



Nya Kangri, Southeast Face, Attempt

India, East Karakoram

At the start of May, Rajesh Gadgil, Ratnesh Javeri, Vineeta Muni, Roshmin Mehandru, and I arrived in Leh, hoping to make an attempt on Shahi Kangri (6,934m). The mountain had never been attempted, so the approach was largely unknown, though Google Earth suggested traveling the Chip Chap Nala from Chongtash on the old Silk Road. On the 9th we reached Darbuk in the Shyok Valley, where Roshmin had to return as he did not have the necessary security clearance to proceed further. We then drove 150kms to Murgo and attempted to penetrate the Chip Chap Nala. We soon came to a grinding halt: The nala became very narrow with vertical side walls, and after trying several routes we realized it would be impossible to carry loads through or around these bottlenecks.

We returned to the Nubra Valley, where the Army gave us permission for Nya Kangri (6,480m, 34°37'38.48"N, 77°45'23.08"E Google Earth), which I had attempted in 2008. On the 21st we established base camp at Phonglas (4,630m) in the Arganglas Valley, and subsequently headed up toward the glacier on the south side of the mountain, establishing an advanced base at 5,430m. Above, it was a steady climb up the glacier until we reached the basin below the southeast face, framed by the southwest and east ridges. The southeast spur offered a safe route up the face, which was initially easy-angled with a layer of snow cover. After 200m it steepened and became icy.

On June 2, we moved to summit camp at 5,965m. A grand view welcomed us. Early next morning we started up the ridge above. The initial 100m was steep, followed by a short traverse to overcome a bergschund. The angle eased for the next 100m, and then we hit a section of steep blue ice. Crossing this took a long time, as our crampons and axes would bounce off the hard ice. Another 100m brought us to more steep blue ice. This led toward a rock outcrop that would culminate at the final summit ridge. We were now about 250m from the top, but there was a steady wind and it had started to snow. We decided to turn back, confident that we would finish the climb once the weather had settled.

We regained our top camp on the 8th but on the 9th awoke to snowfall that lasted all day and then became heavy during the night. By morning it was more a question of how to get down safely than whether we would summit. We managed to dismantle camp during a break in the weather and made it down to base camp. There were now only two days left before the horses were due, so we decided to return to Leh. The weather paralyzed the Nubra Valley for a few days, and the Khardung La was blocked, stranding hundreds of vehicles. It was only after we returned to Leh on the 14th that the weather finally cleared. Rajesh and other friends returned in August, but the weather proved even worse, with snow or rain every day for more than two weeks. They were unable to reach the June high point.

– Divyesh Muni, Himalayan Club, India

Images



Nya Kangri (6,480m) from the east-southeast, the 2016 attempt being made on the face to the left.



The southeast face of Nya Kangri (6,480m), showing the route of attempt and summit camp. The east ridge is on the right.



Looking southeast from summit camp at Argan Kangri (6,789m, probably first climbed by the Indian Army in 1970) and, in front and to its left, Abale (6,360m, climbed in 2001 by Divyesh Muni, Cyrus Shroff and Samgyal Sherpa).



Approaching the area of summit camp on the southeast spur of Nya Kangri.

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