

Mt. Shivling (6543 Mt.) Expedition 2003

Organised by :

South Calcutta Trekkers Association

14, Chakraberia Lane, Kolkata - 700020

Leader's Report

Name of the Peak	:	Shivling
Height	:	6543 Mt. (21,467 Ft.)
Latitude	:	30°52' N
Longitude	:	79°04' E
State	:	Uttaranchal
Distt.	:	Uttarkashi
Location	:	Gangotri Glacier
Expedition Status	:	Unsuccessful
Reached Upto	:	6000 Mt. on West Ridge
Reason for Failure	:	Could not negotiate a 200 Ft. high overhanging serac at 20000 Ft as a part of the serac broke and went past of us by 40 Ft.
Duration	:	29 th April to 27 th May 2003
Expedition Members:		Amal Nandy (Leader), Brijes Day, Dipen Samanta, Basanta Singha Roy, Arupam Das, Shib Sankar Das, Binoy Bhowmik, Santanu Saha, Prasenjit Mazumdar, Barun Mazumdar, Sayantan Dutta & Upal Chakraborty.
Sherpa	:	Thendu Sherpa, Na Dorjee Sherpa, Lakpa Sherpa, Sange Sherpa, Nima Sherpa & Sange Sherpa.
Cook	:	Til Bahadur Sahi
Route followed	:	Kolkata – Hardwar Train. Hardwar – Uttarkashi (4000 Ft) Bus. 150 Km Uttarkashi – Gangotri (10300 Ft) Bus. 100 Km Gangotri – Bhujbas (12000 Ft) Trek. 14 Km Bhujbas – Tapoban (14800 Ft) Trek. 8 Km Base Camp – ABC (16000 Ft) Trek. 2 Hrs. ABC – Camp – I (17000 Ft) Trek 2 Hrs & Climb on snow at 65°. Fixed 200 Mt. of Poly rope with snow stakes. Camp I – Camp II (18400 Ft) Climb with crampon on show & rock. Fixed 900 Mt of Poly Rope with snow stakes & rock pitons. Camp II – Camp III (19600 Ft) Climb with crampon mainly on rock angled at 60° to 90°. Fixed 750 Mt of 8 mm climbing rope with rock pitons. Camp III – Serac (20000 Ft) Climb with crampon on rock & snow angled at 65°. Fixed 150 Mt of Poly rope with rock pitons.

This was South Calcutta Trekkers' Association's 18th Expedition. The association is organizing climbing expeditions to the Indian Himalayas since 1986 every year uninterruptedly. We could not climb to the top but we climbed the steep rocky west ridge upto the serac barrier at 20000 Ft.

