

THE TRIMUKHI PARBAT EXPEDITION 1990

THE MOUNTAINEERS

72, Vijay Apartments, 16, Carmaical Road, Bombay 400 026.

S U M M A R Y

An expedition was organised to the unfrequented and unknown Jadh Ganga Valley which lies to the north of the Gangotri glacier, Garhwal, Uttar Pradesh. The valley was last recorded with visit of J. B. Auden in 1939 (Himalayan Journal, Vol.XII,p.17). Heinrich Harrer escaped from one of the northern passes, Tsang Chok Ia to Tibet for his Seven years in Tibet.

We operated in the Mana gad valley turning south of Tridhara. This valley has not been entered or recorded since the visit of J. B. Auden (1939) on whose account we relied. This is one of the easternmost valley, draining Mana bamak, Sri Kailash bamak, and Trimukhi bamak.

The following peaks were climbed : Both First Ascents.

<u>Peak/height</u>	<u>Summiters</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Trimukhi Parbat East (6280 m)	Monesh Devjani Pasang Bodh	30 May 1990
2. 'Nandi' (5795 m) (NE of Trimukhi Parbat)	Harish Kapadia Monesh Devjani Pasang Bodh Yograj Buruwa	28 May 1990

Col Reached :

'Saraswati Col' (5900 m)	Harish Kapadia Monesh Devjani Pasang Bodh Yograj Buruwa	4 June 1990
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This high col at the head of the southeast Branch of Mana bamak, is situated on Mana dhar. It leads down gently to Saraswati valley little south of Mana pass and would lead to Badrinath. J. B. Auden had mentioned the possibility of its existence while observing from a high col between the two branches of Mana bamak. It is for the first time that this col over a high mountain divide was explored and reached by this party.

Period : 4 May 1990 to 14 June 1990.

Members : Harish Kapadia (leader), Monesh Devjani with Ashwin Popat, Zarir Mistry, supported by Pasang Bodh and Yograj Buruwa from Manati, Himachal Pradesh.

Sponsored by : The Mountaineers, Bombay.

DETAILED REPORT

The expedition left Bombay on 4 May and reached Gangotri on 9th. A four day acclimatization trek with family and friends was undertaken to Tapovan (4460 m). Two members returned to Uttarkashi to sort out the final problems and obtained the 'Inner Line Permits' for this highly restricted area.

History : The earliest visit to this area was by surveyors. Griesbach surveyed it in 1883 and J. B. Auden completed the work in 1935 and 1939 (see 'A Season's work in the Central Himalaya' by J. B. Auden, Himalayan Journal, Vol.XII, P.17). The present expedition was in the Tridhara-Mana Gad valley. J. B. Auden was the last known and recorded person to have visited this in 1939, fifty one years before us.

Approach : The expedition left Bhaironghati on 17 May to reach Nelang (3650 m - 23 km). Naga (3640 m - 7 km) was reached on 18th. At Naga Jadh Ganga (Jahanvi) flowed from the north while we now followed Mana gad to the east reaching Nilapani (3860 m - 12 km) on 19th. Ahead of this we were to be alone and in unknown country. Crossing Nilapani gad, which flow in from the north, we proceeded along the right bank of the Mana gad for 8 km and crossed it finally to the left bank and camped little below the Mana camping grounds (4200 m - 8 km). Local porters were discharged and Harish, Monesh and two supporters remained here for the next 17 days. Next day an advance base camp was recceed going along the left bank of Mana gad to a point 2 km west (and before) Tridhara (4560 m - 8 km). Next two days all ferried luggage and finally a site 4 km ahead of the ABC (2 km south of Tridhara - nicknamed 'Leopards Cave') was selected and occupied by 25 May. Harish and Monesh carried out a detailed recce in the meantime and observed Trimukhi Parbat and its glaciers. Based on this recce, site for Camp 1 (5100 m - 6 km) was selected on the Trimukhi glacier. This camp was stocked and occupied on 27 May.

First ascent of 'Nandi' (5795 m - 19007 ft) : This peak lies to the northeast of Trimukhi Parbat and was to the north of our camp. It was climbed on 28 May going up 600 m on its southern slopes from our camp. The view from above was magnificent. It was observed that Trimukhi Parbat (6422 m) was an imposing ice and rock pyramid and its approaches, if any, were from south after skirting the long glacier. This was thought to be beyond the capacity of our small party. However, the east peak of Trimukhi Parbat seemed possible from its eastern approach. This peak prominently and distinctly situated east of Trimukhi Parbat was only 142 m lower than the main peak.

