

# Mt Shivling (6543 Mt) Expedition, 2007

Organised by:

## South Calcutta Trekkers Association

45B Puddapukur Road, Kolkata 700020

### Leader's Report

| Information as required by IMF format           |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Name of the Association                      | South Calcutta Trekkers Association   |
| 2. Name of the Expedition                       | Mt Shivling (6543 Mt) Expedition 2007   |
| 3. Name of the Himalayan Peak climbed           | Mt Shivling, 6543 Meters  |
| 4. Date on which permit given by IMF            | 21 <sup>st</sup> June 2007  |
| 5. Role of the expedition members               | Leader – Brijes Day<br>Dy Leader – Dipen Samanta<br>Quarter Master – Binoy Bhowmik<br>Treasurer – Upal Chakraborty<br>Doctor – Saibal Misra<br>Members – Kalyan Banik<br>Rajsekhar Maity<br>Barun Majumdar<br>Arindam Jana  |
| 6. Commencement of Trek                         | 20 <sup>th</sup> Aug '07 from Gangotri  |
| 7. Number of camps en route to Base Camp        | One, in Bhujbas   |
| 8. Interaction with local administration        | 1. District Magistrate Office, Uttarkashi<br>2. Superintendent of Police Office, Uttarkashi<br>3. Forest Office, Gangotri<br>No assistance was required and no problems were faced  |
| 9. Establishment of Base Camp                   | Tapovan (14400ft) 21 <sup>st</sup> Aug '07  |
| 10. Establishment of higher camps               | Camp – I (17100 ft) on 24 <sup>th</sup> Aug '07<br>Camp – II (18300 ft) on 27 <sup>th</sup> Aug '07<br>Camp – III (19600 ft) on 30 <sup>th</sup> Aug '07  |
| 11. Technical difficulty on way to higher camps | <u>Base to Camp I</u><br>No technical difficulty faced. Simple trek with gradual height gain by true right lateral moraine of Meru Glacier<br><u>Camp I to Camp – II</u><br>1 <sup>st</sup> Section – Height gain on scree.<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Section – A vertical rock wall of 40/50 feet and height gain on scree.<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> Section – Easy rock slab at appx 60 deg gradient.<br><u>Camp – II to Camp – III</u><br>1 <sup>st</sup> Section – Easy rocky ridge at 45 – 60 deg gradient.<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> Section – Difficult rock wall at 70 – 90 deg gradient. |

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| 12. Snow & Rock condition  | <p><u>Snow</u><br/>There was no snow till the summit camp. The snow condition was thin but stable at the summit camp. The snow condition on the way to the summit was stable, pack and ankle deep.</p> <p><u>Rock</u><br/>Loose moraine on the glacier towards camp –I. Loose scree, broken slab, solid slab &amp; vertical wall with cracks on the way to Camp – II. A rock ridge with various gradients with moderate &amp; difficult climbing towards camp – III (summit camp).<br/>Snow covered slabs on the way to the summit.</p> |
| 13. Weather Condition  | Weather condition was of a retreating monsoon. More or Less drizzle almost everyday on the lower camps and snow on the higher camps. Prolonged bright sun was absent With occasional whiteout. Lowest temperature recorded at the summit camp was 12 deg centigrade below zero.   |
| 14. Summit Report  | Attached  |
| 15. Camp site cleaning activity & disposal of garbage.                                       | All non bio degradable garbage were carried down and submitted at the forest office at Gangotri.  |
| 16. Maximum height attained and its date   | The summit 6543 Meter, on 1 <sup>st</sup> Sep '07 at 13:15 hrs  |
| 17. Name of Summiteers   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rajsekhar Maity</li> <li>2. Barun Majumder</li> <li>3. Passang Sherpa</li> <li>4. Pemba Sherpa</li> <li>5. Phurba Sherpa</li> </ol>   |
| 18. Name of LO   | Not applicable  |
| 19. Total Expenditure  |   |
| 20. Details of Day by Day events   | Attached  |
| 21. Suggestion / Complain  | Suggestion – Increase IMF financial grant based on difficulty of the expedition.  |
| 22. Survey of India map or sketch marking accurately the route, camp site and their heights. | Attached  |

The summit of Mt Shivling remained an unfulfilled dream since the Association's team had to retreat from the serac on the west ridge of Mt Shivling in 2003. Since then we had been working to be back to the mountain to fulfill our desire to scale the mountain successfully. Different constraints kept us holding back to organize another expedition to the mountain but the passion never died down. We knew from our 2003 experience that we have all that is required to be successful on Mt Shivling.

