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*Edited by Sukeshi Sheth*

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## Club News

### *Annual Program*

Mallikarjun Singh

The Club celebrated its 82<sup>nd</sup> year with an annual program that was held in late February. The event was inaugurated by Dr. M.S. Gill, Hon. Minister for Sports and past president of the Club. A revised edition of his book *Himalayan Wonderland* was also released.



Dr. M. S. Gill with Hon. Sec. Vijay Crishna  
(Photo: Rajesh Gadgil)

Noted American climber Nicholas Clinch delivered the *Kaivan Mistry Memorial Lecture*. He spoke of the joint American-Pakistan expedition that made the first ascent of Masherbrum (7821 m) in 1960, a very difficult peak in the Karakoram, which has only had 4 successful ascents, giving us an insight into what climbing was like in those days.



Nick Clinch (Photo: Rajesh Gadgi)

Other speakers included: Divyesh Muni, who told us of an attempt on Plateau Peak (7310

m) in the Eastern Karakoram that remains unclimbed; Harish Kapadia who recounted treks that he undertook in vastly different terrains and cultures - Ichu valley across the

Kanji la in Zaskar, and the Yang Sang Chu valley in Arunachal; Vijay Crishna who explored the source of 'The Other', the presence seen by climbers (and others) in extreme circumstances; Dr Raghunath Godbole who spoke about medicine on Everest and Cyrus Shroff who led an expedition that made the first ascent of Lampak North (6181 m) in Kalla Bank Glacier in the Garhwal Himalaya.

British climber Jim Lowther who has been exploring the Greater Ranges since the age of 18, told a rapt audience about one of his most difficult journeys, a two-man Trans-Greenland expedition. One of the highlights of this 32-day trip was when Jim used a parachute to sail through an ice surface. He also talked about numerous challenging climbs in the Himalaya, including Sepu Kangri (6950 m) with Sir Chris Bonnington.



Jim Lowther (Photo: Rajesh Gadgil)

The celebrations continued with a group of Himalayan Club members and their families (ranging in age from 18 to 77) climbing Nagtibba (3027 m).



Nagtibba Top (Photo: Suman Dubey)

## ***Upcoming Himalayan Club Events***

### **Mountain Literature Festival**

In October this year, the Himalayan Club will collaborate with Winterline Arts Centre and Woodstock School in hosting the third Mussoorie International Writers' Festival. This year's theme is **Mountain Literature** and will feature writers whose work explores all aspects of the mountains – landscape, people and culture. More than 25 authors will participate in readings, panel discussions and workshops. Participants will include poets, novelists, filmmakers, travel writers as well as editors and agents. Authors scheduled to attend include Jim Curran, Harish Kapadia, Bernadette McDonald, George Schaller and Bittu Sahgal. More information and the full list of speakers is available at: [www.woodstockschool.in/wac](http://www.woodstockschool.in/wac).

The event is open to all members of the Himalayan Club and their guests so do not miss the opportunity to participate in this unique event.

For help with travel and accommodation please contact Krishnan Kutty, Hon. Local Secretary at [krishnankutty@woodstock.ac.in](mailto:krishnankutty@woodstock.ac.in).

### **Painting/ Photo Exhibition**

The Himalayan Club will hold an exhibition of paintings and photographs contributed by its members in early 2011. These will be sold to raise money for the Club. More details soon on how you can send in your art to be included in the exhibition.

## **Expeditions**

### ***Expeditions to the Indian Himalaya in 2009***

Harish Kapadia

The best news of the year 2009 is that the Indian government has opened 100 new peaks for climbing! Though the notification came in early 2010, the process was undertaken throughout 2009. It has been almost 17 years since a large number of peaks have been opened to climbers. All the peaks are in Zaskar and Ladakh. Many of them

are along the road that runs from Kargil-Sankoo to Padam. It passes through Panikhar, Parkachik, Ringdom and over the Pensi la to reach Padam. Several smaller valleys that are on watershed between Zaskar and Kishtwar lie to the south of this road. The peaks lie in these valleys like Gelmothungos, Chilung, Durung Drung and Hagshu. The Nun and Kun peaks, both above 7000 m, were open, but now many other approaches to these peaks are possible. Lingsarmo, 6955 m, a high peak in the Nun-Kun massif is now open. In the Shafat glacier peaks that have opened up include Rungofarko I (6495m), II (6395 m), in the Chilung nala: Chiling Pk I (6253 m) and II (6349 m), in the Hagshu valley peak 6515 m and in the Durung Drung valley, peak 6485 m. Moreover since the road passes through the mouth of these valleys one has only to get off from transport and cross the Suru or Doda rivers to set up a base camp. Peaks are not more than two days away and can thus be climbed in a very light and economical style, going by road from one base camp to another. A word of warning - the IMF has not yet formulated a policy for climbing in this area and on new peaks. It is not clear whether they will be listed as trekking peaks, whether a liaison officer will be required, whether permits will be required and whether there will be peak fees.

Some photographs have been published in the *Himalayan Journal* vol. 65 and a complete list of 104 newly opened peaks with co-ordinates and map references is available. Zaskar anyone?

2009 saw 101 expeditions to the Indian Himalaya, 64 Indian and 37 foreign, more expeditions than in the recent past. However, many Indian expeditions were to peaks that have been climbed often (Satopanth, Chhamser Kangri), and many of the foreign ones were commercially organized trips to well known peaks, including Nun and Kun. Stok Kangri retained its record of being the most climbed 6000 m peak in the world with the added dubious distinction of having one of the dirties base camps seen (or smelled) anywhere!

One of the best climbs in the Garhwal Himalaya was of Mukut Parvat (7242 m) by a French team. As this peak is located on the Indo-Tibetan border, it is significant that a foreign team was allowed to climb here. Martin Moran solved the challenge of Changuch (6322 m) that rises above the Pindari glacier. Many teams, including one in 2009, have failed, sometimes with fatalities, where Moran, now an expert on the Indian Himalaya,

succeeded in making a safe first ascent. An Indian team climbed Deoban (6852 m) and the leading Slovenian alpinist Marco Prezelj and two young climbers, climbed Bhagirathi II (6512 m) and III (6454 m) on the Gangotri glacier. They climbed the south and southwest faces respectively in alpine style.

