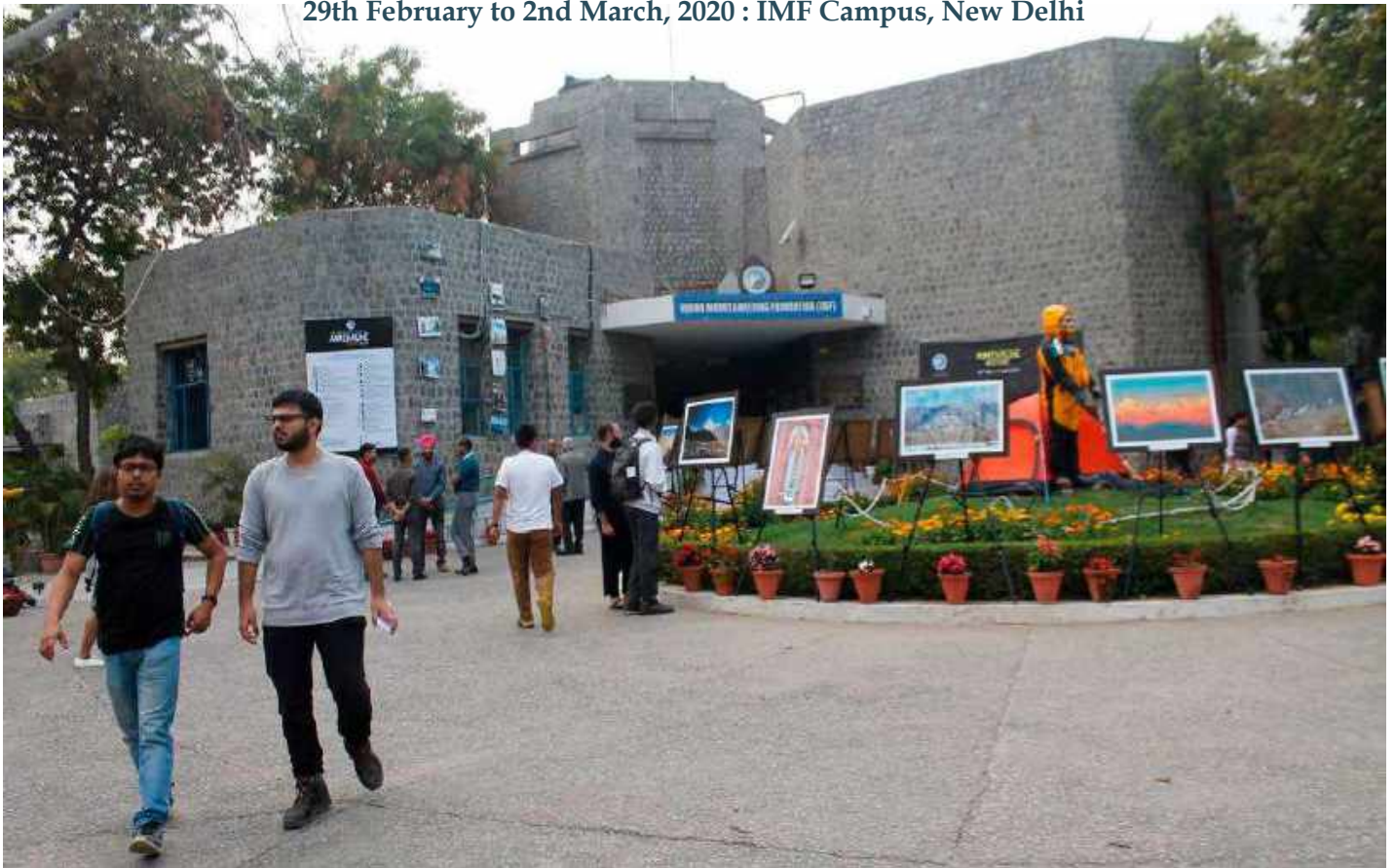


Image courtesy: [researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net)

4th IMF Mountain Film Festival

29th February to 2nd March, 2020 : IMF Campus, New Delhi



The 4th edition of the IMF Mountain Film Festival took place at the IMF campus in New Delhi, from 29th February to 2nd March 2020. It was inaugurated by Ms. Usha Sharma, Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Govt of India. Ms. Sharma felt that the films of the IMF Mountain Film Festival should be shown in every school across India in order to motivate the younger generation for mountaineering and allied adventure activities.

