

1981 SWETVARN Indo-French EXPEDITION

Sponsored by



with

Groupe Universitaire De
Montagne Et De Ski
Paris - France

Gram: WINTERWEAR
TF : 363772-313227

The Mountaineers,
72, Vijay Apartments,
16, Carmichael Road
Bombay 400 026.

The expedition climbed the following peaks:

1. SUDARSHAN PARBAT - (6507m - 21,350 ft)

First ascent, 30 May 1981 by the east ridge. About 1500 ft. of rope fixed and some very exposed and difficult sections of ice. Starting from the Final Camp at 0400 hrs, the summit was reached at 1000 hrs. In last ten years five attempts on this peak by various expeditions had failed.

Summitters: Hubert Odier, Alain de Blanchaud, Zerksis Boga, Lakhpa Tsering, Bernard Odier and Jacques Giraud.

2. 'CHATURBHUJ' - (6655m - 21,835 ft)

First ascent, 5 June 1981. Starting from camp on Swetvarn glacier (E) to a Col in north. Descent of 60 m over ice to the north and a long snow traverse to the north ridge. Then followed the ridge to the summit. This peak was never attempted before.

Summitters: Hubert Odier, Alain de Blanchaud and Jacques Giraud.

3. 'SAIFE' - (6161m - 20,215 ft)

Second ascent. Three climbs, all by the northeast face to the east ridge and summit.

19 May 1981 by Hubert Odier (Solo) skied down partly and survived a giant avalanche.

30 May 1981 by C.D.Danthi, Kanu Pomal and Kami Tsering.

7 June 1981 by Alain de Blanchaud and Jacques Giraud.

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4. KOTESHWAR I - (C.6080m - C.19,950 ft)

Climbed, 19 May 1981, by the east ridge.

Summitters: Alain de Blanchaud and Jacques Giraud.

5. KOTESHWAR II - (5690m - 18,670 ft)

Climbed, 24 May 1981, by the northwest ridge.

Summitters: Harish Kapadia, Vijay Kothari, Kami Tsering and Nawang.

The following peaks were unsuccessfully attempted:

a) 'SWETVARN' - (6340m - 20,800 ft)

C.D. Danthi, Jacques Giraud, Kanu Pomal and Lakhpa Tsering reached within 300 ft of the summit from the east ridge on 25 May 1981. A narrow traverse and mixed terrain ahead stopped them.

b) 'YOGESHWAR' - (6678m - 21,910 ft)

Harish Kapadia, Lakhpa and Kami Tsering reached within 1000 ft of the summit on 6 June 1981. After crossing a high Col to the adjoining 'Shyamvarn Bamak' attempt was made by the south ridge. A huge bergschrund cut-off the ridge from the summit pyramid.

AREA: Gangotri glacier region in the Garhwal Himalaya. Swetvarn Bamak is a tributary glacier of Raktavarn Bamak.

MEMBERS: Harish Kapadia (Leader and Liaison Officer), Zerksis Boga, C.D. Danthi, Vijay Kothari, Kanu Pomal, Dr. V.N. Desai and Dr. R.H. Shroff (Indians) Bernard Odier (Deputy Leader), Hubert Odier, Alain de Blanchaud and Jacques Giraud (French).

PERIOD: From 1 May to 15 June 1981.

Harish Kapadia
Leader

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Detailed Report

The idea for an joint expedition originated in 1979 during the visit of a French climber to Bombay. After series of letters the present expedition materialised. The final group consisted of 5 climbers from India and 4 climbers from France with two doctors from India. We were supported by 2 Sherpa climbers and 4 High Altitude Porters.

After scrutiny Sudarshan Parbat (6507m - 21,350 ft) was selected for attempt. This imposing ice-pyramid had defeated five previous expeditions in the last decade. The peak is situated in the Gangotri glacier region of the Garhwal Himalaya. Six peaks situated near Sudarshan Parbat were also to be attempted.

All the organization was undertaken from Bombay. Majority of food and equipment were arranged at Bombay. French climbers provided for 15 days of high-altitude food, personal equipment and the balance climbing gear. All the preparations were completed with arrival of French climbers on 29 April 1981.