Sikkim was also opened to allow a British team to attempt Kellas Peak (6680 m). Though they did ascend the main peaks, the party reached Kellas Col (6380 m), a snow saddle on the border ridge south of Kellas Peak and climbed an unnamed peak of 6252 m. On nearby Tingchenkhang (6010 m), tragedy struck a Mumbai team soon after the ascent of the peak. A freak avalanche killed two young climbers while two badly injured Sherpas with them were rescued.

In the eastern Karakoram, attempts were made on two high virgin peaks in adjoining valleys. An American-British-Indian team attempted Saser Kangri II (7518 m) Eastern peak, while a team from Mumbai attempted Plateau Peak (7287 m). Both attempts reached half way up their respective mountains.

Both leading mountain related organizations in India have new Presidents. Ramkrishna Rao, former Director General of the ITBP (Indo Tibetan Border Police) was elected President of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, while a leading Indian mountaineer Col. Ashok Abbey took over the reins of the Himalayan Club.

## **Summary of Important Expeditions**

### ***Sikkim***

#### **Kellas Peak (6680 m)**

Team: British

Leader: Jeremy Windsor

See *North West Sikkim, Autumn 2009*, e-letter Vol. 18 and *Himalayan Journal* Vol. 66

#### **Tingchen Khang (6010 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: Chakram Hikers, Mumbai.

Leader. Mangesh Deshpande

See *Tingchen Khang Accident*, e-letter Vol. 17

## **Uttarakhand**

### **Kumaun Himalaya**

#### **Nanda Devi East (7434 m)**

(1) Team: Polish

Leader: Jan Lenczowski

Since the first ascent of this peak in 1939 by a Polish team, Polish climbers seem to have a special affinity for this high peak.

The 10 member Polish team established base camp at 4300 m in the Lawan valley. They followed the south ridge and put up Camp 2 at 6400 m on 22 May 2009. They reached 6900 m on the route. The attempt was called off due to constant bad weather, insufficient time and the ill health of one member.

#### **Changuch (6322 m)**

(1) Team: British

Leader: Martin Moran

Many teams have attempted this unclimbed peak in Kumaun, some with disastrous results. At last, the mountain selected its climbers and a six member British team was successful in reaching the coveted summit in the pre-monsoon season. After establishing their base camp at 4275 m in the Lawan Gad, an advance base camp (ABC) at 5150 m and a summit camp at 5800 m, they followed the northwest ridge of the mountain. On 9 June 2009, Martin Moran, Robin Jarvis, Paul Guest, Leon Winchester and Liaison Officer Ludar Singh reached the summit. They estimated the climb to be of technical grade Alpine – D.

They also attempted Nanda Devi east but too much snow, lack of campsites and the poor health of two members stopped their attempt at 6050 m.

(Article, HJ Vol. 66)

(2) Team: Indian

Organizers: Mountaineers' Association of Krishnanagar

Leader: Basanta Singha Roy

Unlike the British, the seven-member team from West Bengal was not successful in climbing the peak. They crossed Trail's pass en route and entered Lawan Gad from the Pindar valley. They established their summit camp at 5640 m on 29 August on the northwest ridge connecting Changuch with Nandakhat. Technical difficulties stopped the attempt at that point.

### **Kalanka (6931 m)**

Team: Dutch

Leader: Michael Robert van Berkel

Leaving Jumma, the 3-member team reached base camp at Bagini Kharak (4400 m) on 19 August 2009. They reached ABC at 5000 m but were unable to proceed due to excessive snow. As a consolation, they climbed an unnamed peak (6505 m) near their base camp on 21 September.

## **Garhwal Himalaya**

### **Gangotri Region**

#### **Bhagirathi II (6512 m) and III (6454 m)**

Team: Slovenian

Leader: Marco Prezelj

The well-known Slovenian super alpinist visited the Garhwal Himalaya with two young climbers, Rok Blagus and Luka Lindic in the post monsoon season and made alpine style ascents of Bhagirathi II and III. Bhagirathi III was climbed via its southwest face and all the three reached the summit on 22 September 2009. Bhagirathi II was tackled from its south face followed by south ridge and all the three climbers stood on the top on 01 October 2009.

### **Kedarnath (6968 m)**

Team: Italian

Leader: Giordani Maurizio

On 12 August 2009 all eleven members of this Italian expedition successfully reached the summit of this high peak on the Gangotri glacier. They followed the traditional route from their base camp at Tapovan.

### **Meru Shark's Fin (6450 m)**

Team: Slovenian

Leader: Silvo Karo

Another famous Slovenian climber, Silvo Karo attempted Shark's Fin of Meru with two friends, Andrej Grmovsek and Marko Lukic in August–September 2009. They established ABC at 5160 m but only made it up to 5800 m on their intended route on the east face before excessive snowfall forced them to retreat.

### **Unnamed (6172 m) and Swachand (6721 m)**

Team: Italian

Leader: Giambattista Villa

This unnamed peak is located on the left bank of Swachand glacier and has geographical coordinates: latitude  $30^{\circ} 47'$  and longitude  $79^{\circ} 11'46''$ . In August 2009, an Italian team followed the traditional path from Gangotri – Bhojbasa – Tapovan to Sunderban following the Gangotri glacier and established base camp at 4600 m. Bad weather prevented any further progress.

## **Central Garhwal**

### **Chaukhamba I (7138 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: Summiters, Kolkata

Leader: Satyajit Kar

This large team from Kolkata approached this high mountain from Mana. After reaching the Bhagirath Kharak glacier, they established their base camp at Ghoracha (4200 m). Three high camps were established. Camp 3 was established at 6100 m above the icefall. They attempted north face and reached just 40 m below the summit on 25 June 2009. Bad weather stopped them from reaching the top.

