India 1991

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During the year more than 215 expeditions operated in the Indian Himalaya. If you add to these the many climbing parties in Nepal, Pakistan and Tibet, together with the even greater number of trekking groups, this influx can be termed an 'explosion'. A lot for a young mountain range to take.

Kangchenjunga – NE spur An Indo-Japanese team was given permission to climb from the east, the Sikkim side, after overcoming political and religious hurdles. The Japanese were the first foreigners allowed here since Paul Bauer's team in 1931. The huge expedition reached Green Lake via a circuitous route over the northern passes and, deciding against attempting their intended objective, the E ridge, they repeated the N spur – climbed in 1977 and 1987 by Indian Army teams. On 17 May Pasang Sherpa fell to his death from the summit ridge while fixing ropes. On 24 May three Indians and three Japanese reached the summit, followed by three more Indians on 25 May. The expedition refers to their route as the 'E ridge'. The normal E ridge actually runs south; the NE spur runs east before joining the N ridge near the summit.

In October a strong earthquake shook Kumaon and Garhwal. There was major damage lower down and in the Uttarkashi district. Roads were damaged and many houses collapsed. Though relief was soon provided it was not enough. Mountaineers extended help through volunteer agencies, as many had porter friends there. Though communications and roads should have been restored by 1992, mountaineers may have to contend with food shortages and human tragedies.

Nanda Devi East (7434m) – Polish route A strong Indo-Russian team repeated the Polish first ascent route (from the Milam valley, via the Longstaff col and the S ridge) – the first ascent of the route for 52 years. Ten Russians, one Indian and three Sherpas reached the summit between 21 and 25 September.

Panch Chuli (6904m) – N col Unclimbed since its first ascent in 1973, the mountain was attempted from the east by two Indian Army expeditions. One party climbed via the N col and the NE slopes, with eight members reaching the summit on 21 August. This was the route suggested by Hugh Ruttledge in 1929 and tried by W H Murray in 1950.

Panch Chuli (6904m) – E ridge The other expedition climbed this, approaching up the Meola glacier. Four people reached the summit on 17 September. The route was tried by Kenneth Snelson and J de V Graaff in 1950.

Panwali Dwar (6663m) This dangerous mountain was climbed by an Indian team from Bombay – the second ascent. Four people reached the summit on 23 September, following a minor variation of the first ascent route (Japanese 1980).

Nanda Khat (6611m) An American team made little headway and climbed a smaller peak.

Dangthal (6050m) A two man Indian team almost succeeded on this peak. They did climb **Shalang Dhura** (5678m).

Garhwal – Gangotri

Kedarnath (6968m) Five members of an Indo-Australian team were successful on this peak. Havildar Yadav disappeared and died after reaching the summit.

Shivling (6543m) – **W ridge** A Norwegian expedition was successful.

Thalay Sagar (6904m) A Hungarian expedition was successful on 16 October. A Japanese expedition failed in June.

Satopanth (7075m) A Spanish Army team was successful.

Jogin group A Japanese ladies' expedition made some ascents here.

Kamet (7756m) and **Abi Gamin** (7355m) were both climbed by their normal routes.

Trisul (7120m) Two expeditions failed. The Poles reached 6700m from the west, but their leader Anna B Dudek fell ill and died while stormbound. In October a 13-member German team reached 6500m from the south, but three people contracted serious frost-bite.

Bhagirathi III (6454m) An Italian team was stopped by intense cold in October.

Jaonli (6632m) Joss Lynam's team made three attempts, but were foiled by an earthquake. Though they failed, it was amply proved that life begins at 60!

Yogeshwar (6678m) – **SE ridge** A Bombay team climbed this virgin peak, NE of Sudarshan Parbat. It was approached via the Shyamvarn glacier and the summit was reached by eight members on 27 June. The same expedition climbed **Shyamvarn** (6135m), a second ascent, by the dangerous first ascent route; **Rataban** (6166m), on 19 August; and they attempted a new route on the S face of **Swargaroni I** (6252m).

