

Peak, ca 5,600m) and the route Shan-grila Ridge (600m, 900m long, VII R).

We then spent five rainy and snowy days in base camp with Slovak climbers Andy and Juraj. The temperature dropped significantly, and a lot of snow accumulated on the upper walls. After the weather improved we decided to move to the Tawa Glacier side valley, to an advanced base camp under Neverseen Tower. The approach to this ABC involved almost 1,000m of altitude gain, half of it wandering on an unstable glacial moraine. Fresh snow on moving and slippery stones made walking hard and dangerous. Even south-facing, steep walls like Neverseen were plastered with snow. We stopped on the glacier to wait until the walls cleared of snow.

So as not to lose time in nice weather, we decided to climb a nice three-tower east ridge opposite our temporary camp. But it snowed all night, and we waited one more day for the ridge to dry. Then, on September 29, we climbed Trident Ridge (500m, 1,000m long, VII/VII+) on a virgin peak we called Prem Singh Peak (ca 5,200m). Even in the sun it was cold for rock climbing, and it became clear that Neverseen was not a suitable option. With only a few days left, on October 1 we climbed our last route on the rock tower David's 62 Nose (ca 4,950m) on Castle Peak's south face. We called our route Lufoo Lam (Windy Way) (350m, 400m long, VII+). This tower had already been climbed, by Italians.

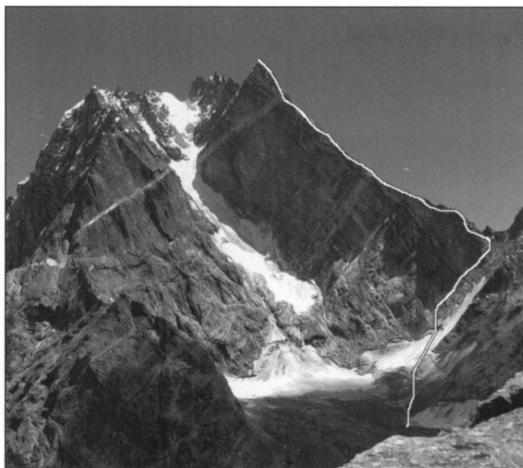
Climbing in this remote, uncrowded valley was a great adventure. It was nice to deal with hospitable local Buddhist people. The climbing itself was enjoyable because of the featured migmatite rock, which is something between granite and gneiss, and solidier than it looks. We used only removable protection and left only a few rappel slings, to keep the area as adventurous as possible. We enjoyed our four new routes, on two virgin peaks, but our wish of climbing something on Neverseen remains a dream. I suggest that late summer is probably not the best time for rock climbing there because of low temperatures. There is still a lot worth exploring in this region.

ANDREJ GRMOVSEK, *Slovenia*

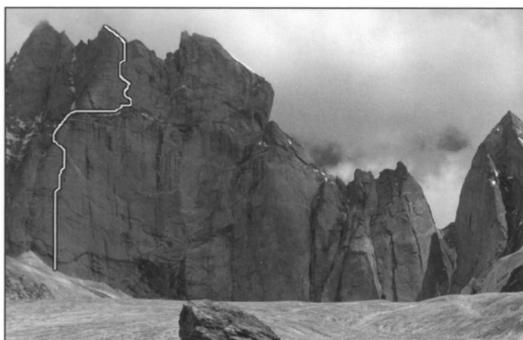


David's 62 Nose (ca 4,950m) on Castle Peak's south face, showing 350m-vertical Lufoo Lam-Windy Way. Andrej Grmovsek

*Mahindra, middle summit, Ashoka's Pillar; Peak 5,960m; Orange Tower.* After long and crazy travel days, including a ride from a fellow named Happy, Freddie Wilkinson, Pat Goodman, and I thankfully found the end of the road in the small Himalayan village of Tingrit. In preparation for the months when the sturdy stone houses will be buried in meters of snow, bushels of straw lay stacked upon the flat roofs. Sweet peas, for which this valley is known, were starting to ripen. From Tingrit we hiked for three days to our base camp below Castle Peak, passing through open



Peak 5,960m, which was climbed via its west ridge. *David Sharratt*



Mt. Mahindra, showing 700m Ashoka's Pillar, which yielded sustained and superb 5.11 climbing. *David Sharratt*

grasslands and fields of wildflowers, fields populated by sheep and shepherds, horses, cattle, and small villages. After traveling through Delhi's chaos and lack of infrastructure, I reflected on India's many contradictions as we passed well-maintained schools in each tiny community. There is even a helicopter pad in Tingrit, so that medicine and supplies can be flown in to help the people endure austere winters. With base camp established, we headed up the Jangpar Glacier with our sights set on the pyramid-shaped Peak 5,960m. To get our groove on and acclimatize, we first climbed the Orange Tower. This previously unclimbed peak does resemble a tower from one vantage point, but is really more of an elongated fin, and hosts much potential for short multi-pitch cragging on generally solid and well-featured rock. We climbed the Tower by a six-pitch route, featuring a memorable pitch of overhanging climbing on wind-sculpted pinches. After some bad-weather tent time we set out on Peak 5,960m via the west ridge. To gain the ridge, we climbed 500m of low-angle alpine ice and a few pitches of choss-aneering. We climbed the ridge to

the base of a steep 350m buttress that led to the summit, but retreated as snow flurries turned to an all-out slush storm. As the gods continued to puke mashed potatoes on us, we rappelled through the night onto the Dali Glacier. Having not previously explored the Dali Glacier, we found ourselves cliffed-out and hunkered down on the ice for a short shivery sleep. At first light we made our way down to base camp. A few days later Freddie and I returned to summit Peak 5,960m, while Pat endured severe stomach pain in base camp. The ridge was moderate, with generally solid rock on its crest, and the final buttress had fun 5.9 climbing. From the ridge to the summit is about 700m vertical, or about 1,000m of climbing.