### **Deoban (6852 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: Ordinance Factories Mountaineers & Trekkers

Leader: Samrat Basu

The nine-member team approached Deoban located in the Amrit Ganga valley in the post monsoon season. They established base camp at Eri Udiyar on the right bank of the Amrit Ganga. Camp 3 was established on the Upper Bidhan glacier and a summit camp was put up at 6320 m. They started climbing the northwest ridge and finally reached via the west ridge. Leader with Ashim Ghosh, Tapas Dey, Prosenjit Bagchi along with 4 high altitude supporters reached the summit on 28 August.

### **Mukut Parbat (7242 m)**

Team: French

Leader: Albrieux Lionel

The eight member French team approached this high mountain from Ghastoli. After entering the Khati nala they reached the Pachhimi (West) Kamet glacier. They established base camp at 4800 m, ABC at 5300 m and the summit camp at 6500 m on the south ridge. They climbed the peak in alpine style. Albrieux Lionel, Cabane Damien, Giacobi Sebastien, Jourdain Didier, Pellissier Emmanuel, Ms. Poitevin Marion and Bohin Sebastien reached the summit on 2 October 2009 at 11.00 a.m. Munoz Dimitry had to leave the expedition on account of acute mountain sickness.

Mukut Parvat was first climbed by an expedition from New Zealand in 1951, but from Dakhhini Chamrao glacier and the NW ridge. They had reached the west Kamet glacier approach but had found it too challenging. Sir Edmund Hillary was a member of the team and this expedition was one of the reasons he was selected to join the 1953 Everest expedition.

### **Ronti (6063 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: The Natures' Foundation

Leader: Debabrata Dutta

This seven-member team approached Ronti from Wan and followed the route through Ranak Dhar - Gairuli Patal - Ali Bugial - Bedni Bugial - Pathar Nachuni – Kailubinayak – Baguabasa – Huniathar – Rupkund - Giunargali col to reach their base camp at Silasamudra. They established Camp 1 at Dodang and then crossed Bara Homkund. On 29 August they reached Ronti Saddle and finally the peak at 13.30 p.m.

### ***Himachal Pradesh***

**Fluted Peak (6159 m)** in Losar valley, Spiti

Team: Indian

Organizers: Jadavpur University Mountaineering and Hiking Club

Leader: Atanu Krishna Pathak

The eight-member team approached the mountain from the Losar nala and established two high camps. On 27 June they reached under a cornice at 5800 m and could not proceed. The attempt was called off.

**Indrasan (6221 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: Tarit Memorial Mountaineering & Trekking Association.

Leader: Partha Majumder

A seven-member team attempted this attractive mountain near Manali in June 2009. They established Camp 1 atop Duhangan col (5100 m) but bad weather and excessive snowfall forced them to retreat from 5300 m on 12 June.

**Menthosa (6443 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: BEAS Sodepur

Leader: Amiya Sarkar

The seven-member team followed the Urgus nala and established two high camps on the mountain. From their high camp (5850 m), they attempted to reach the summit on 30

July 2009. They were however unable to cross a big crevasse at around 6005 m and were forced to retreat.

### **Papsura (6451 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: Bhadrakali Padatik

Leader: Prosenjit Mukherjee

This eight-member team from West Bengal established base camp at 4500 m on the Tos glacier. They established four high camps and a summit camp was at 5850 m. From the top camp they reached 6100 m on the northwest face of Papsura. Bad weather and excessive snow prevented them from continuing the attempt. An attempt on nearby Devachen was also foiled, for the same reason. On 8 June, Arun Sen, Dipankar Ghosh, Rajib Bhattacharya, Soma Paul, Jyotilal Soren, Santosh Singh and Subrata Das reached the top of an Unnamed Peak (approx 6000 m) via the north ridge. This peak was located to the west of their summit camp of Papsura.

### **Rubal Kang (6187 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: Kolkata Trekkers Youth

Leader: Ashim Kumar Ghosh Chowdhury

This peak is located on the West Dibibokri glacier, and was attempted by an eight-member team from West Bengal. They established two high camps on the mountain. From the top camp at 5836 m, Kakali Majumdar and Mohar Singh Thakur reached the summit on 27 August. No further details are available.

### **Shiva (6142 m)**

Team: Indian

Organizers: Climbers' Circle

Leader: Tapan Kumar Mukhopadhyay

The peak is located in the Pangri valley of Chamba district. From Cherry village, the team of nine followed the right bank of the Garotu nala and reached base camp on 27 July. They established Camp 1 (4800 m) on the southwest ridge on an icy patch, Camp 2

(5400 m) on the broken west ridge and a summit camp at (5800 m) again on the northwest ridge. They continued climbing the ridge and on 7 August, after crossing an icy hump, Tapan Kumar Mukhopadhyay, Sushanta Mandal, Laxman Singh Rana and Kendru Singh Rana reached the true summit.

**Unnamed Peak (6184 m) near Gangstang**

Team: British

Leader: Jonathan Preston

The eleven member British team began walking from Darcha and after passing through Palamo and Doll established base camp at 4284 m. They established ABC at 5008 m and Camp 1 at 5606 m. Two members suffered from acute mountain sickness and had to be brought down by the liaison officer and other high altitude supporters. Other members continued the attempt. From the summit camp, the south face was climbed and on 5 October Jonathan Preston, Robin Thomas, David Bingham and Benjamin Fry reached the summit. This was first ascent of this peak located at the geographical coordinates Latitude 32° 49'25" and Longitude 76° 58' 91". They have proposed naming the peak 'Sarasvati'. Their GPS showed the summit to be at 6165 m.

**Unnamed Peak (6060 m) near Karcha Parvat**

Team: Japanese

Organizers: Tokai Section of Japanese Alpine Club

Leader: Tsuneo Suzuki

This three-member Japanese team followed the Karcha nala and set up base camp at 4420 m. Camp 1 (4700 m) and Camp 2 (5200 m) were established and on 18 July at 2.50 p.m. Ritsuyu Matsubara and 3 high altitude supporters reached the summit via the northwest face. They proposed the name 'Lower Karcha Parvat' for this peak.