This year a total of 40 films were screened – 35 in the competitive category and 5 in the non competitive category. Most of the filmmakers were on hand at the festival to introduce their films and take questions. Close to 300 adventure enthusiasts came to the festival. The featured photographers this year at the Festival were Mr. Anup Sah and his son Mr. Pranjal Sah. Twenty of their best images were shown at the festival.

The 12 Winning Entries of the IMF Mountain Film Festival 2020 were as follows:

- Best Water Sports Film** : A Kayakers Solo Journey in India | Red Bull | 14 minutes
- Best Mountain Biking Film** : The Mysterious Roopkund Lake | Hans Ray | 26 minutes
- Best Mountain Sports Film** : Blutch | Nicholas Allot | 51 minutes
- Best Film – Exploration & Adventure** : Trans Himalaya 2019 | Peter Van Geit | 15 minutes
- Best Film – Mountain Environment** : Healing Himalaya | 4Play | 4 minutes
- Best Feature Length Mountain Film** : Piano to Zanskar | Michal Sulima | 88 minutes
- Best Film Extreme Mountain Sports** : Free Soul | Kopal Goyal | 4 minutes
- Best Film – Mountaineering** : Changabang and the Mirrors of Repetition | Jean Pierre Tuvron | 51 minutes
- Special Jury Mention** : Gyanmo – Queen of the Mountains | Gautam Pandey | 43 minutes
- People’s Choice Award** : The High Way | Hannah Price | 10 minutes
- Best Film – Mountain Wildlife** : The Junjuna’s Kingdom | Munmun Dhalaria | 10 minutes
- Best Film Climbing** : Samsara is Nirvana | 4Play | 24 minutes

IMF Online Initiatives

IMF Webinar Series

In an initiative to utilise online platforms in the wake of the worldwide pandemic, the IMF has launched the IMF Webinar Series on its YouTube channel. The ongoing webinar series showcases a series of illustrated presentations on the Indian Himalaya, highlighting diverse subjects such as mountaineering, exploration, mountain ecology, biodiversity, cultural ethos, livelihood issues, conservation efforts, mythology, books and films.



Eminent personalities who have participated in the series include Anindya Mukherjee, Stephen Alter, Anup Sah, Kirti Chavan, Dr. Arun Nayak, Prem Kumar Singh, Mahmood Ahmed Shah, Harish Kapadia, Sujoy Das, Rijul Gill, Ashutosh Mishra, Mick Fowler, Sankar Sridhar, Stephan Siegrist, Wing Commander Paramvir Singh, J. & Vrinda Ramanan, Munmun Dhalaria, Etosha Chatterjee, Sanjeeva Pandey and Prof. Tejvir Khurana.

About 24 webinars have been made live till date (Link [IMF YouTube Channel](#)).

Risk Management Webinar Series

The Risk Management Webinar Series presents illustrated presentations on incidents and accidents which have taken place while participating in mountaineering and various allied sports. The Series also covers medical related information delivered by experts as well as notable efforts in regard to rescue.



The objective is to reduce the number of incidents by sharing critical information and making it accessible to the outdoor community across India.

The Risk Management webinar series can be seen on this link: [IMF Risk Management Series](#).

Online Workshop Series

IMF strongly believes that building skill levels across multiple areas will be of benefit to the climbing community and also enhance safety, and the Online Workshop Series is an initiative to ensure the continuation of skill building during the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown conditions. Experts from various fields conduct the workshop courses on a range of technical subjects related to mountain climbing and exploration, which are recorded and later made available on the IMF YouTube channel (link: [IMF YouTube Channel](#)). A complete calendar of online courses has been planned by the IMF.



