

SWETA GLACIER EXPEDITION 1986

Organised by :

South Calcutta Trekkers Association

1/3 Love Lock Street, Calcutta 700 019

Leader's Report

ORGANISATION & PLANNING :

The Association formed with its objective to be a perfect mountaineering association by some local youths, who were going to see and enjoy the Himalayan beauty for the past eight years. After completion of Rock Climbing course in the year 1983 (organized by Himalayas Beckon) they thought without forming an association there was no alternative to enjoy the Himalayan beauty in a well and disciplined manner. At last in the month of March '83 we formed our Association named 'South Calcutta Trekkers Association'. Our activity were who organized Rock Climbing course ; High altitude trekking in the Himalayan region to promote trekking, adventure activity amongst the young generation and we successfully did that. Most of the club members took training from Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttar Kashi – Basic Mountaineering Course in the year 1985-86. At last in one Committee Meeting held sometimes in the month of September, 1985 was resolved to organise a peak climbing programme in 1986. I had been selected as Leader by the Executive Committee and two offers took the responsibility to choose the expedition area. We thought to go to Sweta glacier of Gangotri-Chatrurangi complex of Garhwal Himalaya in the month of May – June '86. With this view we talk with Miss Munmun Chatterjee of Baje-Shibpur Mitali Sangha (Howrah) who went to this area in 1984 to climb two virgin and unnamed peaks of height 6166 Mtr. and 6352 Mtr. After long discussion we planned to undertake our first peak climbing programme (peaks : 6166 mtr. and 6352 mtr.) in Sweta Glacier. Accordingly we made the final plan and send to IMF, New Delhi for getting necessary approval. The team were consisting of 11 members.

ARRANGEMENTS & JOURNEY :

After obtaining necessary approval from IMF, New Delhi we started raising our funds and making arrangements for necessary materials and equipments and finally a team consisting of 10 members, Sri Anjan Ghosh (Dy. Leader), Sandip Roy Choudhury (Qr. Master), Ranjan Dutta (Treasurer), Kanak Ghosh, Gautam Giri, Shibnath Basu, Subrata Saha, Shyam Sundar Pal, Chinmoy Bhattacharjee and myself as the leader left Howrah Station on 24th May '86 by 9 UP Doon Express amidst warm reception from our well wishers. The team arrived at Uttar Kashi on 26th May in the evening and decided to stay in Uttar Kashi on 27th for arrangements of equipments from NIM. Porters and necessary inner line permit from the D.M. Uttar Kashi. On 27th May morning we got the tragic news about the death of Liaison Officer of the Australian team, who were in the Shivling. Naturally we got little bit upset. The whole day was cloudy and was raining cats and dogs. When we went to S.P.'s office we saw that postmortem was going on of the same Liaison Officer Dr. Bhanumati who died in Australian Shivling expedition. There we met our instructor Sri Jamir Singh Rana who went as rescue team member and took the body. He advised us not to take any risk As there was huge deposit of snow because of fresh snow fall in the 3rd week of May '86. We did not get our necessary inner line permit on the same day as S.P. was badly busy with the postmaster case. On the same night I decided to move to Gangotri by 11 A.M.'s Bus. Next day i.e. on 28th May we woke early morning and myself and Sri Shibnath Basu went to SP's Home to get our necessary inner line permit and instructed Sri Gautam Giri & Sandip Roy Choudhury to talk to Sri Khem Singh of Uttar Kashi regarding our porters (LAP & HAP). We were in S.P.'s home up to 11 A.M. but did not get the permit, so I decided to move my team except myself to Gangotri by 11 AM's Bus including porters. According to that I sent Sri Shibnath Basu to convey the news to my members who were waiting for us at Bus Stand. At 11.30 AM I joined with them and told them to go and wait at Gangotri until I reach over there. The Bus left for Gangotri and I came back to SP's office. I got my necessary permit at about 2.00 PM and ran to avail of 2 P.M.'s bus. I reached at Gangotri at 9.00 PM and joined with my members there. I got my dinner and enjoyed the fine evening with my members. 15 L.A.P.s came with us to ferry our loads upto Base Camp and 4 H.A.P.s to go to our higher camps. At 10.00 P.M. I got the sad news from one of my HAP Sri Lal Bahadur Singh about his unwillingness to join with us. He told that he was going to Nandanvan (our Base Camp) the next morning to rescue his brother who went to SATPANTH with a team from Pune. Possibly three members and two HAPs who pitched their tents in that area were buried in snow due to heavy snow avalanche from Satapanth peak. The day ended in tension and anxiety. I decided to stay at Gangotri next day (29th May) to analyse the actual situation as well as to search for another H.A.P.

