



AAC Publications

Atal Peaks, First Ascents

India, Gangotri

Looking southeast across the head of the Ratkaban Glacier toward Chaturangi and Satopanth. Photo from Nehru Institute of Mountaineering

In October 2018, the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (established in 1965) and the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board jointly organized an expedition to attempt unclimbed peaks in the area of the Raktaban (a.k.a. Raktavarn) Glacier. The venture was highly successful, with the eight-member team climbing four previously virgin peaks within eight or nine days of arriving at base camp. The team comprised experienced instructors and young climbers from Uttarakhand State: Amit Bisht (leader), Avdhesh Batt, NK Ghanshayam, Vishweshwar Prasad, Rakesh Rana, and Vijender Singh, and included two female members, Anamika Bisht and Jyotsana Rawat.

All team members were established at the 3,700m Bhojbasa base camp (30°57'19.18"N, 79°02'49.74"E) by October 8 with the main aim of climbing unnamed Peak 6,566m. This high summit sits on the long ridge that separates the side glaciers that run south from Sri Kailas West and Sri Kailas to the Raktaban Glacier. After establishing camps 1 and 2, the latter at 5,100m on the glacier west of the ridge [sometimes referred to as the Shyamvarn Glacier], two groups led by Batt and Bisht first tried to climb along the ridge starting near its southern end. On the 14th they summited two peaks, 6,086m and 6,126m, and camped in preparation for a continuation north to Peak 6,566m the following day. However, the sharpness of the crest ahead of them and fresh snowfall that evening caused them to retreat. On the 15th, from Camp 2, they ascended the glacier north to camp at 5,900m, below the col that separates Peak 6,566m and, to the north, Peak 6,557m. On the same afternoon they fixed some rope on the slope leading to the col.

Leaving at 1 a.m. on the 16th, all eight members reached the col, turned north, and were on the summit of Peak 6,557m by around 11 a.m. Returning to the col, they turned their attentions to the higher Peak 6,566m. Three of the younger climbers became dehydrated and descended, leaving Batt, Amit Bisht, Prasad, Rana, and Singh to make the difficult ascent to the summit, negotiating steep ice walls and arriving at 3:30 p.m. They returned to their top camp 18 hours after leaving.

This was the first known attempt on any of these peaks, which were named Atal I (6,566m, sometimes referred to as Shyamvarn Parvat, 30°59'18"N 79°09'03"E), Atal II (6,557m, just north of Atal I at 30°59'51"N, 79°9'4"E), Atal III (6,126m, 30°58'42.69"N, 79°8'54.18"E), and Atal IV (6,086m, 30°58'29.21"N, 79°8'59.43"E), after a former prime minister of India, the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

In September 1979, Ranvir Singh and two high-altitude workers, Narayan Singh and Gopal Singh, reached the summit of a snow dome in this vicinity, a peak west of Sri Kailas reported as a little over 6,600m. The exact location is unclear.

– Information provided by the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, India

Images



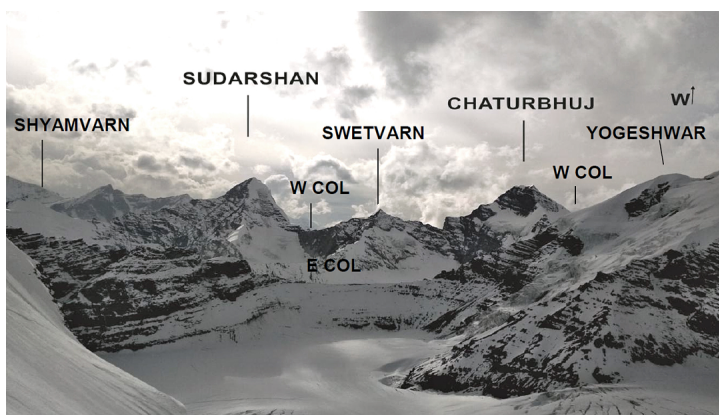
Peak 6,557m from the upper glacier descending from Sri Kailas West. The 2018 ascent slanted through the ice walls to the col (hidden) right of the peak, and then headed left up the snow slope/ridge to the summit. Nehru Institute of Mountaineering



Heading through the ice cliffs toward the col between Atal I and II.



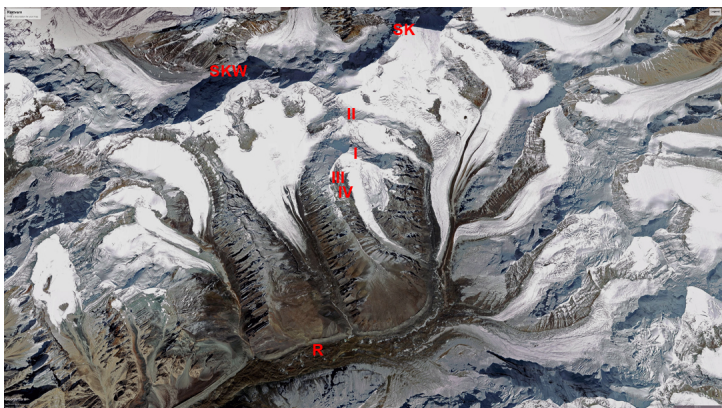
On the ridge near Atal IV (6,086m) looking southeast. The high distant summit toward the left is Chaturangi (6,407m).



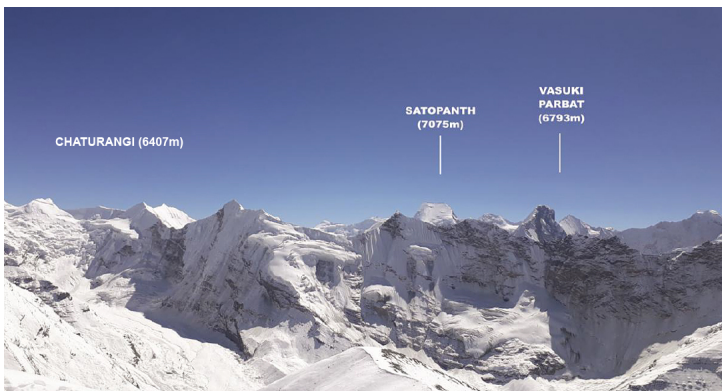
Looking west from the summit of Atal I.



NIM_Atal_Map



The northern Gangotri. (R) Ratkaban Glacier. (SK) Sri Kailas. (SKW) Sri Kailas West. Atal I, II, III and IV are marked; they were climbed in 2018 from the glacier to the west.



Looking southeast across the head of the Ratkaban Glacier toward Chaturangi and Satopanth.

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