Registration

The workshops are free for participation, with limited slots available on first come first serve basis. Interested participants can register for Online Courses on the IMF website. Sign up at www.indmount.org, log in to your account and proceed to <https://indmount.org/IMF/courses> to register for available courses.



2nd IMF Risk Management Meet

3rd March, 2020 : IMF Campus, New Delhi

The 2nd edition of the IMF Risk Management Meet was held this year on 3rd March at the IMF Campus in New Delhi. The Meet is an ongoing initiative of the IMF, organised by the IMF Risk Management Unit with the objective of building awareness on managing risk in adventure sports and working towards drastically reducing accidents and deaths in the coming years.



The Risk Management Unit conducted a detailed review and analysis of accidents and deaths that have taken place in the Indian Himalaya during the period 2019 while doing trekking and mountaineering. Participants included various stakeholders from the industry, experts, adventure sportspersons and journalists.



A wide range of topics were presented by eminent speakers including: **Review of Accidents & Deaths during 2019 in the Indian Himalaya** by Dr. Hari Mohan, **Seven Sigma & Managing Risk in Adventure Operations** by Ajeet Bajaj, **Review of accidents taking place in Nepal for Indian community** by Prateek Gupta, **Review of accidents taking place in the paragliding industry** by Roshan Lal Thakur, **Review of accidents taking place while Rafting & Kayaking** by Akshay Kumar, **Nanda Devi East : the chronicle of a Tragic Accident**

by Wg Cdr Amit Chowdhury, **Choosing Participants for a Commercial trip** by Avilash Bisht, and, **Learning from Medical Camps in Ladakh** by Prateek Gupta.

A Special Edition newsletter on the 2nd Risk Management Meet was brought out and circulated among the outdoors community.



25th National Sport Climbing Championship

Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar, 6th - 10th January 2020



The 25th NSSC 2020 was organised by the IMF East Zone at the Sport Climbing Complex, Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar (Odisha) from 6th to 10th January 2020. A total of 129 athletes participated in six categories in Lead, Speed and Bouldering. Overall Championship was won by the **IMF Eastern Zone** after a long period of 25 years. The zone-wise medals tally is:

	EAST	WEST	SOUTH	NORTH	NORTHEAST	SERVICES
GOLD	8	4	4	3	1	0
SILVER	3	4	4	4	0	1
BRONZE	4	4	5	3	1	1
TOTAL MEDALS	15	12	13	10	2	2
POINTS	34	24	25	20	4	3

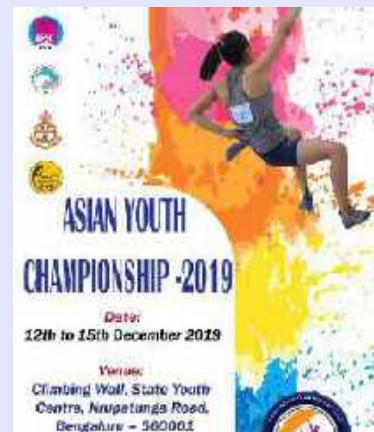
The category-wise Gold Medal winners:

Category	Lead	Speed	Bouldering
Sub Junior Girls	Lakshmi Mathangi	Vidula Abhale	Lakshmi Mathangi
Sub Junior Boys	Nikhil Abby Abraham	Arnav Prakash Khanzode	Rahul Vishwakarma
Junior Girls	Anisha Varma	Anisha Varma	Anisha Varma
Junior Boys	Aman Varma	Aman Varma	Aman Varma
Women	Shivani Charak	Sonali Pereira	Prateeksha Arun
Men	Suraj Singh	Maibam Chingkeiganba	Adarsh Singh

IFSC Climbing Asian Youth Championships

12th - 15th December 2019, GETHNAA, Bengaluru

The IFSC Climbing Asian Youth championship, organised by the International Federation of Sport Climbing and Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF), was hosted by the General Thimayya National Adventure Association (GETHNAA) at their campus in Bengaluru from December 11-15, 2019. This was the first time that the championship was held in India.



