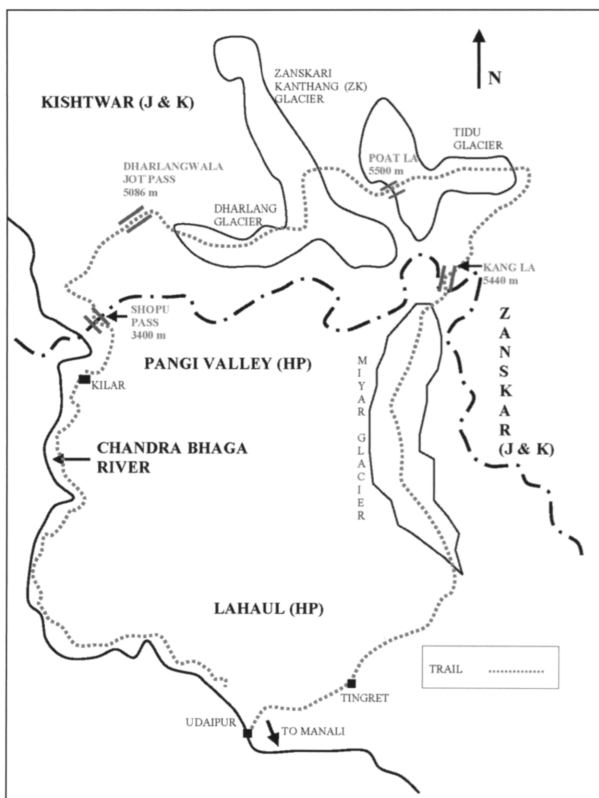


climbing was sustained 5.11 and great; we got to the ledge early and traversed 150m right to the base of Mt. Mahindra's middle summit. Freddie deftly led the way through discontinuous cracks and pods—the kind of run-out face climbing where you don't know if you are going to get more pro. He got it done, 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, Pangl 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.

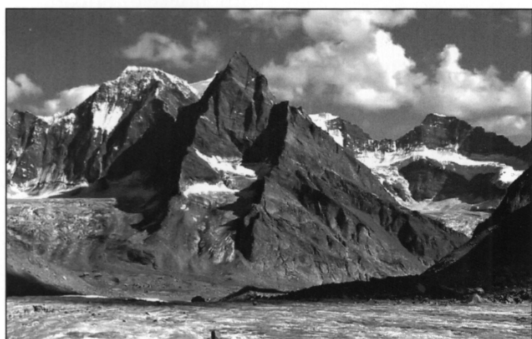
The next day as we hiked up the Tidu Glacier, my eyes riveted to the trio of peaks, 5,995m, 6,294m, and 5,935m (from west to east), which girdled the glacier. Each is virgin and would give even the best



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, Pangl), Zanskar, and Kishtwar. *Satyabrata Dam*



A virgin peak on the Zanskari Kanthang Glacier. *Satyabrata Dam*



A virgin wall at the confluence of the Kanskari Kanthang and Dharlang glaciers. *Satyabrata Dam*



Admiring ridges along the Dharlang Glacier. *Satyabrata Dam*

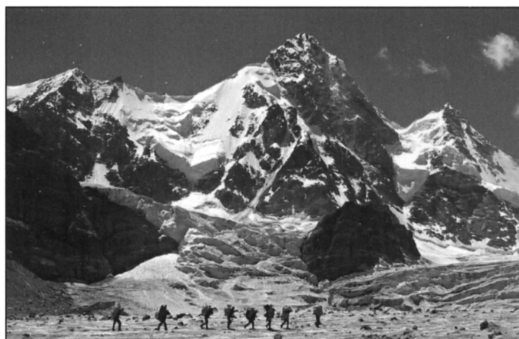
climbers a hard time. The icefall below Peak 6,294m was horrifyingly rotten. Up toward the cwm of the glacier lay two superb peaks, 5,609m and 5,763m, both virgin.

On August 18, we climbed steeply over rock and ice flutings toward Poat La, which looked deceptively close. Navigating through colossal obstacles we finally reached the little-known Zanskari Kanthang Glacier. On the side opposite, two rock walls reared up like sentinels; they would be a rock climber's delight. About 15km long and 1km wide, the Zanskari Kanthang Glacier has rock and ice problems strewn from one end to the other, several topping the magical 6,000m mark, all unclimbed and never before photographed from nearby. One might be a miniature Trango Tower. If we had had climbing gear, I would have stopped there. One could spend a month on this small glacier and climb more than dozen adrenaline-pumping peaks in true alpine style.

This may be the prettiest sight I have seen in the Himalaya. Our camp was perched on a tiny grassy ledge at about 4,800m on the right bank of Dharlang Glacier, just at the junction with ZK Glacier and another icefall. To my south, peaks 6,072m, 5,698m, and 5,615m (east to west and all unclimbed) spread out like a Japanese fan, coming down to the glacier in outrageously oversized falls of ice and rock. It was an unusually narrow gorge, filled with glacier ice, rocks, and

frozen pools with towering rock and ice walls rearing into a brilliance that simply took my breath away.