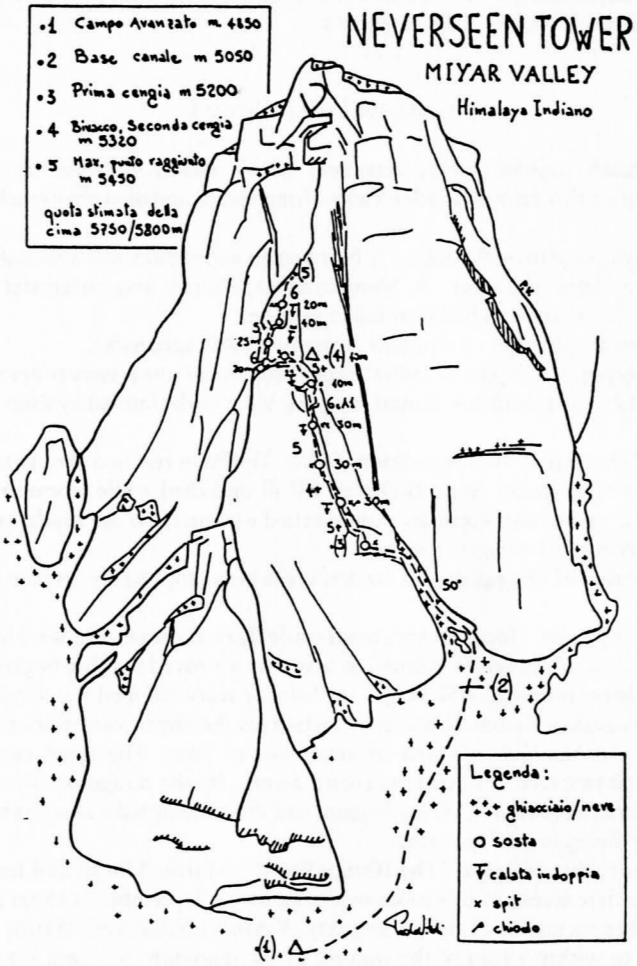
Bhrigu Pathar (6038m) **'The Bhrigu Prow'** Martin Moran and Ian Dring made the first ascent of this unknown peak on 13 September (1100m ED VII/A1). Other members of the same party, Kevin O'Neale and Martin Welch, climbed to within 150m of the summit of **Bhrigupanth** (6772m), via the NE face. They turned back in poor conditions, but above the technical climbing (1000m 45-60°D).

Tribhuj (5055m) Andrew Brett and Alexander Laird climbed this small but difficult peak in the Garhwal.

Kulu*

Papsura (6451m) David Cameron led a New Zealand team and, along with Nicholas and Michael Graham, reached the summit on 26 September. Earlier,

(*For the sake of consistency, and after taking advice from the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, I have retained the spelling more familiar to British readers: 'Kulu', though the alternative form, 'Kullu', is now used in India. *Ed*)



Route of ascent on a small tower in Lahul, aptly named 'Neverseen Tower' (5800m).

on 11 September, Roger Reodmanne took a 400m fall while attempting to solo the mountain, and died shortly afterwards from injuries sustained. The team also climbed **Pt 5639** and **Devachen.**

Dharamsura (6446m) An Australian team climbed this mountain and **Pt 5595m,** to the north of Sara Umga La.

Peak 6816m, south of **Leo Pargial (6791m) 'abode of demon'** This peak, which rises above Shipki La in Lower Spiti, was climbed on 26 July, as a second ascent, by four climbers from Delhi. The first ascent was in 1971.

Kulu Pumori (6553m) An Indian team from the Manali Institute climbed this peak on the Bara Shigri glacier.

Miyar Nala rock towers. An Italian team, led by Paolo Vitali, feasted themselves on 'small' rock towers. The highest, on the Tawa glacier, was named the **'Neverseen Tower' (5800m).**

A Japanese expedition climbed **Mulkila IV (6517m),** and British and German teams failed on Menthosa (6443m) and Shigri La (6247m) respectively.

Kashmir – Kishtwar

Surprisingly, two teams climbed in this troubled area.