A total of 111 athletes from 12 Asian countries, including 28 Indian climbers, participated in the Lead, Speed and Bouldering categories, in Male and Female sections and 3 age groups. The event was inaugurated by Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj and Youth Empowerment and Sports Shri. K.S. Eshwarappa on 11th December 2019, followed by a dazzling cultural programme.



From left to right: Saniya Sheikh, Shivpreet Pannu, Shivani Charak and Anisha Verma



Japan stole the show by winning 31 medals in all. India bagged 4 medals in total, namely Shivpreet Pannu (Gold, Speed Junior Female), Anisha Verma (Silver, Speed Youth B Female), Shivani Charak (Bronze, Speed Junior Female) and Saniya Sheikh (Bronze, Speed Youth B Female). The complete country-wise medal tally is:

COUNTRY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
Japan	10	13	8	31
Iran	3	1	1	5
India	1	1	2	4
Kazakhstan	2	2	-	4
Korea	1	-	2	3
Kyrgyztan	1	-	-	1
China	-	1	-	1
Singapore	-	-	3	3
Philippines	-	-	1	1
Thailand	-	-	1	1



Atal Rohtang Tunnel inaugurated

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the strategically important Atal Rohtang Tunnel on 2nd October. The Border Roads Organisation had resumed work on the tunnel in May 2020 after being halted during the lockdown period due to COVID. It took around 10 years to finish the construction work of this tunnel.



With the completion of this tunnel, the distance between Manali and Keylong, en route Leh, will be reduced by a distance of 46 kilometres. The South Portal of Atal Tunnel is located 25 km from Manali at 3,060m, while the North Portal is located near village Teling, Sissu, in Lahaul Valley at 3,071m. Meanwhile, one steel super structure bridge is also under construction, about 100m in length across the Chandra river on the North Portal of the Rohtang Tunnel.

The strategic 9.02 km long, 10 metre wide, horse shoe shaped tunnel is going to be the longest highway tunnel in the world at above 10,000 feet. Four more tunnels across passes on the way to Leh have been proposed, passing through the Baralacha Pass, Lachung La and Tanq Lanqia, are further planned to connect directly to Leh.

For credits and information: <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/atal-tunnel-to-be-inaugurated-today-by-pm-modi-5-facts-about-engineering-marvel-11601689838516.html>

New Heli service begins in Uttarakhand



The first-ever helicopter facility from the Sahastradhara helipad in Dehradun to Gauchar and Chinyalisaur has been officially made operational. These chopper routes in Uttarakhand have been started under the government's initiative to boost connectivity to remote destinations in the Himalayan state.

The chopper services twice every day from Sahastradhara to Gauchar and Chinyalisaur, with incentives from the state government under the UDAN scheme to keep the tariffs reasonable.

The Sahastradhara – Gauchar – Chinyalisaur route will not only benefit local residents, but also give a big push to the tourism sector in Uttarakhand. These services will assist the Char Dham Yatra pilgrims, as Gauchar is located on the way towards Badrinath, and Chinyalisaur is situated on the route towards Gangotri in the Uttarkashi district.

For credits and information: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/destinations/heli-service-starts-from-doons-sahastradhara-to-gauchar-chinyalisaur-in-uttarakhand/as74065546.cms>

Tunnel & Road Projects in Kashmir

Works on all mega all-weather projects in Kashmir, including the Z-Morh tunnel and Zoji-La tunnel, are being undertaken on a war footing.

The 6.5 kms Z-Morh tunnel project between Gagangir and Sonamarg, which is part of a strategic project for ensuring round-the-year connectivity between Kashmir valley and Ladakh region, is likely to be completed by June 2021. The project includes a 6 kms approach road, two major bridges and one minor bridge.