On 29th May we woke up earlier and after having our breakfast we heard another bad news. The ladies team from Bengal who were in Bhoojbas had decided to abandon their expedition programme to Kalindi area because of abnormal snow condition. Our LAPs who came with us to go upto Base Camp refused to go due to heavy snow fall. We were in very much acute position and once we thought that our programme might have to be cancelled. I talked with my Guide Sri Kushal Singh Negi regarding the LAP's problem. He talked with the local people but everybody refused also for the same reason. The whole day we are in tension and in the evening a fresh tension joined as because Sri Gautam Giri a member of my team was suffered from high fever.

On 30th May after arrangements of porters from Gangotri we started for our second phase of expedition i.e. approach march for Base Camp. When we started we saw Lal Bahadur was coming down with one injured porter frost-beaten at toes (he was with Pune team) on his back. All the members except Sri Gautam Giri who was suffering from high fever last night and Sri Subrata Saha who was forced to stay at Gangotri with Mr. Giri for that day. I instructed them to join with us at Bhujbas the next day. We followed the mule track of Gomukh through the true right bank of the river Bhagirathi and reached Bhujbas in the afternoon where we stayed for the night.

On 31st May I met the ladies team and was apprised of the snow condition in the upper region. In the meantime our guide came to me and informed that only 3 L.A.P.s were there and the rest left for Gangotri without any information. At that time we were in great trouble and after a short discussion with my members I decided to go upto Raktaboran Nallah to reccy the route. Myself, Anjan, Ranjan, Chinmoy & Kanak along with 3 LAPs and 3 HAPs started at about 10.00 A.M. for ferrying the loads and to select the camp site. After two hrs. trek we reached Gomukh, the snout of Gangotri Glacier. From there we followed the true lateral moraine of Glacier and at about 2 P.M. we dumped our loads there. After staying for some time we started from there and reached at Bhujbas at 5 P.M. There I heard that Sri Gautam Giri and Sri Subrata Saha along with Lal Bahadur Singh reached over there at about 2.00 P.M. In the evening I decided to send 4 of my members along with 3 L.A.P.s and 3 H.A.P.s the next morning to establish a transit camp at the Raktabaran Nallah. They started at 9.00 A.M. with heavy loads. I told rest of the members to go upto Gomukh for acclimatization as well as to see the route condition. I stayed there alone. At about 5.00 P.M. they came back. In the evening we were tensed as it was our first expedition and 4 of my members had left us for the higher camps. Whom, as per plan, we would meet at the Base Camp.

1st June, we started from Bhujbas at 9.00 A.M. on that day each member had to carry heavy loads due to porters' problem. We occupied our Raktavaran Nallah camp following the true lateral moraine of Gangotri Glacier and reached the confluence of Raktabaran and Gangotri Glacier and pitched our tents just behind the water point. The same day my advanced party left this camp and approached for the Base Camp. It was a windy evening and we felt cold outside the tent and had an early dinner.

2nd June, we started at about 8.00 A.M. Today's destination was Base Camp (Nandanban – 14230'). Crossing the Nallah we moved towards south. The route was very bad because of huge loose boulders and high deep snow. We had to cross a dangerous rock fall zone area. Keeping the confluence on our right we entered little inside the Chaturangi Glacier. The speed was abnormally slow and was very difficult to walk. However, we had to climb a snow covered slope of about 300' which was the left lateral moraine of Chaturangi Glacier to reach Nandanban at 3 P.M. Nandanban, was the vast plane covered with huge snow. Wherever we saw, we saw only white. However, we saw our tents which our advance team members pitched over there yesterday. First we met them and enjoyed ourselves at the Base Camp. After talking with my advance members I came to know that they went upto Vasukital (our proposed ABC) to reccy the route as well as to dump loads over there. We pitched our tents and saw the polish team who also established their Base Camp. Their aim was to climb Satatanth. The B.C. area was very nice. We had a magnificent view of Kedarnath, Kedardome and Kharchakund to our SSW. To our SE the gigantic Bhagirathi II, in the western side i.e. in Tapovan area there was a dazzling shivling.

3rd June, today I declared as Rest day in Base Camp. All members were exhausted and due to LAP's problem we have to left some quantity of food at our Raktavaran Camp. I instructed to HAP to bring the same load. The whole day we were in relaxing mood. Only we did the repacking jobs of food stuffs & equipments.