This year we could overcome the hurdles and ultimately leave Howrah station on **14<sup>th</sup> of August** to try ourselves against the difficulties of Mt Shivling.

The nine member team (including a doctor) along with four Sherpas & one cook arrived at Gangotri on **18<sup>th</sup> August**. We took rest in Gangotri for acclimatization on **19<sup>th</sup>** and started walking towards Bhujbas on **20<sup>th</sup>** morning along with approx. 700kg of load carried by 28 porters for the Base Camp. The last trace of monsoon was still palpable on the weather system and the sunrays were often guarded by clouds with light drizzle. Roadside tea shops were available on the route and the team walked in a relaxed mood. Due to off season, accommodation was available in all the places at Bhujbas, the Lal Baba Ashram, the GMVN Bungalow & the roadside tea stalls. We chose the tea stalls for our night stay to be with our porters and the loads.

**21<sup>st</sup> Aug** – We reached Tapovan (Base Camp) from Bhujbas. It was an hour's walk from Bhujbas to Gomukh and there was a distinct trail from Gomukh on the Gangotri glacier and the team could move without any difficulty. It took less than 5 hrs walk from Bhujbas to reach Tapovan. The lush green field with a small stream meandering through it offered an ideal base camp site. The team was offered hot tea by Mataji (a sadhu with a rock cave ashram living in Tapoban) before we pitched our tents and put up the kitchen.

**22<sup>nd</sup> Aug** – With just couple of days easy trek to the base, we decided not to take a rest day and pursue our activity of moving to higher camps. So we started load ferry to a dumping point before Camp – I by all the members. The sherpas also ferried loads to Camp – I. The route to camp – I from base followed the true right lateral moraine of the Meru glacier towards south, keeping Shivling on the left. Before the glacier turns left (east) we left the lateral moraine and gained height on a subsidiary ridge coming down on the Meru glacier from the west ridge of Shivling.

**23<sup>rd</sup> Aug** – The Sherpas and the cook ferried loads to camp – myself and the members took rest at base.

**24<sup>th</sup> Aug** – With Camp – I getting dumped with enough materials, myself, Kalyan Banik, Barun Majumder & Rajsekhar Maity along with all the sherpas, occupied camp – I, leaving Dipen, Binoy, Upal, Arindam & cook Til Bahadur at Base.

**25<sup>th</sup> Aug** – Pemba & Phurba went to open the route towards Camp – II and fix ropes. myself, Barun, Rajsekhar, Passang & Oyangchu carried loads following them. They opened and fixed rope to the entire route to Camp – II and we were able to dump loads at Camp – II site.

The route initially followed a loose scree zone for an hour then a 100 meter slab and a short (50 ft) vertical rock wall, again a loose scree slope taking us to the 60 / 70 deg gradient rock slabs of the west ridge to the Camp – II site. The wall was fixed with climbing rope and the slabs were fixed with polypropylene ropes. There was no major difficult rock climbing in the entire stretch.

Rest of the members (Dipen, Binoy, Arindam & Upal) & cook Til Bahadur occupied camp – I from BC.

Only the emergency & return loads remained dumped at the Base Camp kitchen.

**26<sup>th</sup> Aug** – Dipen, Arindam, Upal & all the sherpas made another load ferry to camp – II and rest of the team took rest at Camp – I.

**27<sup>th</sup> Aug** – Camp – II was occupied by all the sherpas, myself & Arindam. Rest of the team rested at Camp – I.

**28<sup>th</sup> Aug** – Heavy snow fall & bad weather restricted us from any activity for the whole of the day and the team was forced to an unscheduled rest day at Camp – I and Camp – II.

**29<sup>th</sup> Aug** – Pemba & Phurba opened the route and fixed ropes to Camp – III (Summit Camp) & Passang & Oyangchu ferried loads to the Summit Camp. Climbing ropes were fixed on the vertical sections and polypropylene ropes on the slopes with lesser gradients.

The route was following the crest of the west ridge directly. It was moderate to difficult rock climbing all the way with a couple of very difficult technical sections.

Barun & Rajsekhar Occupied Camp – II from Camp – I.

