

SPITI



Khhang Shiling on left and Shigri Parvat from Khamengar valley in Spiti. *Divyesh Muni.*

Khhang Shiling (6,360m), first ascent. A three-member team sponsored by The Himalayan Club made the first ascent of Khhang Shiling peak (6,360m–20,866') on 19th September assisted by Sherpa Lakhpa Bhoté. (“Khhang Shiling” means “Snow Mountain of four ridges”). The team consisted of Vineeta Muni, Shripad Sapkal, and me. We explored the Khamengar Valley in Spiti, a rarely visited area in Himachal Pradesh. The peak Khhang Shiling is a prominent mountain at the head of the Khamengar Valley.



Dibbibokri Pyramid, from a col on Khhang Shiling. *Divyesh Muni*

We approached from Mikkim near Kaja to reach base camp (4,320m) in three days. ABC was at 5,160m. We established Camp 1 at 5,880m in a basin formed between a large rock feature and the Shigri Parvat massif. We climbed along the glacier until a bergschrund below the col between Shigri Parvat and Khhang Shiling. It was decided not to attempt Shigri Parvat since the entire route to the peak was over steep but loose rocks with a constant barrage of rockfall down

the face. The route on Khhang Shiling looked promising, so we dumped rope and some hardware at the col and returned to C1.

Next day Vineeta, Shripad, Sherpa Lakpha, and I left for the summit by 7 a.m. Although the route was not very steep, we had to fix three rope-lengths due to the hard ice below the thin layer of snow. A strong wind increased the wind chill and all of us were very cold. We ran short of rope to fix the last two rope-lengths and carefully belayed each other to the top.

We started our return journey on 23rd September. Since we did not attempt Shigri Parvat, we had a few days to spare and decided to trek across the Pin Parvati pass into Kullu, which brought us to the traditional route to Manali.

DIVYESH MUNI, *The Himalayan Club, India*

UTTARANCHAL

Uttaranchal, new regulations. While the world is opening its doors to mountaineers and mountain lovers, the news from the new Uttaranchal State in India is distressing. The state contains some of the most beautiful areas in the Indian Himalaya, with peaks like Nanda Devi, Kamet, and Shivling. The Uttaranchal State has imposed severe restrictions on climbing and imposed special royalty charges for mountaineers to pay (minimum US \$1,400). This is in addition to charges payable to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. Moreover special and separate permission (red tape!) must be obtained from the officials in the state, forest department, and local authorities. At least half the porters must be employed from local villages, and each village is to be paid a fee as you trek through it. The forest department is to be paid a special fee to camp on their land. Several foreign expeditions (notably a Spanish team on Shivling) were charged these extra fees in 2004. Indian mountaineers and trekkers are also not spared, and for the first time Indian teams will have to pay peak fees to climb a peak in their country. After many discussions, negotiations, and protests, which were brushed aside, the state government has decided to impose these rules for the 2005 season. Please check full details, rates and addresses for formalities at www.indmount.org.

HARISH KAPADIA, *Honorary Editor, The Himalayan Journal*

GARHWAL

Bhagirathi III (6,454m), direct southwest pillar, Stairway to Heaven. From the summit of Shivling in 1996 I saw the challenge: to find a direct route on the ridge of Bhagirathi III, because the southwest pillar route by the Scottish team of 1982 didn't follow the actual ridgeline of the southwest pillar. I wanted to master the route with free climbing and in alpine style. I wanted the route to be difficult and challenging, but Jörg Pflugmacher and I, both from Bavaria, also wanted to exclude any unpredictable risks to our lives. This is why we used bolts at belay stations and at dangerous points in free climbing—the style was similar to Wolfgang Güllich's on Nameless Tower in Pakistan.

On my 2001 expedition with Robert Jasper we started from the west face basin. The conditions were very bad: considerable snow and ice. The difficulty from the start to the pillar's ridge (10 pitches) was M7+. In the 2004 expedition we started from the foot of the direct