Simultaneously work on the Zoji-La tunnel project connecting Baltal and Minamarg, which includes a 14.15 kms long tunnel, an 18 kms approach road between Z-Morh and Zoji-La tunnels, besides carriageway, two snow galleries, four major bridges and 18 avalanche-protection dams, has also been ongoing and is likely to be completed by June 2026. The construction of this tunnel is a major engineering challenge located as it is in very treacherous terrain.

For credits and information: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/strategic-z-morh-tunnel-in-kashmir-to-be-completed-by-jun-2021-official/articleshow/77066948.cms>

Bridges in Sikkim : status update



The remote regions of Sikkim will soon become easier to access with bridges under construction at various locations.

In the northern part of Sikkim, a two-lane steel structure, said to be the country's only arch-bridge, is under construction and scheduled for completion by March 2021. The bridge, located about 160 kms ahead of Siliguri (West Bengal) over the river Kanaka at Kayam Dzongu, boasts the longest span of 217 metres between its two piers.

The Border Roads Organisation has also completed construction of a 360 feet long bailey suspension bridge over the Teesta river in Munshithang near Chungthang town in Lachen valley. The roads approaching the bridge have also been constructed, and are now open to traffic.

For credits and information: <https://www.financialexpress.com/infrastructure/roadways/better-connectivity-in-sikkim-two-lane-steel-bridge-over-kanaka-river-likely-to-be-completed-by-march-2021/2026016/> and <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/bridge-constructed-teesta-river-north-sikkim-opened-traffic-1658190-2020-03-21>

Snow Leopard Conservation Centre to come up in Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand is set to open the country's first snow leopard conservation centre. The project aims at protection and propagation of the species in higher reaches of the hill state, a natural habitat of the elusive big cat, and will contribute towards research work, conservation efforts of the endangered species and also help create livelihood.

The centre will be built at the entry point of Gangotri National Park at Lanka, near Bhaironghati bridge above 2,800m, by the Uttarakhand forest department along with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of its six-year long project, SECURE Himalayas.

A number of snow leopards have been spotted in Uttarkashi and Pithoragarh districts although the actual figures are unknown. Based on several researches, it is concluded that Uttarakhand is home to 86 snow leopards at present.



For credits and information: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/travel-news/uttarakhand-to-develop-indias-first-snow-leopard-conservation-centre-six-city-forests-to-come-up-soon/as77349773.cms>

Spanish peak named after Uttarakhand IAS Officer

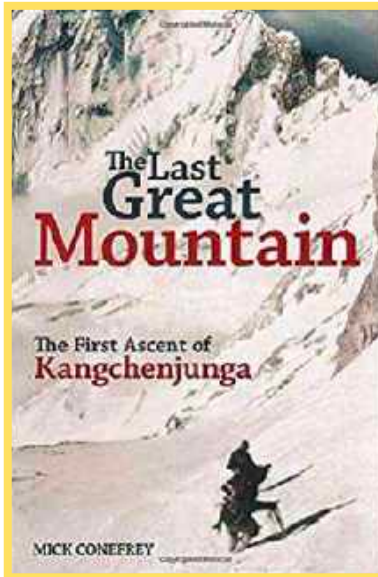


Juan Antonio Padilla, a Spanish mountaineer, recently climbed a virgin peak in his country and has decided to name it and its route after Uttarakhand-cadre IAS officer Ashish Chauhan as a gratitude for helping him while on an expedition.

Padilla and his team mates were in Gangotri region to climb Mount Satopanth (7,000m) in December 2018. The team had got stranded near Vasuki Tal in bad weather and Chauhan had helped in their rescue.

Padilla and his friend David Resino have successfully scaled a virgin peak situated near Avila city of Spain which is at the altitude of 2,950m and one of the toughest in the country. The top will be called "Magistrate's Point" and the road will be called "Via Ashish". It will be registered in climbing books of Gredos (Central Mountain System) Spain.