First ascent of Trimukhi Parbat East (6280 m - 20,600 ft) : On 29 May a four member party ferried loads to Camp 2 (5720 m - 4 km) at the eastern foot the Trimukhi Parbat East peak. Monesh and Pasang Bodh stayed there as the first summit team while Harish and Yograj returned to Camp 1. On 30 May Monesh and Pasang left the camp at 6 a.m. in perfect weather. After 400 m of flat traverse the first climb (100 m) was on snow and ice (35°). The second pitch of 100 m took them one hour (50°). After discarding some loads and having refreshments they tackled the next 130 m in one hour fifteen minutes. This was the crux of the climb over mixed snow and rock (60°). With this they reached the southeast ridge of the peak which was 40° and not complicated but highly exposed. They climbed this quickly and the summit was gained at 9.45 a.m. After spending about half an hour they returned on the same route, now roped up and glissading on the easier lower section. They reached the camp at 1 p.m. Harish and Yograj came up as the second summit team/in support. As the peak was climbed a happy party returned to Camp 1 together. All descended to Leopards Cave for a day of rest.

Exploring 'Saraswati Col' (5900 m - 19400 ft) : In 1939 J.B. Auden had penetrated the Mana gad valley wanting to explore a col leading towards Badrinath. He camped at the bifurcation of the two Mana glaciers and followed the southwest branch. Climbing steeply he reached a high col which was in fact between the two branches of the Mana glaciers. However, he observed and mentioned the possibility of an easy col at the head of southeast branch of Mana bamak. This was the col which we explored, reached and named as 'Saraswati Col'. All 4 members left Leopards Cave on 2 June. We camped at 4900 m near the junction of the valley leading to Tara bamak. The next day we gained 600 m. The route proceeded on a moraine ridge with rocky breaks and finally turned southeast to our camp at 5500 m, which was due east of the junction of two Mana glaciers. On 4 June we left at 5:30 a.m., at first proceeding on the moraine ridge on the right bank and after 2 km descended on the glacier floor. Climbing gradually for next 4 km a final 100 m steep climb led us to the eastern head of the glacier. After a 100 m steep descent on the other side it led very gently to the Saraswati valley in the east and to Badrinath in the south. The view was all encompassing with Kamet, Mukut Parbat and host of other peaks on the east while Sri Kailash, Mana Parbat and our own Trimukhi Parbat towards the west. This col could be used as a pass between the Jadh Ganga valley and Saraswati valley which are otherwise too far away placed by road approaches. As far as we could confirm, the existence of such a col was heard of but no one had yet reached or seen it.

We returned quickly to our last camp and descended to the Leopards Cave very tired, with the last party reaching at 9 p.m. This was a most satisfying way to end this expedition.

Return : We withdrew to B.C. on 5th evening where as arranged 3 porters were waiting. We left on 6 June and reached little above Naga, crossing nala and snow bridges. On 7th we quickly passed Naga and Nelang from where a truck ride deposited us at Bhaironghati for warmth and civilization. After a rest at Dhanolti the party returned to Bombay on 14 June.

Nomenclature : The few names that we came across have traditional meanings.

Jadh Ganga : The river of Jadh people who were the earlier inhabitants here and traded with Tibet.

Nilapani : The river of blue water.

Tridhara : Meeting place of three nalas.

Trimukhi Parbat : Mountain of three faces. A colloquial name for Shiva.

'Nandi' : Consort of Shiva. It generally faces all the temples of Shiva. In this case it faces Trimukhi Parbat.

Saraswati : The goddess of learning. The col leads to discovery and Saraswati valley.

Wildlife : As the valleys we were visiting were unvisited we expected and found signs of wild animals. As one turns south with the Tridhara valley on the left bank there was a complex of huge rocks with many caves and ledges. Around the area many distinct and recent footprints of Snow Leopards were found. Inside some of the caves remains of the kills were seen. Our camp near the cave was promptly called 'Leopards Cave' camp.

Bear tracks were seen in plenty and they followed our tracks every day. We were unable to site any of them (perhaps luckily!). A wildlife observer can surely look for the elusive Snow Leopard and bears here and is bound to be rewarded. Plenty of bharal herds were observed. (or seen observing us!).

Ecology : No ecological damage except natural was seen as no party has visited this valley for '51 years. 'Old moraines, oxidized and crumbling like rotten slag heaps flanked the oppressive gorge' as mentioned by J.B. Auden are still evident. 'A glacial step formed during the Pleistocene Ice Age', west of Tridhara is a rare geological site here.

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H. Kapadia

HARISH KAPADIA
LEADER

Place : Bombay

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Date : 16 June 1990.