On 1 May 1981 we left for Dehra Dun where we changed to a bus and reached Uttarkashi on the 4th. and Gangnani-Lanka on 5th. The famous Gangotri Shrine opened on 6th and we were fortunate to be present at the auspicious and colourful ceremony. Next day a broken bridge stopped our load carrying mules at Gangotri. We separated and one party went ahead to Gaumukh and probed the site for base camp. Danthi and Dr. Desai pushed up loads by available porters. On 12 May 1981 all the members with 65 loads occupied the base camp at 15,800 ft. The site was on Raktavarn Bamak about 2 km. before the turning to Swetvarn Bamak and 2 km. ahead of the usual camp site on Thelu Bamak.

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Advance Base Camp was sited at 17,700 ft. on a high moraine ridge at the point where Swetvarn Bamak bifurcates into two valleys, west and the east. It was well occupied by 17 May. We were established in the valley as planned and on schedule.

At first we concentrated on acclimatization by various trips to the east and west glaciers and to attempt 'Saife' and 'Koteshwar'. We were to operate as small 'alpine style' parties now onwards. On 17th and 18th Saife was attempted by Hubert/ Jacques and Boga/Kanu respectively. While on 18th Harish/Danthi/Hubert/Bernard receded the east glacier. Alain/ Jacques climbed the inner divide ridge. Boga/Bernard/Alain receded site for Camp I on the west glacier. With these sorties we had full knowledge of the area.

On 19th May simultaneous attempts were made to climb Saife and Koteshwar. Hubert leaving A.B.C. early was on the top of Saife (6161m - 20,215 ft) at 0850 hrs, solo. He started to descend on skis at 0930 and caused a giant avalanche. But luckily he was not carried far with it. Harish/Danthi/Rodhan witnessed the happening from below and to guided the badly shaken skier to safty. At the same time Koteshwar I (C.6080m - C.19,950 ft) was climbed by Alain/Jacques at 0900 hrs. They saw Hubert falling and believing him dead shouted to Kanu/Hubert who were following. They gave up the climb and ran down to a happy reunion.

20 May was spent on nearby slopes to learn and refresh various ice and snow techniques. From 21st we started building up towards Sudarshan Parbat. Alain/Hubert climbed a steep couloir of rotten rock and snow to gain the east Col. They fixed rope on the north face of the east ridge and descended to Camp I (W) at 19,000 ft. For next 5 days loads were ferried.

On 24 May, starting from ABC, Koteshwar II (5690m - 18,670 ft.) was climbed by Harish/Vijay/Kami/Nawang. On 25th Danthi/Lakhpaa/Kanu/Jacques attempted 'Swetvarn' (6340m - 20,800 ft) from Camp I (W). They were stopped 300 ft below the summit by a dangerous traverse on ice.

More ropes were fixed on the east ridge of Sudarshan Parbat on 26th and the first attempt was made on 27th. Leaving at 0415, they jummed up the fixed ropes. A narrow wall of blue ice, 20 metres in width seperated the ridge from the ice-cornice ahead. Hubert/Alain negotiated this with extreme care in 2 hrs.

They reached about 500 ft. short of the summit. They stopped due to the soft unstable snow on ice, fixed rope and descended. All went down to ABC for rest day.

On 29th, two parties left ABC. Danthi/Kanu/Kami established camp at bottom of Saife, while others occupied Camp-I(W). After preparations camp was shifted 1000 ft higher at the start of the fixed rope at 20,000 ft. Harish/Nawang ferried till the 'assault camp' and returned to Camp I (W). On 30th May, Hubert/Alain, Boga/Lakhpa, and Bernard/Jacques left in three ropes at 0400 hrs. Following the fixed ropes they reached a plateau on the cornice. Terrain was easy then on and the peak was reached at 1000 hrs. The other team climbed Saife at 0800 hrs. We all celebrated with Champagne at ABC that evening.