***Eastern Karakoram and Ladakh***

**Saser Kangri II (7518 m)**

Team: Indian American

Leaders: Motup Goba and Mark Richey

See *Indo-American-British 2009 Sasser Kangri II Expedition*, e-letter Vol. 18

## **Plateau Peak (7287 m)**

Team: Indian – American- British

Organizers: The Himalayan Club

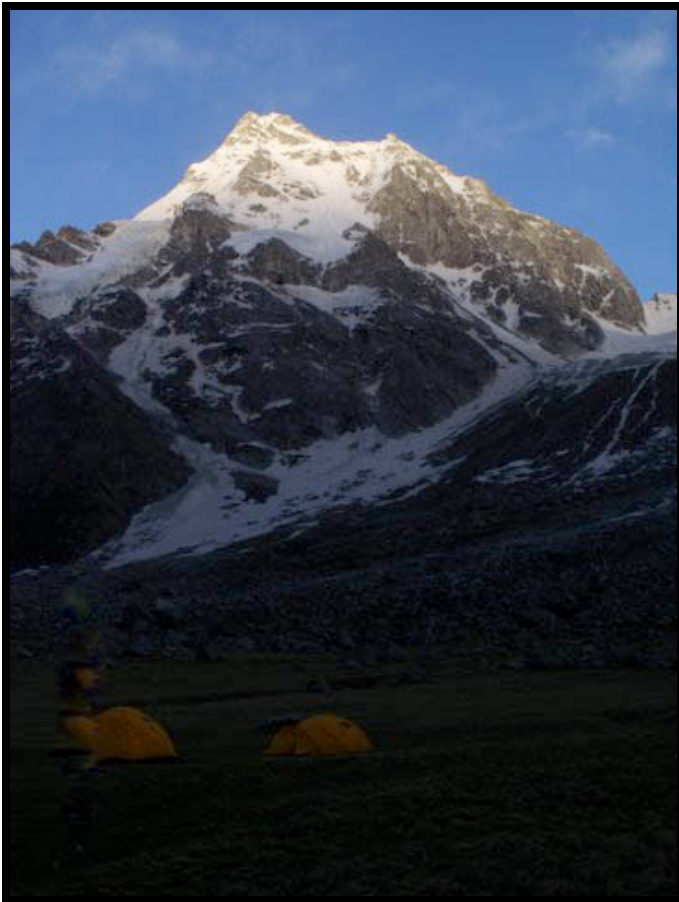
Leaders: Divyesh Muni and Marlin Geist

See *Indo-American Plateau Peak Expedition*, e-letter Vol. 17

### ***Expeditions in 2010***

#### ***Sometimes some things are simply not to be***

Vinay Hegde



Ranglana (Photo: Cyrus Shroff)

“The col route is not possible.”

This, coming from our brave and fearless leader Cyrus Shroff, was disappointing news. We were attempting Ranglana (5400 m), the beautiful nymph of a mountain, situated in the Obra Gad in western Garhwal. for the third time in two years. It was my fifth trip to this valley and we were quite optimistic of the results this time around. The two previous trips had been marred by extremely poor snow conditions and we were unable to do much climbing in the region, which

incidentally offers a multitude of objectives apart from the ever-alluring Ranglana.

My trip started after the others’ and I reached Base Camp, which was on a vast green pasture at 3800 m two days after the others i.e. on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Cyrus, Sanjay Khatau

and Prakash Samant accompanied by Sherpas Norbu and Lingdu had set off on a recce trip to the col separating Ranglana from the adjacent mountain to its northwest the day after they reached Base Camp. There are two possible routes, at least as discerned by us, on Ranglana. One is directly up its west face and the other is through the aforementioned col. The face route appeared to provide serious difficulties in its upper section and did not seem possible in the time we had. The col route was not entirely



View from the Col (Photo: Cyrus Shroff)

visible, but we hoped that there would be a feasible route from the col to the top, via the north ridge. The recce to the col dispelled such hopes. The rocks rising from the col were vertical and consisted of long sections as far as the eye could see and once again did not look possible within the 10 climbing days we had. The col however provided a grand view of the Har-ki-dun valley and a positive and interesting route connecting the Obra with the Har-ki-dun valley. A worthy trek for anyone so inclined.

When I reached Base Camp, Cyrus greeted me with a smile on his face. He was still smiling when he broke the news that the Col Route was not possible, making me wonder. It was only later that Sanjay and Prakash confided that they strongly believed that Cyrus had climbed the peak under the pretext of a recce (he has done such things in the past) and was now busy denying it so that we would focus on other mountains. I intend to take up this issue with the authorities who monitor claims of climbs and see how they prove, for a change, that the peak was indeed climbed but was being claimed to be not climbed!

As we had been brought up to not question our leader, we decided to attempt another peak. We had the option of attempting a 5700 m unnamed peak at the head of the Obra valley or Dhodu (about 5200 m) situated immediately adjacent to Ranglana and promised good climbing opportunities.

The weather had turned bad and it was snowing daily, quite heavily at times. The logistics for the 5700 m peak were too daunting, given the available days and so we turned our attention to the fang shaped Dhodu.

We set up one camp at about 4300 m, just below where the angle steepened. The next day we fixed about 400 meters of rope along the steep gully to reach the saddle between two of the several fangs of the mountain. Having run out of rope, we used the last two climbing ropes to make further progress and reached about 5150 meters before the weather, which had been worsening since early morning, completely broke into a dangerous thunderstorm. With bolts of lightening seeming to strike inches above our heads, we decided to give up on the final 50 meters over an exposed rocky pinnacle and instead rush down. We reached Base Camp the same day by about 8.00 p.m., totally drenched and tired but happy for an excellent climbing session.



Dhodu (Photo: Cyrus Shroff)

The weather prospects continued to be daunting and we decided to wrap up and return to Mumbai.

Despite such devoted and repeated visits (I have been assured a permanent residence card by the locals) Ranglana remains elusive. Perhaps sometimes some things are simply not to be.