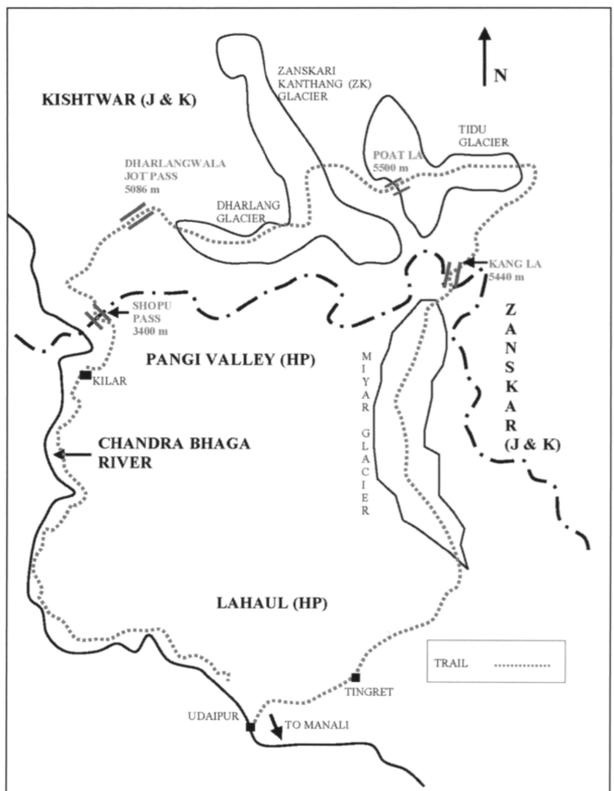
Lured by entrancing views of Mt. Mahindra's clean walls at the head of the Dali, we decided to keep a camp on the Dali Glacier. We scouted our route with binoculars in the late morning and climbed the first two pitches of our envisioned line. Pitch one was steep, technical, and tricky-to-protect 5.11. It shared the belay with a route that Italians had established to a broad ledge about halfway up the peak. Our route shared pitch two with the Italian route. We rappelled and left ropes fixed for our next climbing day, when we climbed to the broad ledge where the Italian route ends, sharing a pitch or two of it, but generally staying to its right. The

climbing was sustained 5.11 and great; we got to the ledge early and traversed 150m right to the base of Mt. Mahindra's middle summit. Freddie deftly led the way through discontinuous cracks and pods—the kind of run-out face climbing where you don't know if you are going to get more pro. He got it done, and I took the final few pitches to the summit, feeling guilty for getting a clean, steep, well-protected 5.10 glory corner, with a fun roof to cap it, just below the middle summit. We named the route Ashoka's Pillar (700m, 5.11R). To the best of our knowledge ours was the first ascent of Mt. Mahindra's middle summit. During this ascent Pat got a break from his stomach malaise and free-soloed a new 5.9 route to the top of Peak 5,300m. We climbed all routes free and onsight without bolts or pins. The trip was supported by a grant from Mountain Hardwear.

DAVID SHARRATT, AAC

*Miyar Glacier, Pangli Valley, Zanskar, Kishtwar, exploration; crossings of Kang La (5,440m), Poat La (5,500m), Dharlangwala Jot (5,086m), Shopu Pass (3,400m).* For many years I have been trying to connect the entire length and breadth of the Himalaya on foot. In 2007 I put together an inexperienced but tough, eager team from the Navy, and on August 10 our rickety bus groaned over Rohtang Pass. Next morning we hiked into one of the greenest, loveliest valleys in the entire western Himalaya. Village children and women gathered around, while the men offered us peas and potatoes. Three days later we reached the Miyar Glacier, and the day after that we topped Kang La, where the panoramic view extended into Zanskar. Kang La is crossed by trekkers going from Miyar to Padam, and we spied a group of hikers ascending from the other side. This pass took us across the Great Himalayan Axis, into the Zanskar range.

The next day as we hiked up the Tidu Glacier, my eyes riveted to the trio of peaks, 5,995m, 6,294m, and 5,935m (from west to east), which girdled the glacier. Each is virgin and would give even the best



In 17 walking days, Lt. Cdr. Satyabrata Dam's expedition covered 156km, crossing Kang La (5,440m), Poat La (5,500m), Dharlangwala Jot (5,086m), and Shopu Pass (3,400m) in the Himachal (Miyar, Pangli), Zanskar, and Kishtwar. *Satyabrata Dam*