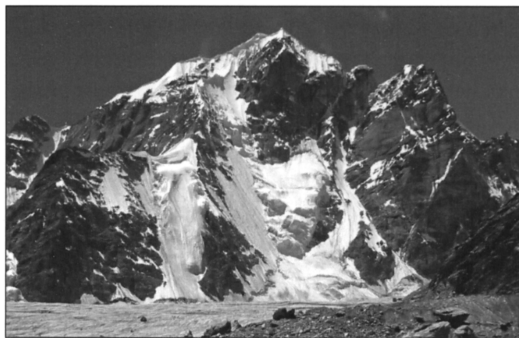
That day we waded through the Bodh Nullah and descended to a grassy meadow. Sheep and yaks dotted the green field, and a few horses loitered. The mountain slopes on either side bustled with flowers, butterflies, bees, and birds. It was paradise after so many days of rock and ice. We camped next to a stream; I could reach my hand out of the tent to touch the freshest



Peak 6,294m rears out of the Tidu Glacier. *Satyabrata Dam*



Peak 5,995m on the Tidu Glacier. *Satyabrata Dam*



Peak 5,935m at the head of the Tidu Glacier. *Satyabrata Dam*

water in the world. At 6,002m, Shiv Shankar is the giant in that area. As far as I know, it is still virgin, but this region is so rarely visited by climbers or hikers, and so little has been written about these mountains, that nothing can be known with certainty.

Our next objective was the dreaded Sersank Pass. What we heard from local shepherds was not encouraging. The glacier leading to the pass has broken down, with steep icefalls and huge crevasses opening up. It was impossible to cross this pass without climbing equipment, and certainly not with such a large group as ours. We had two options for leaving this narrow valley. We could walk due west, along the Dharlang Nallah, come out at Machel, and go by road to Kishtwar and Jammu. Or we could cross the high, rarely used pass of Dharlangwala Jot and enter the remote Huram valley of Kishtwar. From there we could loop back across the Shipu Ridge into the Pangi Valley of Himachal and Killar. According to the shepherds, this trail was well-marked and the pass had little ice, so this would be our route.

Tien Singh and I started early, to find the base of Dharlangwala Jot. Eventually we came across a group of severe-looking nomad women, unruly and dirty kids, and a very old man. They spoke in pure Kashmiri, and we barely understood a word. The inevitable dog bared its teeth and strained at its leash. A kilometer later we came across a muddy hut in the middle of nowhere,

tended by a woman and her children, with three of the fiercest dogs I have seen in the Himalaya. She offered buttermilk that we gulped down.

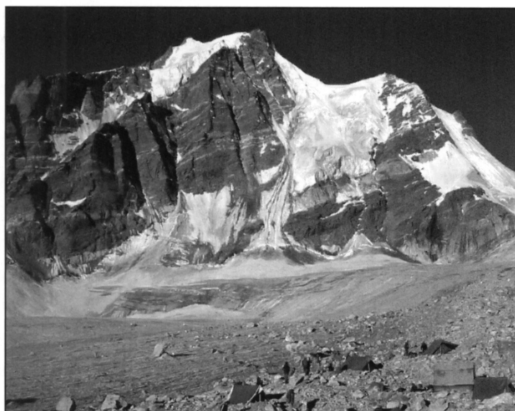
Around another cliff, we crossed a rickety bridge filling the chasm over the rushing waters of Dharlang Nulla. We pitched our tents and waited for the others to catch up. The next day was long and stressful, as we crossed a high pass, so we spent the morning of the 23rd relaxing, drying our clothes and sleeping bags before descending to the Huram Glacier. Typical of Kishtwar, the ridges were decked with gravity-defying hanging glaciers and massive waterfalls. Soon we

reached plush meadows and green pastures. The vista was so exotically beautiful that I could have stopped at every step and stayed there forever. Farther ahead, the stream dropped away, turning toward the villages of Tun and Bhatwas. I stopped often to gaze awe-struck at nature's handiwork, musing that if this did not prove God's existence, then nothing will.

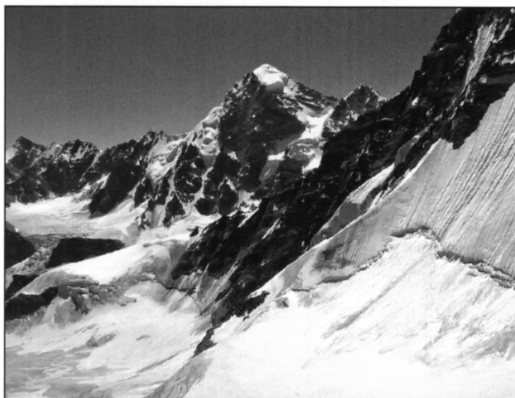
The next day we descended into the immense grazing ground of Sanyot Adhwari, where the Billing Nullah united with the Huram. Typical Tibetan houses with flat roofs and black-framed doors held snout-nosed kids and red-cheeked women, who welcomed us heartily. Sonam, our only Ladakhi member, finding his brethren, beamed from ear to ear. Only seven families and around 30 folks populated Tun. They were clearly Tibetan and Ladakhi in origin. None of them knew how their people reached here across the high passes, nor when or why. We rested on the open roof of the village chief and then walked down through the villages of Alya, Khizrauni, Muthal, and Chag finally camping on the Chaund next to the gurgling Sansari Nullah. A group of young Kashmiri women visited our campsite in the evening and, showing none of the restraint or coyness that they are normally known for, visited each of our tents and even entered our kitchen tent looking for male company.