- 27th April** Sri S. B. Mookherjee, Hon'ble Minister for State for Statistics, Program Implementation, Atomic Energy and Space handed over the expedition flag to me in the presence of the team at his residence and wished us luck for the expedition.
- 29th April** 11 members & 6 sherpas left Howrah railway station by Doon Express for Hardwar at 8:35 pm amid a huge gathering of friends, relatives, associates, members and well wishers. Sri Santanu Saha did not board the train as he will join the expedition on 11th May at Tapoban. The president of the association Sri Arijit Mullick handed over flowers to me for the success of the expedition.
- 30th April** The whole day was spent in the train without much activity. Prasenjit & Barun got down at Lucknow and availed bus at 9:30 pm for Delhi to pick up the 20 gas cylinders collected from IMF lying there.
- 01st May** Reached Hardwar at 8:30 am and availed Bus for Uttarkashi. Reached Uttarkashi amid rain at 7:00 pm. Stayed at Bhandari Hotel.
- 02nd May** Contacted Highland Treks & Tours for the required 40 porters and 1 cook. Brijes, Arupam & Dipen went to NIM for collecting equipments. Rest of the team completed the remaining marketing & packing. Prasenjit & Barun arrived at 7:00 pm with the gas & other equipments from Delhi.
- 03rd May** Shib & Myself took the entire load to Gangotri by a Mini truck. The rest of the team came by Jeep. Reached Gangotri at 1:30 pm. Stayed at Manab Seva Kendra. It snowed heavily from evening. The minimum temperature recorded during the night was 4° below 0.
- 04th May** We were lucky as the Gangotri temple opened this day and we witnessed the grand procession of the Doli bringing the deity to the temple from Dharali. As this was a rest day we gained some height in the Kedar Ganga valley in the morning. Rest of the day was spent by roaming around the town and gossiping in our rooms.
- 05th May** It took 39 porters to carry the entire expedition load. The porters left at 9:00 am and soon after all the members were on their way to Bhujbas with their own rucksacks. Reached Bhujbas at 4:30 pm. Strong wind was blowing and soon it started snowing. We spent the night very comfortably inside a room of the Lal Baba Ashram. The minimum temperature recorded during the night was 4° below 0. The porters stayed inside a tea stall.
- 06th May** The porters started from Bhujbas at 7:30 am as they will dump the loads at Tapoban and return to Gangotri the same day. The sherpas went with the porters and the members trekked in a relaxed mood. Reached Tapoban (Base Camp) at 12:30. The whole ground was covered with packed snow. A Koream team was also at Tapoban trying Mt. Meru. Our tents were pitched on snow and it was a very cold night as the temperature dropped to 16.5° Celsius below 0.
- 07th May** This was declared a rest day for acclimatization & re-arranging loads for ferry to the next camps.
- 08th May** The route to ABC followed through the lateral moraine of the Meru glacier. we reached the true right lateral moraine ridge by the scree slopes on the western side of Tapoban. After a steep ascent for 45 minutes, the moraine ridge lost all its gradient and it was a very easy walk for an hour up to the site of ABC. The whole team dumped loads on a scree hump on the Meru glacier, which looked very stable. The whole area was covered with snow except vertical rocks or glacial walls. From here we could see the lower section of the west ridge and the site of our Camp – I & Camp – II. The weather was fine with a short snowfall during late afternoon. The minimum temperature fell to –11.5°C.
- 09th May** It was decided not to occupy ABC but use it as a dumping spot and occupy Camp – I directly from Base. Accordingly members ferried loads up to ABC and the sherpas ferried loads up to Camp – I.

- 10th May** 4 sherpas (Thendu, Dorjee, Lakpa & Sange) & 3 members (Brijes, Basanta & Arupam) occupied Camp – I, 2 sherpas & rest of the team ferried loads to Camp – I. Camp – I was established on a subsidiary ridge coming down to north from the lower section of the west ridge where the Meru glacier takes a sharp left turn towards South. A 220 Mt poly rope was fixed just below Camp – I as they directly climbed the steep face to gain the ridge.
- 11th May** Thendu & Dorjee opened the route to Camp – II, Brijes, Arupam & Basanta ferried ropes & equipments to a point before Camp – II. The first half of the route from Camp – I was traversing and gaining height on the western side of a rock tower, which stood between Camp – I and the west ridge. It took 1 ½ Hrs of jumaring on mixed ground of rock & snow from Camp – I to reach the west ridge. The second half of the route was a steep accent on snow over rock to gain the ridge and then climb another 100 mt by the southern slopes of the ridge to pitch Camp – II on the crest of the ridge in between two rocky pinnacle. These pinnacles are clearly visible on the lower section of the west ridge. A total of 4 Poly rope (220 Mt each) was fixed in between Camp – I & Camp – II. One 60 Ft. vertical rock section & the last 200 ft. of climb before Camp – II was the only major technical climbing in the whole route. 2 sherpas ferried from ABC to Camp – I.
- 12th May** 4 sherpas ferried loads to Camp – II & 2 sherpas occupied Camp – I. The weather turned bad during the afternoon and we had some snow during late afternoon.
- 13th May** It was snowing from the morning, so this was declared a rest day and there was no movement on the mountain. 6 sherpas & 3 members were at Camp – I and the rest of the team was at Base Camp.
- 14th May** 4 sherpas occupied Camp – II, 2 sherpas ferried loads to Camp – II from Camp – I, Dipen & Myself occupied Camp – I and Til Bahadur the cook along with some members ferried loads up to Camp – I.
- 15th May** Nima & Sange ferried loads to Camp – II, Brijes, Arupam & Basanta occupied Camp – II. Thendu, Dorjee & Lakpa fixed ropes on the lower section of the west ridge.
- 16th May** Thendu & Dorjee fixed ropes on the remaining portion of the ridge upto Camp – III and Sange, Lakpa & Nima ferried loads upto Camp – III. The vertical rock sections were very difficult but with help of old ropes in place they managed it without much difficulty.
- 17th May** Brijes, Arupam & Basanta left Camp – II at 8.00 am. They followed the ridge as directly as possible. 200 mt from the camp the ridge became steep and it was climbing on mixed ground of rock & snow angled beyond 60°. There was 3 sections on the ridge before Camp – III, which was vertical (90°). The first is 25 ft, the second is 100 ft & the third is 40 ft. Other than this 3 vertical sections there are some technical climbing even on 60°-70° gradient. Being a pre monsoon climb there was a lot of advantage of snow on some sections. The whole climb was with crampons on. Reached the site of Camp – III at 1.00 pm (the only place to put 2/3 tents on the ridge beyond Camp – II). It took a lot of time to dig platform for the tents as they hit ice below snow. The weather was not at its best and they rested for the day inside the tents. At 6.00 pm in the evening a portion of the serac broke and avalanched down by 40ft from our tents with thundering noise.
- 18th May** After fixing 150 mt of rope on the remaining portion of the ridge Thendu & Dorjee reached the serac at 7:30 am. They could not find any possible line of weakness on the serac, as the whole stretch of it was overhanging. the direct line from the ridge faced an 8-100 ft overhanging wall, which looked quite unstable so they traversed 50mt to the left to try through a vertical crevasses on the face of the serac. Ropes could not be fixed on this route also as big chunks of ice lay hanging inside the crevasses blocking the way and the top of the crevasses was not open for avoiding the overhanging section. The traverse to the right was also not fruitful as yesterday's avalanche has left a lot of debris, which was not negotiable at all, and reaching the main wall seems impossible. As Basanta & Sange reached the serac. Thendu and Dorjee had given up hope of opening route on the serac. Basanta also could not find any convincing line of climb and came back to summit camp. At 1:30 pm after discussing all the possibilities the whole team decided to call off the climb as everyone in the camp was convinced that attempting the serac in this state will be unreasonably risky. They packed up the camp and Brijes, Basanta & Arupam came down to Camp – I and Thendu, Dorjee & Sange stayed back at Camp – II.