## Treks

### *Exploring the Kanasar Lake Region*

Maninder Kohli

There is always an element of curiosity when visiting an area that is a blank spot on a trekking map. Kanasar Lake (4400 m), located between the Supin and Nalgan valleys in western Garhwal is one such location. As the crow flies, it is 5 km from Baraadsar Lake, a known lake in the region. From research on 'Google Earth' we knew that Kanasar Lake was about a kilometer long but when we reached it on the afternoon of 13 June this year, we were amazed at the sheer expanse of the lake and its magical surrounding.



Long view of Kanasar Lake (Photo: Percy Fernandes)

It is not surprising that Kanasar Lake has not received much interest by trekkers as it takes a week's worth of walking to get there and there are no trails. There are two possible routes to the lake - the approach from the Supin valley requires one to climb a ridge over 4800 m directly from 3600 m, with no campsite in between. We decided to go from the Nalgan valley, a more manageable option. Studying maps we determined that there were two further options to reach the head of the Nalgan valley itself. The first was to walk up the valley from Dodra Kwar which is close to its origin and the other was from Kinnaur over the Nalgan Pass, the route we thought would be more interesting.

We left Sangla village which is now more like a town in Kinnaur and crossed the Nalgan Pass (4300 m) three days later to reach a point at 3050 m, close to the head of the Nalgan valley. From here we crossed a ridge to the south and descended to a lovely campsite at 3500 m in the Panchodar valley, an offshoot of the Nalgan valley that gives the best access to Kanasar Lake. The Panchodar valley is visited most by shepherds from Dodra Kwar, between June and August, who take their flock up to the meadows in the region. Our team spotted three brown bears in the Panchodar valley as we approached our campsite, but there was little cause for alarm as they were at a distance and in any case did not show any interest in us.



Approaching Kanasar, Nalgan Pass in background

As we began our approach to Kanasar, we were able to understand the attraction the area had for the shepherds. We were walking in long stretches of meadow for hours. That afternoon we camped at Bijori (3950 m), a sprawling flower filled meadow. We had lovely views of Nalgan Pass to the north.



The final approach to the lake

We left early on the morning of 13 June for Kanasar Lake. At 4000 m the snowline was surprisingly low, right in the middle of June. After gaining a couple of ridges we reached a point at 4200 m, which looked like the final stretch of 3 km to the lake with a gentle height gain of only couple of hundred meters. We figured we needed another hour. Distances in the mountains and the degree of difficulty can be deceptive and boulders covered by thigh deep snow did us in. It finally took a further 4 hours to reach a point at 4450 m, which gave us the first views of Kanasar Lake below us.

Kanasar Lake appeared to be shaped like an eye and certainly looked to be a kilometer long. Virtually the entire lake had a thin sheet of ice on its surface and we could see birds walking on the ice. Towards the middle of the lake we noticed two islands and soon learned that these islands were responsible for the name Kanasar. Apparently early visitors to the lake thought the islands resembled a mark on the eye of a blind person or

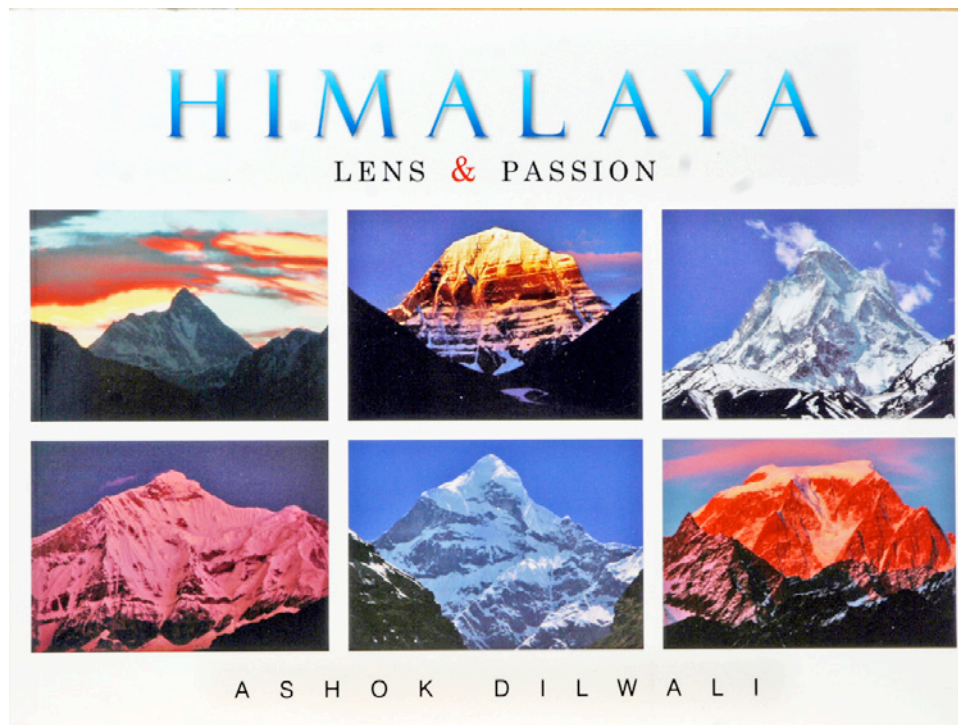
*kana* hence, the name Kanasar. Based on information available with us, the lake is very deep and is visited annually by villagers primarily from Himachal, who immerse a deity in the lake using a rope. It took us a full hour to walk the length of the lake and by the time we were done it was late afternoon and clouds had descended around the lake creating a heavenly sight.

Our decent from Kanasar was a lot quicker as we chose a route offering a steep descent through a side valley called Narma. We then descended down the Nalgan valley via Dwadra Kwar, Sewa, Dhaula and reached Netwar completing our trek to Kanasar Lake.