For credits and information: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/good-news/2020/aug/17/spanish-peak-named-after-uttarakhand-ias-officer-by-mountaineer-in-gratitude-2184634.html>



The Last Great Mountain
The First Ascent of Kangchenjunga

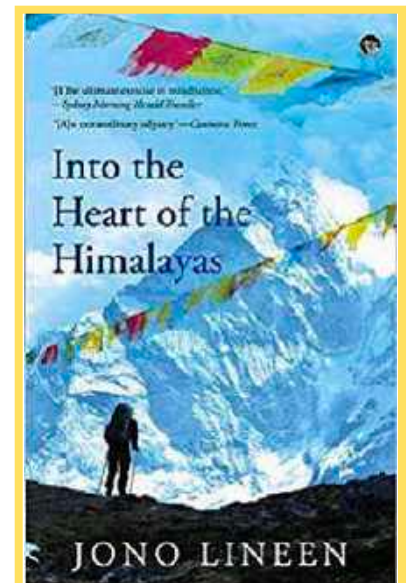
Award winning author and film maker Mick Conefrey presents the incredible and comprehensive climbing history of Kangchenjunga – the third highest but reputedly the hardest mountain in the world, leading up to the first ascent by Joe Brown and George Band, an astonishing achievement for a British team led by Everest veteran Charles Evans. Drawing on interviews, diaries and unpublished accounts, Conefrey begins The Last Great Mountain: The First Ascent of Kangchenjunga in 1905 with the first, disastrous attempt on the mountain by a team led by Aleister Crowley, explores the three dramatic German expeditions of the late 1920s and brings it all to a climax 50 years later with the first ascent. The Last Great Mountain is the final instalment of Mick Conefrey's acclaimed high altitude trilogy. A must-read for adventure and Himalaya lovers.

by Mick Conefrey
Mick Conefrey * April 2020 * Rs. 1,857/-

Into the Heart of the Himalaya

Jono Lineen has donned many hats through the years – forester, mountain guide, ski racer, humanitarian relief worker, writer, public speaker and a curator at the National Museum of Australia. Following his brother's tragic and untimely death, Jono moved to the High Himalaya and spent the next 8 years in a solo trekking odyssey spanning 2,700 kms from Pakistan to Nepal, a remarkable feat never attempted before. "Into the Heart of the Himalaya" delves into his myriad cross-cultural experiences as he treks through the stunning landscape of Ladakh, Lahaul & Spiti, Himachal and Uttarakhand regions of the Western Himalaya. An enjoyable and unmissable read!

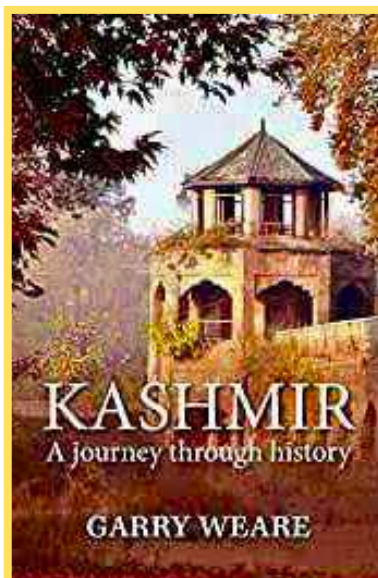
by Jono Lineen
Speaking Tiger Books LLP * January 2019 * Rs. 423/-



Kashmir
A journey through History

Trekking legend, acclaimed adventurer, author and photographer Garry Weare first trekked in Kashmir in the 1970s, and is recognised as a foremost authority on the Indian Himalaya, authoring several books. In his latest book "Kashmir" Weare traces the rich cultural history of Kashmir, the Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic influences which shaped culture in the region from ancient times to the present. There are chapters highlighting periods in history, such as the role of the Mughal emperors, the Treaty of Amritsar signed in 1846, which created the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, and the Instrument of Accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh in 1947. A treat for history buffs and adventure lovers, both!