Danthi/Rodhan left for Bombay on 2 June. Camp I (E) was established on 3rd and the East Col leading to 'Shyamvarn Bamak' reced. On 4th ropes were fixed to the North Col and beyond. On 5th 'Chaturbhuji' (6655m - 21,835 ft) was climbed by Hubert/Alain/Jacques. They left Camp I(E) at 0400 and going over the North Col descended 60 m to north over ice. Long traverse to the north ridge by which they reached the summit at noon. Sameday, Harish/Lakhpa/Kami crossed over the East Col to camp on 'Shyamvarn Bamak' in the east. On 6th they attempted the South ridge of 'Yogeshwar' (6678m - 21,910ft). At 21,000 ft. a giant bergschrund cuts of the ridge from the summit pyramid and they had to retreat.

On 7th Saife was again climbed by Alain/Jacques. Dr.Desai celebrated 64th birthday by climbing to Koteshwar ridge at 19,000 ft. Boga/Vijay reached within 200 ft.of Koteshwar I summit. On the return Dr. Desai slipped and broke left wrist and was rescued by members from ABC.

On 8 June 1981 all withdrew to base camp and Jacques left for Paris. On 10th Boga/Vijay/Dr.Desai left for Bombay. Others trekked to Nandanban, Tapran and returned to Gangotri on 15 June 1981.

MEMBERS: Harish Kapadia (Leader and Liaison Officer), Zerksis Boga, C.D. Danthi, Vijay Kothari, Kanu Pomal, Dr. Rodhan Shroff and Dr. Vasant Desai (Indians) Bernard Odier (Deputy Leader), Hubert Odier, Alain de Blanchaud and Jacques Giraud (French).

PERIOD: 1 May to 15 June 1981.

SUMMARY: An eleven member expedition climbed 2 virgin and 3 other peaks between 18,000 to 12,500 ft. surrounding the Swetvarn Bamak in Gangotri Himalaya (Garhwal).

Harish Kapadia
Leader

THE SWETVARN INDO-FRENCH EXPEDITION, 1981

Sponsored by The Mountaineers, Bombay.

In the summer of 1981, the above expedition operated in the Swetvarn Banak in the Gangotri glacier area of Garhwal. This falls under the Bhatwari Tehsil of the Uttarkashi District.

In this area of all the peaks attempted only one was named on the survey of India maps, that is Sudarshan parbat. It was confusing to refer to the various peaks by heights alone. Moreover in the recent survey maps the heights of the various peaks varies from the old maps. This added to the confusion. Hence the peaks around the glacier were named in accordance with the guidelines by the Surveyor General of India as published in Himalayan Journal, Vol. XXXI, p. 344.

- (1) It was ascertained that no local name exist for any of these peaks.
- (2) The names are appropriate to the surroundings and the nomenclature of the area as explained below.
- (3) The names have appropriate meaning in the local language.

The following peaks were named as under :-

<u>Unnamed peak (in metres)</u>	<u>Name given</u>	<u>Map Reference</u>	<u>Location from Sudarshan Parbat</u>
6655	CHATURBHUJ	53 N/1	North
6678	YOGESHWAR	53 M/4	Northeast
6340	SWETVARN	53 N/1	North- Northeast
6135	SHYAMVARN	53 N/1	East
6161	SAIFE	53 N/1	South- Southeast
5690	Koteshwar II	53 N/1	Southeast

All the peaks lie between longitudes $79^{\circ}5'$ to $79^{\circ}10'$ and latitudes $30^{\circ}55'$ to $31^{\circ}0'$.

A point, c-6080 m. southeast of Sudarshan parbat is locally known as 'Koteshwar' - though not marked on the map. The only point marked is Sudarshan parbat, 6507 m.

EXPLANATIONS FOR THE NAMES :

All the peak names in the Gangotri area are based on the Hindu mythology and Gods. Towards South names like Chaukhamba are for Brahma, the creator. Towards the West, Shivling stands for Shiva, the destroyer. The only peak named in our area towards the East is Sudarshan parbat. Sudarshan is the weapon of Lord Krishna or Vishnu, the preserver. Hence the peaks are named accordingly.

