

## A QUICK VISIT TO KULTI

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'WE WILL GO IN HURRY hurry and come back quickly'. Monesh was urging to take advantage of the nearness of Himalaya and a short vacation. It was difficult to resist against such youthful exuberance.

We were off to Lahul on 7 November 1986. A short flight from Delhi landed us at Kulu (Manali) and next day we reached Rohthang Pass, the gateway to Lahul.






Kulti must be the most visible valley of Lahul. Scores of travelers crossing Rohthang could see its peaks rising across the Chandra river. They all look beautiful, challenging and so near that a fly-over could be built from the pass. But the dream sequence ends here. The valley is not much frequented; certainly not by the mountaineers; not much observed and recorded; and there is no fly-over. We descended to Khoksar and proceeded on the northern bank of Chandra. The entrance to the Kulti valley is 6 km to the southeast. We reached here in three days from home, with not much expense. BC is just a day away, which was reached over a well-trodden path suitable for mules.

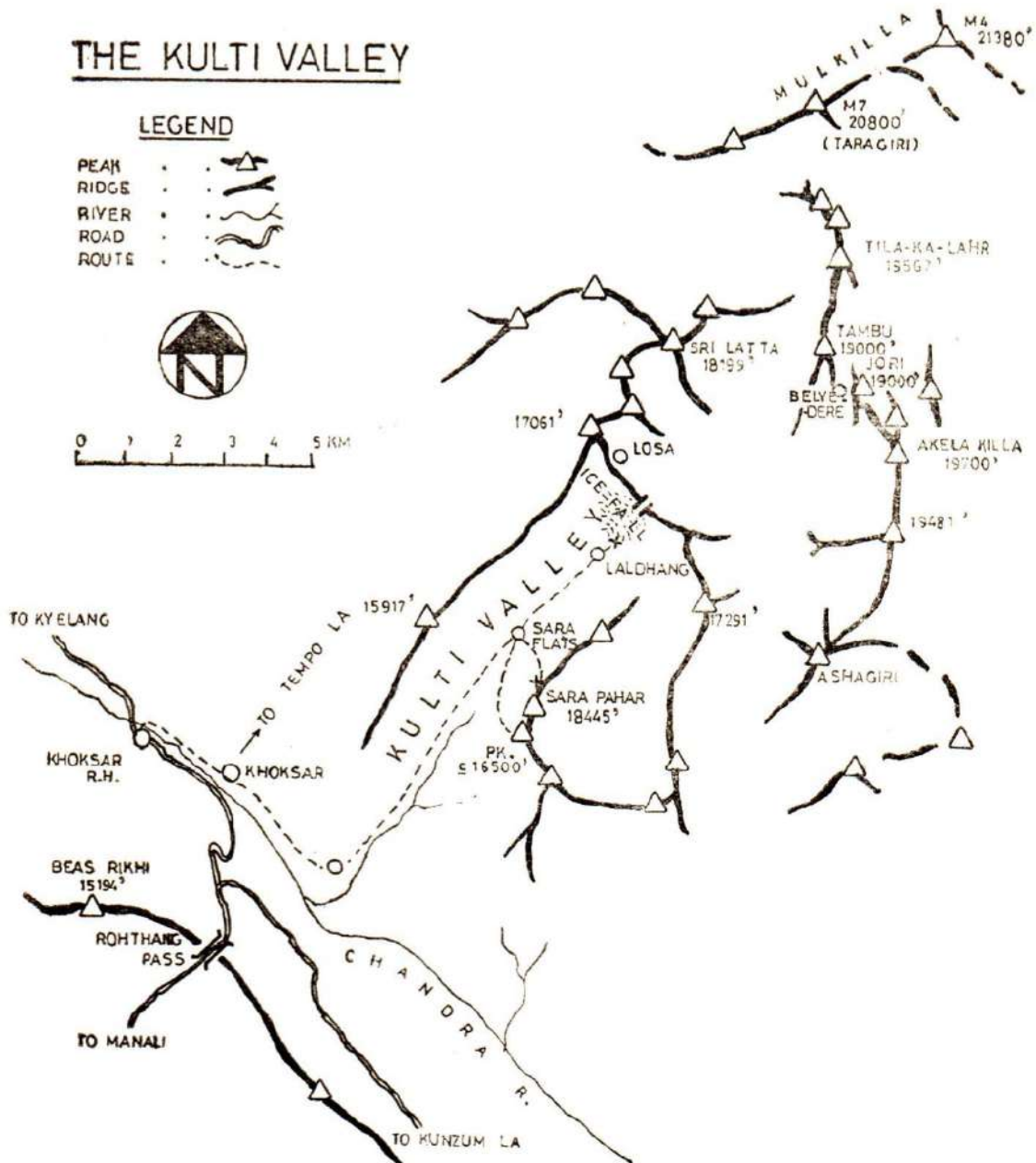
I got up at the 'Sara Flats', our site of BC at 12,500 ft with shouts of 'It's solid cold' as Monesh changed clothes in  $-10^{\circ}\text{C}$ . He had slipped into the Kulti early in the morning. But that seemed to give him ideas. With Milind, he left to try a small peak of c. 16,500 ft opposite our camp. Ashwin and myself trekked to the head of the valley to the northern edge of the Sara Flats. A steep