## Book Review

*Himalayan Memories*

Maninder Kohli



**Himalaya Lens & Passion** by Ashok Dilwali

147 pages, 100 photographs

Kinsey Bros

Rs. 695

One would imagine that after writing 21 books there would be some repetition across books but, once again, Ashok Dilwali has come up with a unique format for his latest book. In *Himalaya Lens & Passion*, Dilwali has chosen 100 of his best pictures taken in the course of over 300 trips to the Himalaya. With each picture he has provided details about the area where the picture was taken, some information on how the photograph was taken and why the photograph is special to him. He has also shared details on the camera and lens used as well as speed and aperture settings.

With the advent of digital cameras, everyone wants to shoot like 'Dilwali' when they are in the mountains. There is no better way to learn than to look at high quality photographs taken by leading photographers. For the adventure lover, there is the added attraction of getting information on some amazing locations in the Himalaya. Dilwali has devoted a lifetime photographing the Himalaya and this is quite evident from both the quality of the photographs and the story around each one.

In my opinion *Himalaya Lens & Passion* is an interesting format and will appeal to the current generation of trekkers, who are not only looking for stunning locations to visit but want to return with a prize in terms of a memorable photograph.

***A(nother) Bottleneck at the Top of the World***

Sukeshi Sheth

11 names were added to the Art Gilkey Memorial located above K2's base camp in August 2008. It was the deadliest day in the mountain's history.

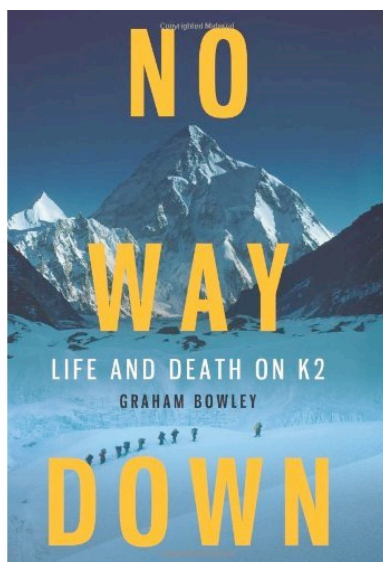
Though Everest is about 240 m higher, K2 (8611 m) comes out on top in every other comparison between the two mountains. It is more beautiful and technically challenging. Far fewer people have stood on its summit than Everest's. Before August 2008, 66 climbers had died trying to reach the summit and of the 274 who did, 22 had died on the descent. For any serious climber, K2 was the ultimate prize.



Climbers using fixed ropes to ascend a dangerously steep gully called the Bottleneck.  
(Photo: Lars Flato Nessa)

More than two months after getting to Base Camp and after several weeks of uncertain weather, 30 climbers from 8 international expeditions set off for the summit from Camp 4 (around 7880 m) before dawn on 1 August 2008. From Camp 4 the route follows a ridge called the Shoulder to a gully of snow, ice and rock called the Bottleneck. The Bottleneck rises steeply for almost a thousand feet towards a horizontal section called the Traverse, which is actually a steep ice face around the mountain. This route then climbs up to a long snowfield, at about 8333 m, before it finally reaches the summit. A huge, highly crevassed serac ooms over the Bottleneck and most of the Traverse. As long as the serac remains stable, this is the safest route up K2.

Ropes had not yet been fixed above Camp 4. There had been an agreement at Base Camp between the various expeditions about sharing this responsibility higher up on the mountain. This was not what happened in actual fact. As climbers reached the Bottleneck, they saw a traffic jam – some of the climbers in front were slow and there was insufficient rope. Fearing they would not reach the summit at a reasonable time, several climbers returned to Camp 4.



No Way Down: Life and Death  
On K2  
Graham Bowley  
Harper Collins pp 270

At 11 a.m. while still waiting in the Bottleneck, Serbian climber Dren Mandic unclipped himself from the fixed rope to help a Norwegian climber put some rope in her backpack. He slipped and fell among the rocks and died soon after. Though not usually done so high on the mountain, Mandic's teammates wanted to recover his body. A high altitude porter trying to help also slipped and fell to his death.

Perhaps encouraged by the fine weather, or the theory of 'safety in numbers', 19 of the 30 climbers pushed on toward the summit.

Some of them had left Camp 3 the previous day and had made only a brief stop at Camp 4. By the time they reached the Traverse, some of them had been climbing continuously for almost 24 hours. They were still several hours from the summit.

The first climber to reach the summit was a Spaniard who had been at the front, fixing ropes and opening the trail. He got there at 3 p.m. and left by 3:40 after waiting in vain for the other climbers to arrive. He descended all the way to Base Camp that day. The rest of the climbers began arriving at the summit at about 5:30 p.m., with the last set arriving at 8 p.m., some 17 hours after leaving Camp 4.

About 9 p.m., a massive serac avalanche ripped off the fixed rope from the Bottleneck before all the climbers had safely descended. A Norwegian climber was killed in the icefall. Parts of the Traverse and Bottleneck now looked completely different from the way they did when the climbers were ascending. They had to descend in the dark, in unfamiliar landscape or wait for daylight. Not everyone made it down. Of those who did, some suffered terrible frostbite.

*No Way Down: Life and Death on K2* is Graham Bowley's engrossing account of what happened on 1 August and the next couple of days. It is inevitable that it will be

compared with Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air*, an account of a similar disaster on Everest on 10 May 1996. Krakauer is a climber who was part of the events as they unfolded. Bowley is a reporter for *The New York Times*, whose initial reaction was "Why should we care?" As he interviewed as many of the people present as he could, he gained some understanding of the fascination the mountain held for many and later even made a trip to K2's base camp. The result is a sympathetic portrait of the climbers and their quest.

The book was gripping; I read it in one sitting. Unfortunately it does not even try to answer some important questions. Were the climbers too dependent on fixed ropes – a relatively new phenomenon on K2? Why did some climbers turn back while most continued up? Were the ones that went up not experienced enough to know that descending in the dark would be folly? Why did they all have satellite phones and high-end camera equipment but not even the most basic survival gear? Experienced mountaineers that they all were, surely they knew that K2 is a mountain that exacts a high price from all those who try to climb it?

