

India

SIKKIM

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



HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

KUMAON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARTIN MORAN, U.K.

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

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

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

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

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