4th June, this morning when we came from our tents we could see the peaks overlooking us in clear sky. Immediately I decided to see our ABC (i.e. Vasukital – 16075') area. Myself and Kanok along with HAPs, started at about 8.00 A.M. to ferry the loads. Also I instructed my members who were in the Base Camp to repack the balance food gears and paid off the 3 LAPs. The route towards ABC was followed through the true left lateral moraine of Chaturangi Glacier. The whole route was covered with snow. Some time it was knee and waist deep. The trek was very much slow and we felt abnormally exhausted. We had to descend 500' to cross the Vasuki Nallah which was covered with snow and boulders and again a climb of 500' took us to Vasukital. On our way to

Vasukital we saw one military Helicopter was flying on the sky in search of the bodies of Pune team, who were buried in snow avalanche at Satopanth area. However we reached at about 1.00 P.M. There we stayed for sometime and returned to our Base Camp at about 5 PM. On the way we met Nim instructors Sri Ratan Singh & Sri Pratap Singh who were going to Vasukital as rescue team member of Pune team.

5th June, yesterday night I decided to send Ranjan, Chinmoy & Kanak to occupy the ABC. Accordingly myself and Gautam joined with them. Our another objective was to ferry loads to the higher camps as well as to accalmatise ourselves. The rest members took rest at the Base Camp. At about 2.00 P.M. we reached over there. On our way we saw Chaturangi peak and the dominating north face of Vasuki Parbat (6792 mtr.) to our SE. We could also see the Bhagirathi-I there. We saw two Nim instructor and along with Mr. Biddhy of mount support of Uttar Kashi were coming from the opposite side i.e. from Vasuki Tal side. They met with us and after some time they started to clear snow from the ridge where we stood and we saw the dead body of Mr. Bharat Mingray of Pune Team who died in the Satapanth Expedition. The instructor told us that they had brought the corpse here. However our members got down along with two HAPs from the slopes towards the Vasuki nullah to establish our ABC. Then I and Gautam along with one HAP started our return journey to Base Camp. Sri Ratan Singh told us to carry their rucksack as because they were to carry the dead body of Bharat Mungray to Nandanban. We reached the Base Camp at about 6.00 P.M. and heard that one H.A.P. Dhyam Singh went back to Gangotri as because he was sick. We took our dinner. I instructed Sri Shyam Sunder Pal to ferry the loads to the Vasukital Camp next morning along with HAP (Lal Bahadur).

6th June, accordingly in the morning Shyam and Lal Bahadur started early morning after heavy breakfast with a heavy load of food in their rucksack. We took complete rest that day. At about 5.00 p.m. they came back to Base Camp.

7th June, today morning was very fine. The sky was Blue. All the peaks from the camp site was totally clear. First I instructed my Base Camp members to stay over there, until I along with my members returned to the Base Camp. After having breakfast HAP (Lal Bahadur) and myself started for Vashuki camp. We moved east following the left lateral morning of Chaturangi Glacier, after marching we went to sough and over the left lateral morning of Vashuki Glacier. We had to come down to cross the Glacier and to climb up the other site about 500' through boulders covered with huge snow and screes. At about 1 P.M. we reached at our Vashuki camp and met by members and HAPs. They told me that they went to see the Camp I area and also to ferry the loads up to Camp I. They got abnormal loose snow on their way to Sundar Camp. Some time it was knee deep and waist deep also. However, I had given all the reports of Base Camp. After having our lunch, I had a small discussion with my members regarding our proceed to higher camps and our ultimate Goal i.e. Peak assault programme. We decided ourselves to establish our Camp – I tomorrow. In the afternoon we enjoyed ourselves because the weather was fantastic and all of us were complete fit and confident to success our programme.

8th June, we were getting ourselves ready for the 8th march to establish our Camp – I. At 8.00 A.M. we four members and 3 H.A.P.s started towards east through the left lateral moraine of Chaturangi. After marching 2 hrs. we turned south and entered in the Sundar Bank. We traversed the ridge and descended to the glacier. There we saw Santopanth. We diagonally the glacier and climbed up the right lateral moraine of Sundar Bamok. The entire route was covered with snow. Somewhere it was thigh deep we had to march for another one hour and reached near a big boulder where our advance members dumped loads yesterday. We pitched our tents over there and it was our Camp – IO (5200 mt.). We took tea and snacks at about 2.30 P.M. We saw Chaturangi-peak to NE side. Avalanch peak was visible from our camp site. An unnamed rocky peak of 5801 m. was in the south.

9th June, the morning was fine. The sky was abnormally blue. Everywhere was only white. All of us were getting ready and started for our next camp we were carrying heavy loads. We had to traverse long way keeping the rocky peak to our right. After marching through the snow region we stepped on the left lateral moraine of Suralaya Bamok. From there we saw Chandra Parbat. We claimed down to the Suralaya Bamak and crossed the glacier which covered with huge snow. Then we moved through the medial moraine of Chaturangi glacier and after one hour marching we stopped there and just beside the scree soots, we pitched our tents and established our Camp – II at about 5500 m.