## Obituary

***Dr Charles Houston (1913 – 2009)***

Dr Thomas Hornbein



(Photo: Harish Kapadia)

Dr Houston the legendary American mountaineer passed away on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2009. He was 97 years old. Charlie, as his friends called him, was a legend in his lifetime. Dr Houston was an honorary member of the Himalayan Club.

Houston was born in New York in 1913. He was educated at Harvard University and named a Doctor of Medicine from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons.

In 1936, Houston was a member of a celebrated expedition led by the British climber H.W. Tilman to the top of Nanda Devi in India, the highest mountain climbed at the time. In 1938, he was the leader of the first American Karakoram expedition to K2. Although he did not reach the summit, his party mapped a route that was later used by the Italian team that first summited the mountain in 1954. He attempted K2 again in 1953 (see *Third American Karakoram Expedition*). A member of the team, Art Gilkey, became ill (probably with thrombophlebitis) as they approached the summit. The team reversed direction and tried to carry Gilkey down. However, he was lost in a disastrous cascade of events which included a fall in which the rest of the roped-together team survived only by virtue of a single ice ax that suspended them all.

### **Medical Practice and Teaching**

Houston practiced Internal Medicine in Exeter, New Hampshire and Aspen, Colorado. Later, he joined the faculty at the University of Vermont as Professor of Medicine. He retired from the faculty in 1979.

### **Medical Research**

Houston began his study of the effects of high altitude as a naval flight surgeon in World War II. He was in charge of Operation Everest (1947) in which four subjects were taken to a simulated altitude of 8850 m over 34 days in a compression chamber. These studies demonstrated that careful acclimatization would allow pilots to fly unpressurized planes to altitudes of 15,000 feet and higher. This capacity afforded the US Army Air Corps an important tactical advantage.

He was among the first to study High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (1958), and High Altitude Retinal Hemorrhage (1968). He has authored numerous books and articles about mountain medicine. Since 1975, he has organized the International Hypoxia Symposia in the Canadian Rockies.

In 1996 he was awarded the King Albert Medal of Merit to honor his "singular achievements" in the mountain world. Houston was also involved with early attempts to construct an artificial heart. Although not successful, his design was influential in later developments, including the Jarvik-7 model that was used with some success.

## **Peace Corps Service**

From 1962 to 1965, Houston served as the first Country Director of the Peace Corps for India. During his tenure, the volunteers in India grew from 6 to 250.

## **Works by Charles S. Houston**

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Charles Houston (1993). *High altitude: illness and wellness*. Merrillville, Ind: ICS Books.

Charles Houston (2005). *Going Higher: Oxygen Man and Mountains* (5th ed. ed.). Seattle, WA: The Mountaineers Books.

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This book received the Himalayan Club Kekoo Naoroji Award.

## **News and Views**

### ***Death in the High Himalaya***

Sukeshi Sheth

There appears to be an increase in the number of reports in the media of people dying from the effects of getting to high altitude too quickly. News agencies in Nepal reported that at least 10 Indian pilgrims were killed in 2009 due to high altitude related illness. This year, a group of Indian pilgrims had to be evacuated by helicopter, again suffering

from acute mountain sickness (AMS). Last month, the *Times of India* reported that a tourist was found dead in his hotel room in Leh. The cause was believed to AMS.

The actual number of casualties is almost certainly higher. And, they are not restricted to tourists and pilgrims. A climber is reported to have reached 4850 m three days after leaving base camp and went into a coma.

As the high Himalaya becomes more accessible to the casual tourist, with better roads and airports, the number of tourists is visibly increasing. Unfortunately, the average tour operator and travel agent lacks even a basic understanding of the effects of high altitude on the human body necessary to advise and guide their clients on the need for proper acclimatization and the basic precautions to be taken when traveling to heights over 2500-3000 m. This could save much discomfort and certainly avoid illnesses related to high altitude as well as even, on the odd unfortunate occasion, death.

As altitude increases and atmospheric pressure drops, the air becomes thinner. Less oxygen is available to the body and results in a condition called hypoxia that affects every function of the body. The body is able to adapt to the rarefied air, but it takes time. It is well known that lack of acclimatization can lead to symptoms ranging from headaches, nausea, insomnia and the loss of motor and cognitive skills to more serious conditions like High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE) which, if not treated quickly, result in death.

While there are things one can do to aid acclimatization, slow ascent is the key. If someone is exhibiting symptoms of AMS, there should be no further ascent and if symptoms persist, descent is the only option.

With a few precautions it is possible to enjoy all that the high Himalaya has to offer. The Himalayan Club published a booklet last year about the simple things that travelers to heights need to keep in mind called 'Healthy in the High Himalaya' and will be posted on the Club's website soon. It is always best to consult a doctor before making a trip to altitude.

### ***Work Begins on the Rohtang Tunnel***

The foundation stone for a tunnel under the Rohtang Pass was laid at the end of June, eight years after it was announced. At 8.8 km, it will be the longest in the world at an altitude over 3300 m. Excavation started at Dhundi, about 25 km from Manali. When completed, the tunnel will provide year round access to the Lahaul and Spiti valleys of Himachal Pradesh.

### **Advisory on Satellite Phone Use in India**

Maninder Kohli

While the use of satellite phones in India has been banned for several years, there had been no way for the authorities to determine if in fact they were being used. The situation has recently changed. Devices that pick up satellite transmission and also pinpoint the location of origin have now apparently been put into place. Whenever usage has been detected, the user has been immediately arrested.

The fact that most foreigners visitors to India are unaware of the satellite phone ban compounds the problem as users are caught unawares. The press has recently reported several incidents of foreign tourists being arrested. The *Incredible India* website set up by the Ministry of Tourism doesn't mention the satellite phone ban, something that should be rectified.

### ***Environment News***

#### **Kailash Sacred Landscape Initiative**

In a spirit of environmental co-operation, India, China and Nepal have agreed to work together to develop a plan for the conservation of the Mount Kailash region of Tibet. This is a first step towards a framework for the Kailash Sacred Landscape Initiative.