CHATURBHUJ ; 'One with four hands'. This is a name of Vishnu who has four hands and holds Sudarshan. This peak has four distinct ridges falling in four directions. Thus both mythologically as well as topographically the name is appropriate.

YOGESHWAR, is a name of Krishna, when serene. Thus it applies to this high snowy peak.

SAIFE, in local language and Hindi means 'Sword'. This is the weapon carried by Rama, who is known as 'God with white complexion' - Swetvarn. This peak lies near Koteshwar - 'God of the edges'. Thus with sword-edge like ridge, the name is appropriate.

SWETVARN is named after the glacier. It stands in the centre and at the head of the glacier. The ridge from this peak divides the glacier.

KOTESHWAR II is the peak south of the main ridge of Koteshwar.

The glaciers in this area are named as per their appearance. Raktavarn (with reddish complexion), Swetvarn (with white complexion) and they conform to these names in reality. The glacier to the east of the Swetvarn valley was unnamed on the map. This is a large valley with many peaks and is as big as Swetvarn. 'Yogeshwar' peak lies at the head of it. This valley is blackish in appearance due to lack of snow and black rocks. Hence it was named 'Shyamvarn Bamak' (with blackish complexion). Shyamvarn is another name for Krishna also.

The peak on the watershed divide between the two Bamaks was named 'Shyamvarn' after the glacier.

THE SWETVARN Indo - French EXPEDITION, 1981

Travel/Climb Plans/Addresses

Dates;

- 1 May Dep; Bombay Central by 19 Dn Dehra Dun Express at 9,40 p.m..
 2 May In Train
 3 May Arr.New Delhi rly.stn. 5.45 a.m. to 6.50 a.m.
 Old Delhi rly.stn. 7.00 a.m. to 7.37 a.m.
 Arr.Dehra Dun rly.stn. at 4.40 p.m.
 4 May Dep.by bus to Uttarkashi 6 a.m.
 Arr.Uttarkashi 2 p.m. Stay at N.I.M.
 5 May } Bus/foot travel to Gangotri
 6 May)
 7 May TREK to Chirbas
 8 May To Bhujbas and Gaumukh
 9 May Ferry luggage to Base Camp at junction of Raktavarn/
 Swetvarn glaciers.Back to Gaumukh for night.
 10May All reach Base Camp
 11May Organising Base Camp/rest. (Total 11 days from Bombay)
 12 May to) Attempt Sudarshan Parbat, Koteshwar, SAIFE, Swetvarn,
 31 May } Pt.18,670 ft and peaks to the West.(21 days)
 1 June to) Attempt Chaturbhuj, Yogeshwar, Shyamvarn and other peaks
 16June } to the east. (17 days)
 17June Returning to Base Camp. (40 days at B.C.)

RETURN PLANS (all dates JUNE)

I	II	III	IV	V	
3	10	16	20	23	DEP: Base Camp Arr.Gangotri/Bhairon Ghati.
4	11	17	21	24	TO Uttarkashi
5	12	18	22	25	Arr.Uttarkashi.Rest re-packing.
6	13	19	23	26	DEP.Uttarkashi(bus)to Dehra Dun.Dep.bus or train(42 Up Mussoorie Exp.at 9 p.m.) to Delhi.
7	14	20	24	27	Arr.Delhi 7 a.m..Dep. by 4 Up Frontier Mail at 7.55 a.m.(Delhi) (8.20 a.m. at New Delhi)
8	15	21	25	28	Arr.Bombay at 7.40 a.m.. (Total 5 days return)

- I One ticket Danthi.
 II Three tickets - Rodhan, 2 French
 III Three tickets - Boga, Kanu, Katira
 IV & V - Six tickets each -Harish, Paka, Vasantbhai, 3 French each.

ADDRESSES

Always write; The Swetvarn Indo-French Expedition in address.

up to 17 June
 C/O The Principal,
 Nehru Institute of
 Mountaineering,
 Uttarkashi,
 U.P. 249 193

or C/o Post Master
 P.O.Uttarkashi,
 U.P. 249 193

For any emergency contact
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 eering Foundation, Anand Niketan
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 or
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