On the 25th we crossed Bhatwas and a bridge across the Sansari Nullah. The trail went through a thick wood of pine, deodars, and chinars littered with generous amount of bear droppings.

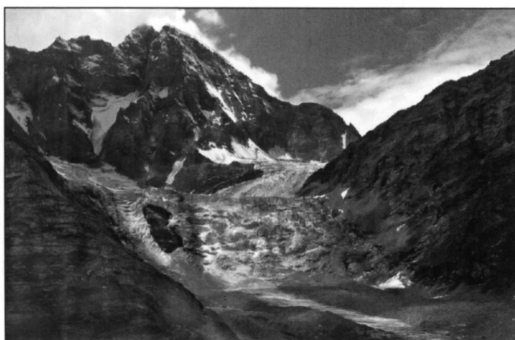
Then we had to climb over the Shopu Pass to return to the Himachal's Pangi Valley. From the village of Dharwas we managed a lift on a tipper to Killar, the main village in the valley. The rest of the journey to Manali would be in buses, and I thought that all dangers were over. But when the bus (if it could be called one) flew like a maniac around blind turns on the worst road I have



Camping at the base of the Poat La. *Satyabrata Dam*



Looking back from the Poat La. *Satyabrata Dam*



The icefall leading to Sersank La. *Satyabrata Dam*

ever seen, I realized that our troubles were far from over. All 60 passengers were threatened with a watery grave in the foaming waters of Chandra Bhaga River. Then the bus shuddered to a halt just inches from the chasm at the edge of a landslide. We had to walk across the kilometer-long landslide and get into another bus on the other side.

It was the evening of August 27 when we reached Manali after a wonderful journey that stitched together four remote valleys. We had explored some of the last blank spots in the Himalaya. My only regret was that we lost one porter. Just before we reached Shopu Pass, a stone zipped out of the woods and struck young Min Bahadur Thapa, who died on the spot. The boy had taken leave from his apple picking job at Manali and came along with us, hoping to make some extra money for his old parents back home. There was no reason why he should die that day, at that spot. We were out of all dangers on easy ground, on the last day of our hike. But he died. As long as men go into the wild, there will be some who will not return. I wish to dedicate this expedition to the memory of the young man who did not return. May his soul rest in peace.

Expedition Summary: 17 walking days, covering 156km. Passes crossed: Kang La (5,440m), Poat La (5,500m), Dharlangwala Jot (5,086m), Shopu Pass (3,400m). Regions covered: Himachal (Miyar, Pangi), Zaskar, Kishtwar. Maps: 52 C, 52 C/16, 15, 11, 12, 8 and Trekking Route map of Himachal Pradesh Sheet No I (First edition, which can be bought from DMAS Manali).

LT. CDR. SATYABRATA DAM, *India*

UTTARANKHAND (FORMERLY UTTARANCHAL) GARHWAL

Changabang, north face and west ridge attempts. In August, Kester Brown, Craig Jefferies, Marty Beare, and I, all from New Zealand, with Adam Darragh from Australia, traveled to the Bagini Glacier to attempt the north face and the second ascent of the west ridge of Changabang (6,864m). After jointly establishing a camp (ca 5,000m) at the head of the Bagini Glacier's west branch, the west ridge team of Beare, Darragh, and me fixed 300m of rope up 50° snow and mixed terrain to the col (ca 5,800m) at the base of the west ridge, where we established a camp. After acclimatizing here and fixing another 200m of rope up 60° ice and mixed terrain, we descended to Base Camp intending to climb alpine-style above this point.

Meanwhile Brown and Jefferies spent time acclimatizing on peaks above base camp. Noticing that the right side of the face was in good condition and less prone to spindrift, on 16 September they started up the north face of Changabang via the line pioneered by the British 1996 attempt. After three days, they established themselves on the top of the buttress. Climbing to this point involved ice up to 90°, often covered in insubstantial snow. After a rest day the pair traversed the icefield to join the line of the British 1997 ascent (Cave-Murphy) and in doing so climbed a few hundred meters of new ground. Difficult, steep ice gave access to the upper icefield, and here they endured an open bivy on the ice arête, at 6,200m, under the headwall. Heavy snowfall overnight and into the next day forced them to retreat down the left side of the buttress in 16 rappels. They descended from high on the face in under five hours. Previous parties who have reached the summit ridge via the British 1997 route have descended south to the Changabang Glacier, in both cases with fatal consequences.

In the meantime, the west ridge team moved into the col camp. A week-long storm arrived on 24 September, dumping over half a meter of snow at base camp and forcing an epic