by Garry Weare
Niyogi Books * January 2020 * Rs. 1,075/-

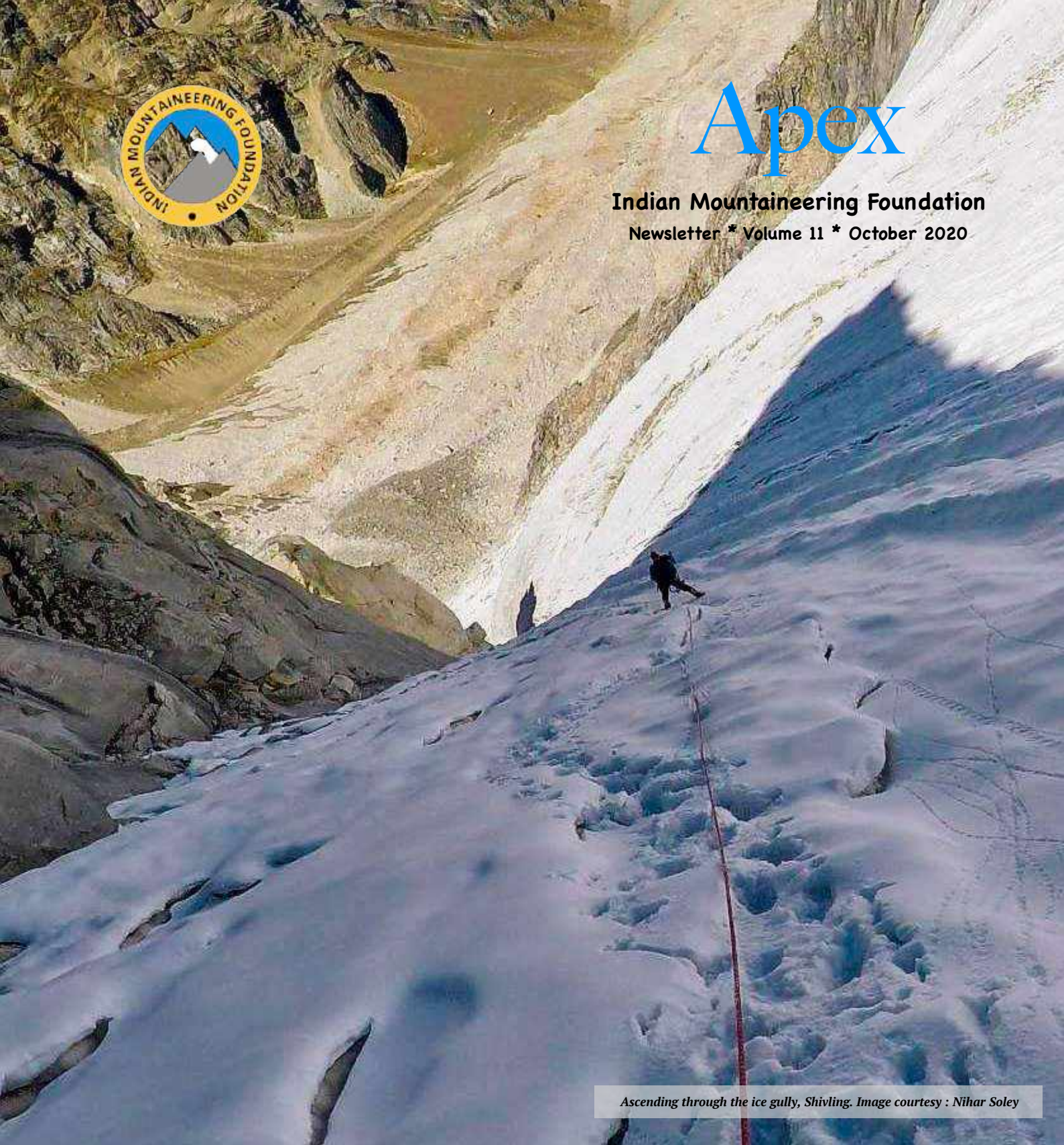




Apex

Indian Mountaineering Foundation

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Ascending through the ice gully, Shivling. Image courtesy : Nihar Soley

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