

Mt. Gangotri – III Expedition (6577 Mt), 1999

Organised by :

South Calcutta Trekkers Association

1/3 Love Lock Street, Calcutta 700 019

Leader's Report

Name of the Peak	:	Gangotri – III
Altitude	:	6577 Mt
Location	:	Road Head – Gangotri, Distt – Uttarkashi, State – UP
Latitude	:	30° 53'
Longitude	:	78° 52'
Route from Calcutta	:	Howrah - Hardwar Train Hardwar - Rishikesh Jeep Rishikesh - Uttarkashi Bus Uttarkashi - Gangotri Bus Gangotri - TC – I Trek TC – I - Base Camp Trek Base Camp - Base Camp Trek Camp – I - Camp – II Climb Camp – II - Summit Climb
Duration	:	16 th May – 11 th June 1999
Members	:	Brijes Day (Leader) Dipen Samanta Amal Nundy Binoy Bhowmik Bhaswati Chakraborty Gopa Dey
Sherpa	:	Passang Nilma
Hap	:	Nabin
Cook	:	Mohan
Summit Attempt	:	29 th May 1999
Summit Attempted by	:	Dipen Samanta & Binoy Bhowmik
Details of Program	:	
16th May 1999		Departure from Howrah Station. The 6-member team along with Passang & Nima (the two Shepa engaged for the expedition) departed Howrah Station by Doon Express for Hardwar at 19:00 Hrs.
17th May 1999		In Train. The whole day was spent in the train.
18th May 1999		Hardwar to Uttarkashi. Reached Hardwar at 9:00 Hrs. availed taxi for Rishikesh and from there availed bus for Uttarkashi which reached Uttarkashi at 17:30 Hrs.

- 19th May 1999** **In Uttarkashi.** Spent the whole day at Uttarkashi for Marketing & porter arrangement. Visited NIM for Equipment and information about the peak. Sri Nabin (HAP) & Mohan (Cook) were hired for the expedition.
- 20th May 1999** **Uttarkashi to Gangotri.** Reached Gangotri by bus at 13:30 Hrs. stayed at Chandralok Lodge to avail the open space of the terrace for re-packing the entire expedition load.
- 21st May 1999** **Stay at Gangotri (10,000 Ft) for Acclimatisation.** Spent the whole day re-organising all the gear, equipment & other expedition materials. Visited the Gangotri temple in the evening for prayers.
- 22nd May 1999** **Gangotri to TC – 1 (12,000 Ft.).** As all the porter loads were sorted and distributed yesterday, the team could start early at 7:30 Hrs. It took 45 min to get to the Rudugaira river to start the steep ascend through the forest towards TC-1. We were carrying pack lunch so the 5 Hr. trek was done in a relaxing mood. The camping site is good with easy access to running water.
- 23rd May 1999** **TC-1 to Base Camp (14,500 Ft.).** At 8 am the first group started from Transit Camp – I situated on lush green meadow on the true left bank of Rudugaira river at appx. 12000 Ft. altitude. The first 1/3rd of the trail took us through meadows with small streams coming down from the lower slopes of Rudugaira peak. The middle 1/3 rd portion was a steep climb of about 1 hr through grassy slopes to the traditional Base Camp site of the Rudugaira Peak. From here we left the grassy fields behind and crossed the unnamed Glacier coming down from the Col of Mt. Gangotri – I & Mt. Rudugaira. It took us almost 6 Hrs to reach our Base Camp Site (It was situated on a flat ground at the left lateral moraine by the confluence of Rudugaira Glacier & the unnamed Glacier.
- 24th May 1999** **Stay at Base Camp for reccy & acclimatization.** Passang, Nima, Nabin & Mohan went for a reccy while the members of the team stayed back at the base for re-organising the entire expedition load. The reccy team came back in the afternoon and decision was taken that the peak will be attempted by the East Ridge and The Camp – I will be established on the left lateral moraine of the Rudugaira Glacier just at the bottom of the East Ridge where it meets the Glacier.
- 25th May 1999** **Load ferry to Camp – I.** Two Sherpas, the HAP the cook, myself, Dipen, Amal & Binoy picked up heavy loads to dump it on the Camp – I site. We left base at 9 am and went straight south on the left lateral moraine for ½ Hr. crossed an unnamed glacier coming from our right (Direction of Mt. Gangotri – II) & started gaining height gradually on moraine & scree ground until reaching the Camp – I site at 12 noon. We pitched a dome tent, stuffed the technical equipment & gear inside, repaired a half-ruined kitchen and stored all the food & fuel in the kitchen by covering it with polythene sheet. We were back at base by 2:30 PM.
- 26th May 1999** **Occupy Camp – I (16,500 Ft).** Passang, Nima, Nabin, myself, Dipen & Binoy left base to occupy Camp – I. Amal & Mohan accompanied us with heavy load to ferry it and come back to base. As the route was known we reached Camp – I in 2 ½ Hrs. Prepared lunch and Amal & Mohan left after having lunch & wishing us all good luck. In the afternoon we gained a height of 500 Ft. on the ridge with our climbing boots on as Camp – I was situated on moraine covered with patch snow. From here we were going to cross the permanent snow line and enter the world of permanent snow.
- 27th May 1999** **Route opening & Load ferry to Camp – II.** From Camp – I the entire route to the summit was visible and we located a depressed portion on the ridge appx. 2500 / 3000 Ft. higher than Camp – I for our Camp – II (Summit Camp). We left at 7:30 am, Passang & Nima was leading the way & rest of us was following the way with loads for Camp – II. The southern side of the ridge was rocky & dropped vertically to the Icefall below. The northern side was snow over ice with a gradient of 45 – 60 degree. We were negotiating the ridge from the top. As the snow condition was stable & the members confident, no fixed ropes was put on place (although it was exposed at certain