**30<sup>th</sup> Aug** – Myself, Rajsekhar, Barun, Arindam & all the 4 sherpas occupied Camp – III (Summit Camp), leaving Camp – II unmanned. The weather turned bad mid way on the ridge and the last (the most difficult rock section of the climb) section was negotiated amidst heavy snow fall.

**31<sup>st</sup> Aug** – The most difficult section in the entire climb lies between the Summit Camp and the summit. It is the serac barrier guarding the top of the west ridge giving access to the snow slopes of the summit pyramid.

Phurba & Pemba left the summit camp to fix ropes on the serac at 9 am. They took an hour of climbing on easy rock slabs covered with snow to reach the base of the serac from the camp. As they started their first move on the ice wall the clouds also started to move in and throughout the days until they came back to the Summit Camp at 6pm we could only have occasional windows through the clouds to have a glimpse of their progress on the wall.

The wall was fixed with double climbing rope and the length of it was 150ft approx.

**1<sup>st</sup> Sep – Summit Day.** In the words of Rajsekhar and Barun.

### **Summit Camp to Serac**

1st September, 5.15am. the snowfall continued with no sign of slowing down. Fully equipped, we have already waited for 1 & half hr. Finally, we decided to set out for the summit before it was too late. We put on our head-lamps as it was still dark. After a while we reached the rock where the fixed-rope starts and continues up to the base of the serac. It was a 220 mt. of length of PP rope. We started climbing through the fixed-rope and very soon discovered that Barun's jumar was slipping on the rope. Fortunately Phurba was carrying an extra jumar. By 6.00am we reached the base of the serac. The snowfall stopped by then and the daylight just started coming out. The view of the first sunlight on Brigupanth and on the massive Meru wall was breathtaking.

### **The Serac**

The first section of the serac was broken and formed a structure of debris made of ice. Altogether 70 ft of climbing rope & 3 ice-pitons were fixed across this part of the serac; a tremendous job done by Phurba and Pemba. The ice was quite hard and a bit more stable than it appeared at first. We climbed up through the tunnels made of icicles. The core of the ice walls, the cracks, crevices appeared in amazingly beautiful shades of blue. By 6.30am all of us reached the top of the broken section from where it was a straight 90° climb up through the main ice-wall. Phurba and Pemba already fixed the ropes on the wall the previous day, but the very last part was still left as they were forced to come back for bad weather. Phurba climbed up to fix the rest few mts. We waited at the base, anchored ourselves to the piton-base on a slope of nearly 70°. Looking back, the entire route right from the Meru glacier through Camps-I,II & Summit Camp

appeared in the view. But, on the right it was the sunlit tip of Thalaysagar peeping out of the Meru wall that grabbed all our attention.

It took about 40 mins for Phurba to complete the rope-fixing. By 7:10am Barun advanced towards the wall and put the first step on it. The gradient was absolutely 90° with slight overhangs at a couple of points. It required 80 ft of climbing rope with 3 screw-pitons, 2 snow-stakes & 1 dead man to fix the vertical section of the wall. Front-pointing seemed not very difficult as the ice-condition was fairly good. At the last section of the wall, about 20 ft below the top, there was a narrow ledge of around 2 ft width and after that it was a slight overhang up to the top. It took around 15-20 mins on average to climb the wall. By 8.15am we all were on the top of the serac. And we realized we had come through the most difficult part of the entire climb quite comfortably, without any major trouble and that could happen only because of Phurba, Passang & Pemba's inhuman efforts.

### **Serac to the Col**

From top of the serac to the col the way was of mixed gradients ranging from 0° to 75°, entirely covered with soft snow. At the top we got enough space to sit and take a brief rest. It was clear & bright sky overhead but full of clouds at low altitudes. Next to this place we climbed a 40° slope of snow of nearly 40 ft to reach a small flat land. We then traversed to the right negotiating crevasses, climbed another slope of nearly 75° & landed on another flat ground. Rope-fixing was not required on the slopes as it was full of packed snow. The flat land was huge in size and could easily accommodate a football ground! Climbing forward we passed over a series of gentle slopes and around 10.00am we reached the col Between the twin peaks of Shivling, the main & the south-summit.

### **Col to Summit Ridge**

The route divides here. To the left it ascends to the main summit & to the right to the south-summit. The route starts with a bergshrund and ascends with a steep gradient up to the summit-ridge. Immediately after reaching the col we faced bad weather. It was almost white-out on our way whereas on the other side the south-summit appeared clear and shining.