and vicious icefall cut off the route. Huge reddish rock, called Laldhang, was on the right while a narrow trek over the scree and rock on the left allowed a possible access above the icefall to Losa. By evening we gathered around — the first party with the satisfaction of a good acclimatizing climb and we with our knowledge of the valley.

### THE KULTI VALLEY

#### LEGEND

- PEAK . . . 
- RIDGE . . . 
- RIVER . . . 
- ROAD . . . 
- ROUTE . . . 





The first record of a visit to the Kulti valley was from the Royal Air Force Mountaineering Association Expedition in 1955.<sup>1</sup> After many struggles elsewhere they had reached the Sara Flats and established camps above the icefall. On the west lies Sri Latta, 18,200 ft, an easy giant mass. Straight on is the shapely 'Tambu' (or Tent peak), c. 19,000 ft, with Jori (Twins) c. 19,000 ft, next to it. The head wall is rounded off by the steep and difficult Akela Killa (Lonely Fort), 19,700 ft. Once on the upper moraine all these are possible in a few days. A passage between the Tambu and Jori (nicknamed 'Belvedere') leads to the north, onto the central Lahul plateau.

The RAFMA expedition had climbed and named all the above peaks. They passed through the passage to climb Tila-ka-Lahr (waves), 19,567 ft, and finally M7 (Taragiri), 20,800 ft, from the south ridge. Thus Kulti is a possible gateway to the higher horizons. In the recent years few parties have climbed in the area and only the climbs of Tambu and Jori were repeated. In the adjoining valley in the west above the village of Khoksar a disused path leads over Tempo la (c. 17,000 ft) to Milang glacier and Darcha. On the east lies the CB group of peaks and its peaks can be attempted by their western reaches from here. We had aims of spending a week in the valley, observing and studying the above peaks at close quarters. We hoped to attempt 'Sara Pahar' a shapely peak of 18,445 ft on the east of the valley above the Sara Flats.

After photographing and recording the peaks, we started off on 14 November. Crossing Kulti nala was a cold but not a difficult affair. We entered a steep nala and then followed a moraine ridge. A camp was made at 15,500 ft. Next day Monesh and myself pushed up. Our idea was to establish another high camp at foot of the summit pyramid. The other two went down. We promised to join them in a day for our second stove had failed and they could not have been comfortable for long. In the event we reached about 17,500 ft by late afternoon and saw huge black clouds swirling over from the northwest. Altimeter jumped steeply and we had a strong inclination of an approaching storm. We decided to rush down to our BC, which we did so by night. And it was a terrible night; the storm raged unabated and left about 3 ft of snow. Late afternoon next day we packed up and the only thing to do was to rush down. Radio was warning of further storms. In two days we retraced back to Khoksar in very deep soft snow. Hard work indeed.

Next day we had a lift in an open truck as a snow-cutter removed snow like a giant dinosaur. But we shivered in the wind on

1. See H.J. Vol. XIX, p. 147 and *Alpine Journal* Vol. 61, p. 45.

Rohthang and were comforted by that man's best friend — arrack, from a local co-passenger who knew how to look after himself. Back at Manali we realised how lucky we were, for this storm had left about 80 persons dead on Zozi la in the west, few trekkers were reported missing and many villages were buried.

Though we came back 'quickly quickly', it was enough to record the impressions of the enormous climbing possibilities of Kulti valley. In a short time one can climb peaks of various difficulties in the unspoilt and unfrequented area within a ten day holiday and at great economy one can have a feel of real mountains, if under 20,000 ft is your choice. As my young friend would put it; 'There is solid climbing around'!

*Members:* Harish Kapadia, Monesh Devjani, Milind Pansare and Ashwin Joglekar.

*Photos 43-44*

*Panorama E*



M7 (Taragir)  
(29,800 ft)

Tila-ka-Lahr  
(19,507 ft)

Tambu  
(c. 19,900 ft)

Jari  
(c. 19,000 ft)

Akoda Killa  
(19,700 ft)



Pennings, E.  
View of Kulu valley peaks (Lahul) from Rikthang pass.  
Note 17

(Horná Kapsidá)