places). Without having to fix ropes we reached the destined site for Summit Camp at 12:30 PM. We took a spot decision and located another point on the ridge 500-Ft above us suitable for a camp and decided to put up summit camp further ahead as we were ahead of schedule. Nima, Passang & Nabin continued for that point with the tents & rest of us dumped the load there & returned to Camp – I.

28th May 1999

Occupy Camp – II (Summit Camp) (19,500 Ft). Six of us left early at 6:30 am for Camp – II (Summit Camp). The snow condition was perfect and the crampon was gripping firmly on it, so we went on without rope at the beginning. As the sun came up we started struggling with knee-deep snow at some places and slipped as the feet touched the ice beneath the snow. There are two rocky notches on the ridge, which is distinct from a distance, which we used for our rest & refreshment point. This point was the half-way between Camp – I & Camp – II. About 1 Hr. after this point light snowflakes started falling without much problem to the visibility and we carried on. Just before the Summit Camp we faced an exposed rock of appx. 100 Ft. (without any technical difficulty). The Camp was put up on a ledge cut by the sherpas the previous day. Two 3 men tents were put up & we estimated the altitude to be 19,500-Ft appx.

29th May 1999

Summit Attempt. The Snow fall did not stop the last day but the dawn was cloudless and Passang, Nima, Nabin, Dipen Samanta & Binoy Bhowmik left the Summit Camp at 4:30 am for the summit bid. I stayed back in the Summit Camp. 200 Ft. of rope was fixed 100 Mt. from the Summit Camp as the gradient became appx. 70 degree & was exposed. Binoy felt nausea & exhausted and decided to turn back at 9 am so he & Nabin started coming down & the rest decided to pursue for the summit. Three of them reached a point of appx 500-700 Ft below the Summit where there is a crevasse cutting the ridge across. The sherpas fixed a rope on it and stopped for a short break when it started to snow. They waited for an hour for the weather to clear which did not. Dipen decided to come down from that point as the visibility was getting poorer. They reached the Summit Camp at 1:30 pm. I decided to stay at the Summit Camp with Passang & Nima to attempt the summit the next day. Dipen, Binoy & Nabin was sent down to Camp – I.

30th May 1999

Base Camp. I woke up at 4:30 am to find that no snow was falling and the sky was starless which made it clear about the presence of clouds. We three got out of the tent prepared for the attempt to find strong winds with light snow greeting us. I knew that snow at 5:30 am in the morning was the confirmed signal of deteriorating weather conditions during the day. I decided to delay our start for an hour. At 6:30 am I decided to call of the attempt & come down as it was not possible to carry on the attempt in such conditions. There was a small powder snow avalanche from the same slope on which we pitched our tents. Nima & Passang went to get the fixed rope just above the camp & I dismantled the tents & packed the other equipment. I reached Camp – I amid snowfall, stopped there for a short brew & went on towards Base. I reached Base at 5 PM. Nima & Passang stopped at Camp – I for the night as they were carrying inhuman loads.

31st May 1999

Base Camp. Nabin & Mohan were sent to Camp – I at 5 am to help Passang & Nima with the load. They all reached Base at 10:30 am. It was snowing heavily with wind blowing at 40 km/h. Nabin went down to Gangotri for LAP. We started packing the entire load.

01st June 1999

Gangotri. Nabin reached with the LAP amid a blizzard condition and we started moving at 10 am. The weather condition was so bad that at times the members had to stop moving as the wind was disbalancing them. The temperature fell subzero & we all had to put more effort coming down at 14,000 Ft than going up at 20,000 Ft. We reached Gangotri at 6 pm in a fully exhausted condition.

02nd June 1999

Uttarkashi. We availed the morning bus and came down to Uttarkashi for the day. Returned all the equipment to NIM & rested.

- 03rd June 1999** **Hardwar.** Came down to Hardwar by Jeep & put ourselves up at Anand Niwas Dharmashala, where we meet the team of our organisation who had gone to Dodi Tal & Kuari Pass for a trek.
- 04th June 1999** **Delhi / Train.** Myself & Gopa went to Delhi & put us up at the IMF dormitory for organizational work & the rest of the team departed for Calcutta by Doon Express from Hardwar.
- 05th June 1999** **Delhi / Train.**
- 06th June 1999** **Delhi / Calcutta.** The main team reached Calcutta and I stayed in Delhi for remaining work.
- 07th June 1999** **Delhi.** Gopa & myself stayed in Delhi for organizational work.
- 08th June 1999** **Delhi.** Gopa & myself stayed in Delhi for organizational work.
- 09th June 1999** **Delhi.** Gopa & myself stayed in Delhi for organizational work.
- 10th June 1999** **Train.** In Train.
- 11th June 1999** **Calcutta.** Gopa & myself reached Calcutta.

Brijes Day

Leader

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