Cerro Kishtwar (6200m) Andy MacNae's British-based team tried this spectacular unclimbed peak by several routes. Brendan Murphy and Andy Perkins put in a particularly fine effort, with a serious, capsule-style, 17-day attempt on the NW face. They had to give up 100m below the summit, owing to exhaustion and food shortages, after pushing themselves to, and almost beyond, the limit. The route was very sustained (crux Scottish 6 and A3) and, together with previous attempts on it, the mountain is now collecting a very impressive list of failed British climbers!

Hagshu (6330m) John Barry and John Romo attempted the N gully in September but were beaten by persistent bad weather.

Kashmir – Kulu

Kashmir – Kulu Ski Traverse Huw Kingston and Carol Ankers (British) and Megan Bowden and Jamie Serle (Australian) undertook a 32-day traverse. Leaving the Kashmir valley they traversed across Zanskar via Pensi La to Padam, then south via Kang La to Lahul and finally over the Rohtang pass to Kulu. These valleys remain cut off in winter and this traverse must have been very hard. (Full details in article 'Kashmir to Kulu Ski Traverse 1991' in this volume.)

Nun and Kun These mountains had their usual quota of ascents and attempts. The only sad part was the death of Michela Cisotti at 6800m on Kun. She was an Italian member of a French expedition.

Eastern Karakoram

This year the Indo-British expedition succeeded in breaking the taboo of differences that has dogged many previous expeditions. Dave Wilkinson and Harish Kapadia led a very happy team to the Chong Kumdan glacier, E of Saser La. Reaching Base Camp in a week, as scheduled, they divided into groups and climbed 10 peaks in 30 days. One of the highlights was the first ascent of **Chong Kumdan I** (7071m) by Dave Wilkinson, John Porter, Bill Church and Neil McAdie in alpine style, via the NW face to the N ridge. Paul Nunn and Lindsay Griffin climbed **Kichik Kumdan** (6000m) in a steep icy traverse. A new col (**Chong Ibex col, 6000m**) was explored and **Kumdan Terong** (6456m) climbed by the Indians Bhupesh Ashar, M H Contractor, Pasang, and Ajay Tambe. Church and McAdie climbed **Landay** (6170m). The final success was the celebration at Leh, with everyone joining in Paul Nunn's loud laughter over beer and kebabs! (Full details in article 'Chong Kumdan – An Unknown Mountain' in this volume.)

An Indo-German team climbed two small **Peaks 6010m** and **6335m** near Saser La. N D Sherpa climbed both these peaks as a warm-up (July); later he went on to climb **Panch Chuli II** (August) and **Kedarnath** (October).

A third expedition to the area repeated **Saser Kangri II East** (7518m). They followed the first ascent route. Fateh Chand was taken ill on the high slopes and died in the highest camp.

Some more cheerful news. A few changes on the 'inner line' are likely, opening up parts of Kumaon, Garhwal and Spiti. The Indian Army is now officially instructed to help all mountaineers, both Indians and foreigners. They will provide local information, transport when available, emergency food and medicine, and climbers will be able to stay at their camps. This is a useful goodwill gesture, as they are everywhere in the Himalaya.

In Memoriam

M C Motwani (69) passed away during the year. He edited the first 26 issues of *Indian Mountaineer* and worked for a decade as chief administrator at the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. Coming to India after the 1947 Partition he worked his way up the hard way. His love and knowledge of the Himalaya was second to none. Without his dedication to the proverbial 'red tape' world of government, many records of climbs would have been lost to posterity.

And Finally . . .

Amidst all this plethora of climbing activity, a group of blind ladies climbed Dzongri Peak near Darjeeling. They were scared and constantly urged on by their escorts. Finally, at the 4200m summit, their ecstasy knew no bounds, but one of their escorts was in agony: 'When I saw Kangchenjunga from the peak, I begged God to give them sight for at least a second so that they could see that

glowing peak. How do I tell someone who has never seen red in her entire life that the peak was on fire, or about the beauty of red rhododendrons? How do I explain a Himalayan sunset to them? There is much for us to be thankful for and how little do we realise this!' A thing to remember when next time in the mountains we act blind.