- 19th May** Dipen, Arupam, Basanta, Brijes & myself took whatever possible extra load on our sack over our personal load and went down to Base Camp. Sange & Nima went to Camp – II to bring back equipments. The other 4 sherpas unfixed whatever equipments they can above Camp – II and came down to Camp – I.
- 20th May** Basanta & Shib was sent down to Gangotri so they can arrange the railway reservations & arrange for the return porters. Rest of the team brought down loads from ABC & Camp – I. The sherpas arrived with huge loads and we found only 2 climbing ropes, 8 rock pitons, 8 carabineers & some snow stake was all we left behind on the mountain.
- 21st May** 5 members & myself along with 2 sherpas left Tapoban for Gangotri. Brijes, Arupam, Sayantan & Upal stayed back for the porters to arrive. It snowed from the afternoon and Base Camp was under 6 inches of snow at night.
- 22nd May** 17 porters reached Tapoban at 8.30 am from Bhujbas. As all the loads were organized previously they all could start at 9:00 am. It was a long way to Gangotri (22 km) and the last porter reached Gangotri at 5:00 pm. As 2 jeeps were waiting, they wasted no time and moved towards Uttarkashi. Reached Uttarkashi at 9:00 pm and stayed at Bhandari Hotel with rest of the team.
- 23rd May** Shib was at Hardwar and he could manage our tickets on a summer special train leaving Hardwar on 26th of May. In this situation we decided to pass these 2 days at Hardwar as good dharmashalas at cheap rates are available there. Shib also informed that Basanta has left by Upasana Exp. on 22nd. We reserved a bus along with the returning expedition team from Mt. Satopanth and returned to Hardwar. As Shib had already booked rooms for us at Mishra Bhavan, we went directly there and had a very nice bath at the Ganges after a very long time.
- 24th May** Stay in Hardwar.
- 25th May** Stay in Hardwar.
- 26th May** Aailed summer special train for Kolkata. The train left Hardwar at 12:00 noon.
- 27th May** The train was delayed by 3 Hrs and it reached Howrah station at 4:30 pm.

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Amal Kumar Nandy
Leader
Shivling Expedition, 2003

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