In addition to the Kailash region, the landscape will include the adjacent Himalayan regions in India and Nepal. The landscape is significant for many religions in the Asia and is one of the most culturally and ecologically diverse and fragile areas in the world. The framework will focus on preserving this diversity and promoting scientific co-operation.

## **Painting Mountains**

Peru is home to 70% of the world's tropical mountain glaciers and these are melting at an alarming rate – 22% in the last 30 years according to a 2009 World Bank report. The remaining could disappear within 20 years if action is not taken to mitigate the effects of climate change.

In June, the BBC reported on one man's efforts to do something about this. Eduardo Gold, a local inventor and one of 26 winners of the World Bank's '100 Ideas to Save the Planet' competition in 2009, has begun a project on the Chalon Sombrero peak (4756 m). It is located in an area where the peaks are now totally devoid of snow. Workers from a nearby village use a mixture of lime, industrial egg white and water to make a whitewash, which they splash on the rocks near the summit.

The principle is simple – a light coloured surface will reflect more sunlight than a darker one, thus cooling the surface. The American Energy Secretary has endorsed a similar project, encouraging people to paint the roofs of their houses white. Gold hopes that the cooling of the surface will allow snow to remain on the ground and glaciers to grow. Reactions have ranged from skeptical to the cautiously optimistic. The best one can expect is a local effect. Gold appears to be undeterred. He is reported to have said, "I'd rather try and fail to find a solution than start working out how we are going to survive without the glaciers, as if the situation was irreversible."

## ***News From Nepal***

Ang Tshering

### **Total Number of Climbers on Mt. Everest**

The spring 2010 season saw fewer expeditions attempting Mt. Everest than in years past. 157 foreign climbers and 190 high altitude Sherpa climbed Mt. Everest from Nepal. Though the CTMA (China Tibet Mountaineering Association) has not been able to provide exact numbers, I predict the total number of climbers on the Tibetan side to be around 165.

The latest information from the office of Ms. Elizabeth Hawley, chronicler of all expeditions in Nepal, gives some very interesting facts. Between 1953 and 2009, the total number of ascents on Everest was 4557 by 3163 individuals (some having summited more than once). 268 of this year's spring total of 513 ascents, are new summiteers. Thus the total number of ascents to date is 5070 while the actual number of persons having summited Mt. Everest is 3431.

### **Dhaulagiri Golden Jubilee Celebration**

The Government of Nepal marked the Golden Jubilee of the first ascent of Mt. Dhaulagiri with various events in Pokhara on 13 May 2010. In the morning, a huge group clad in their traditional clothes started a procession from the lakeside and ended at the premises of International Mountain Museum to celebrate this day.

The Guest of Honor was the renowned Austrian mountaineer Kurt Diemberger, the first summiteer of Mt. Dhaulagiri and the only remaining person alive to make first ascents on two 8000 m peaks. Also present were many veteran mountaineers including Ang Rita Sherpa, Serap Jangbu Sherpa, Kuniko Yagihara - climbing leader of two successful Dhaulagiri Expedition in 1978 and 1982, and leader of the Yeti Research Expedition around Dhaulagiri.



Kurt Diemberger and other Dhaulagiri summiteers in Pokhara

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two 8000 m peaks. Also present were many veteran mountaineers including Ang Rita Sherpa, Serap Jangbu Sherpa, Kuniko Yagihara - climbing leader of two successful Dhaulagiri Expedition in 1978 and 1982, and leader of the Yeti Research Expedition around Dhaulagiri.

Celebrations were also held in Beni (Myagdi District), Baglung (Baglung District), and Kushma (Parbat District) on the 14th of May 2010. The events at Pokhara, Beni, Baglung, and Kushma were a tremendous success in showing the concern towards the mountains and promotion of mountain tourism in Nepal.

### **Reduction on Mt. Dhaulagiri Royalty Fee:**

On the occasion of Mt. Dhaulagiri Golden Jubilee, the Government of Nepal has decided to reduce the royalty fee on Mt. Dhaulagiri by 50% as well as to provide free entry visas to Nepal for Mt. Everest and Mt. Dhaulagiri summiteers for 2010 and 2011.

### **Eco Everest Expedition 2010**

The 2010 Eco Everest Expedition brought 4803 kgs of garbage down to Base Camp. The expedition also brought down all the human waste produced by its climbers and Sherpas. The expedition advocated for other expeditions to follow suit. In this effort, the Eco Everest Expedition also supplied other expeditions at Base Camp with Restop Bags (toilet bags).



Garbage at Base Camp

Since 2008, the Eco Everest Expedition has brought down more than 12,000 kgs of old garbage and more than 300 kgs of human waste produced by the expeditions from Mt. Everest for proper disposal. In 2009, they also brought down about 700 kgs of the wreckage of an Italian army

helicopter that crashed during the Italian Everest Expedition in 1973 that were from the edge of the Khumbu Icefall (5486 m).

The main sponsor of the garbage collection for 2008 and 2009 was Asian Trekking and for 2010 were Asian Trekking, Reinhold Messner, The North Face and The Alpine Convention.

### **Beat the GLOF Action Run and Save the Khumbu Festival 2010**

The second *Beat the GLOF Action Run and Save the Himalayas-Khumbu Festival* was held on 4 June 2010 in Khumjung village in the Khumbu region. This annual event aims to highlight the risks of potential GLOFs (Glacial Lake Outburst Flood) in the area.

The event started at 7 am with the *Beat the GLOF Action Run* in which 79 men and 33 women participated. The run route started from Khumjung (3790 m) and passed through Kyangjuma (3550 m) –Namche (3440 m)-Phurte (3390 m) -Thamo (3842 m) - back to Phurte (3820 m) – Syangboche (3720 m) – Khunde (3840 m) and back to Khumjung.

Locals from Khumjung, Khunde, Phortse, Pangboche, Thame and Namche participated in the festival that showcased traditional Sherpa culture. Students from Khumjung School presented a play called *Message from the Doctor*, highlighting the issues of climate change.