Phurba led the way fixing the rope followed by Pemba, Barun, Rajsekhar and Passang. The bergshrund was not much of a trouble as we found an ice-bridge stable enough. But the very next section appeared as one of the most problematic part. It was a slope of rock & ice with fairly steep inclination, even about 75° at some stretches, nearly-vertical rock surfaces in between & irritatingly unstable soft snow. Moreover the weather was worsening, visibility came down to 15-20 ft. It took out almost all of our energy and stamina. After a one & half hrs of struggle we managed to reach the summit-ridge at around 11.40 am. We fixed 180 mts of pp rope but only 3 ice-pitons on our way to the ridge. It became a little clear but was rapidly deteriorating again.

### **Ridge to the Summit**

The summit was clearly visible from there even though the bad weather but the visibility was declining very fast. When the climbers hit the ridge Phurba was almost half-way through towards the summit, and Pemba helping him in fixing the rope on their way. We moved forward along the fixed rope one by one, first Barun, then Rajsekhar and Passang at the end. The route now ascends through the ridge that goes straight to the summit, a gentle slope of 40-45° full of soft snow. The ridge creates a cornice at our right at merely 6 ft of distance that hangs over the vertical wall of the East face. As the ridge curved towards right on the way to summit the vertical height of the East face became clearly visible. An abyss, it defined 'Perpendicularity'.

The summit was still 500 ft away. As the anchors were fixed at fairly good distances there were large gaps between the climbers. The weather was at its worst. Except for the 12-15 ft of yellow rope in front of us the entire world became grey. As we proceeded towards the summit the visibility continued to diminish gradually. Once the view in front suddenly cleared up for a moment and we found Phurba has already reached the top. It was 12.30 pm. Once again it became dark, the view disappeared and ultimately the snow-fall started. We continued ascending with the last drop of energy we still had. All of a sudden we found there is no more of ascent in front. We

reached the summit at about 1.15pm, in the midst of white-out & snow-fall. Not a single feature in the surrounding was visible other than the fellow climbers, the cornice and a dark rocky projection beneath the cornice. After a short celebration and some formalities & rituals, we waited for 30 mins for a better weather but it showed no such indication. We took photographs of climbers and sherpas with the cornice & the rock at the background as a matter of proof and started descending down. Nearly 160 mts of pp rope was fixed on the summit-route with help of 3 snow-stakes.

### **The descent**

We started at 2.00pm from the summit, reached the starting point of the ridge by 2.30pm and the bergshund by 3.00pm. Till that point there was no sign of any better weather. Only at the half-way towards the serac it started clearing up. We reached the top of the ice-wall by 4.15pm. Instead of using the fixed-rope we rappelled down with another rope and landed directly at the base of the vertical wall. From there we followed the fixed-rope and came down through the broken section of the serac. Then it was a continuous rappelling down till the Summit Camp where we reached by 5.15 in the evening. We were warmly greeted by our dearest fellow members who sacrificed their shares of glory to ensure the success of the mission.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sep** – All the loads were carried down from the Summit Camp back to Camp – II. Dipen and Upal came up from Camp – I to carry all the loads down without leaving any garbage behind. The full team reached Camp – I the same day and it was celebration time for the success and reunion of the entire team.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Sep** – The entire team carried loads for Base Camp but the entire load could not be lifted up from Camp – I and so we left behind some of it for a ferry to Base the next day.

**4<sup>th</sup> Sep** – The loads left at Camp – I did not require a full team ferry and so the sherpas went to bring down the loads from camp – I, the cook Til Bahadur went to Gangotri to arrange for the return LAP and the members stayed at Base Camp.

**5<sup>th</sup> Sep** – The team walked down to Gangotri from Base Camp along with 14 porters carrying loads.

**6<sup>th</sup> Sep** – The team reach Haridwar from Gangotri by jeep halting at Uttarkashi on the way to return equipments at Nehru Institute of Mountaineering and settle the porter payments.

**7<sup>th</sup> Sep** – Aailed Doon express from Haridwar.

**8<sup>th</sup> Sep** – In Train.

**9<sup>th</sup> Sep** – Reached Howrah Station at Kolkata.

There were no accident / injury / illness in the expedition. No garbage was left behind on the mountain and all non bio degradable garbage was disposed at the Forest Office in Gangotri.

### **Brijes Day**

Leader

Mt Shivling (6543 Mt) Expedition 2007

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