10th June, it was very nice morning. We took our Breakfast and were get ourselves ready. We pitched 3 Nos. of Tents in Camp II yesterday. We kept one over there, and started marching at about 8.00 A.M. Today's target was to establish Summit Camp in the Sweta Glacier. We moved to the east following medial moraine of Chaturangi Glacier. We took 2 hrs. to reach the head of Chaturangi Glacier. The route was full of snow. Though we were exhausted but relieved by a clear view of our targeted peaks 6166 m. and 6352 mts. at the head of Sweta Glacier. Two Glaciers, Kalindi from NE and Sweta from SE meets at the spot below the unnamed peak. We moved into Sweta Glacier, the Glacier was fine. No crevasses was seen. After marching for an hour through the

glacier we saw one Black boulder and decided to establish our final camp over there. It was then 1.00 P.M. We pitched two tents there and took our lunch. After that we started observing our peaks. I decided to attempt only one peak i.e. 6166 mts. not the other one (Vergine – 6352 mt.) because we had no food there to stay for another 1 day to assault the same peak. However, we took our dinner at about 7.00 P.M. and went inside the sleeping Bag. Everybody were tensed, though out the night we could not sleep.

11th June, we woke at about 3.30 A.M. and were getting ourselves ready within half an hour. After having a mug of tea and with dry foods we started marching at about 4.15 A.M. Today we were so tensed that about 1 hr. we could not talk to each other. First we had to cross a vast snow field then after taking few minutes rest we started climbing on huge snow hump of normal gradient. The snow condition was typical there. At about 8.30 A.M. we reached below the col. There I felt exhausted and decided myself to go back to Camp – III. Accordingly I handed over the National Flag and Club Flag to Ranjan and told them regarding my decision. They got little bit upset, however I encouraged them and took one HAP on my way back to Camp – III. They started marching to reach the col. Their movement became very much restricted due to loose snow. They started climbing up keeping the col. to their right side. The route was dangerous. They were gradually moving up. They were roped with each other. Within an hour they were on the west ridge and climbed the ridge and ultimately they reached on the top of the unnamed 6166 mtr. high peak. It was then 10.30 AM. They hoisted National and Club Flags over there. They were there for about 30 minutes for few moments they tried to see different sides from the top of the peak. To the north a bit inclined to west they saw unnamed vergine peak of 6236 mtr., a bit gigantic Mana Parbat was also seen. To the west Chandra Parbat, while its neighbour unnamed vergine peak. To the direct south there were high peaks on Arwa valley. To the north a bit inclined to the east they had seen Avalanche peak. They came down to Camp – III at about 2.00 P.M. I conveyed my heartiest congratulation to them for our success. We took hot drinks there and at about 3.00 P.M. we started marching for our Camp II. We reached over there at about 5.30 P.M.

12th June, we started early morning and reached at our Camp – I at 9.00 A.M. We took fruit juice and snacks and after sometime we again started marching and reached at 2 P.M. at our Vasukital Camp. We took our lunch over there and started at about 3.00 P.M. and crossing the Vasuki Glacier we reached at our Base Camp at 6.00 P.M. We met with all Base Camp members and enjoyed ourselves throughout the evening.

13th June, We took complete rest over there and were waiting for L.A.P.s. The whole day we were in joy and relaxed mood.

14th June, after a long trek from Base Camp at about 4.00 P.M. we reached at Bhujbas.

15th June, we started early morning and reached at Gangotri at about 12.00 noon. We had to stay over there for that day due to non-availability of Bus.

16th June to 21st June, we started from Gangotri by Bus and reached at Uttar Kashi at 2.00 P.M. After staying for 3 days we came back to Hardware on 19th June and avail 10 Dn. Doon Express and reached Howrah on 21st June'86.

Cleaning Operation in the Mountain : It is appraised that all of us were very much aware of keeping the mountain in clean condition. So when we had left our higher Camps and Base Camps, we had to clean the area.

Behind the success : I must be thankful to Indian Mountaineering Foundation, New Delhi, Youth Service Dept, Govt. of West Bengal, District Magistrate, Uttar Kashi, Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttar Kashi and many well wishers of Calcutta. Also my heartiest thanks to different Business House of Calcutta who raised their helping hands to success our programme.

Dated : The 11th Dec.'86
Calcutta.

SHYAMAL KUMAR DEY
LEADER
SWETA GLACIER EXPEDITION 1986
ORGANISED BY
SOUTH CALCUTTA TREKKERS ASSOCIATION