



AAC Publications

Shivling, Northeast and North Faces, Partial New Route

India, Western Garhwal, Gangotri

ONCE AGAIN Simon Gietl and I were at the gas station in Toblacher Kreuzung, having a quick coffee before climbing. After the usual “how’s it going,” we discussed whether we each of us had anything planned for the fall. During the day we returned several times to this conversation. A thought had been going through my head: The objective doesn’t necessarily have to be anything new, just a beautiful mountain with a feasible route. When I suggested Shivling (6,534m), Simon’s eyes sparked immediately. Ten months later, in September, we were sitting in a jeep heading to Rishikesh.

Since Shivling’s first ascent in 1974, many different routes have been created on the “Matterhorn of the Himalaya.” In 1980 a Japanese team sieged the north pillar from its base to the final headwall. There they made a long traverse to the far right extremity of the wall, where a weakness led to the summit slopes. In 1993, Hans Kammerlander and Christoph Hainz climbed the crest of a prominent pillar to the left (northeast) to gain the Japanese route at around 5,900m; they turned around in a snowstorm about 300m below the summit. It wasn’t until 2000 that the true finish to the north pillar, a direct line through the headwall, was completed, when Thomas Huber and Iwan Wolf climbed Shiva’s Line (UIAA VII A4). Although it featured only 400m of new climbing, it would subsequently be awarded a Piolet d’Or. This impressive line would be our goal.

Heavy snowfall just before our arrival in the Gangotri made access difficult and covered the ridges in white, unapproachable splendor. While hard rock climbing on Shivling’s northeast pillar would now be problematic, an ephemeral ice line had appeared to the left. It looked steep and difficult to protect, certainly WI5.

On our first trip up the mountain, we climbed to about 5,900m, fixing 400m of rope. The ice line consisted of four long, steep pitches followed by super 70° styrofoam snow. We then descended to base camp at 4,300m for two days of rest.

On October 9 we jumared the fixed ropes, picked up our cached gear, and continued up less difficult but hard-to-protect terrain to reach the crest of the north pillar. One short pitch up the crest led to a bivouac site at 6,000m. Above lay the headwall and the prow of Shiva’s Line. Wearing a thick down jacket and mittens inside good sleeping bags, we discussed plans for the next day. We quickly decided it was far too cold for us to negotiate the A3/A4 climbing on the prow. Instead we would opt for the styrofoam snow of the Japanese Route, which follows a right-slanting ramp below the headwall to reach the summit snowfields.

After a cold night with little sleep, we left most of our stuff in the tent and headed up right, taking a “shortcut” to reach the Japanese traverse. Passing old fixed rope, we reached a corner that led to the final snowfields and, at last, the warming rays of the sun. We reached the summit at midday and rappelled the route back to our tent, spending one more night there before continuing down our route to the base. Unfortunately, one of the fixed ropes in the lower section jammed irretrievably.

We named our partial new route Shiva’s Ice (ca 1,100m, WI5 M6). Apart from the altitude, it could be compared to the Colton-MacIntyre on the Grandes Jorasses. In terms of the overall climbing, it is certainly one of the most uniform routes on the mountain.

– Vittorio Messini, Italy

Images



Looking up at the headwall on the north face of Shivling from the upper north ridge. The prow taken by Shiva's Line (2000) is directly above. The 1980 Japanese Route traversed the sloping snow terrace directly below the rock scar, then climbed the rightward ascending ramp. Shiva's Ice (2017) shortcut across the snow and ice slopes to the right in this picture to reach the ramp directly.



Simon Gietl on the steep mixed ground leading into the upper Japanese ramp, visible above and to the right.



Looking up the northeast flank of Shivling with the headwall above. The original Japanese route up the north pillar crosses the rocky skyline ridge on the right. (1) marks the couloir approach to the north pillar. Gietl and Messini left this couloir and traversed leftward on snow patches and ledges just above the point marked (2) to gain the steep ice they climbed for Shiva's Line. (4) The Hainz-Kammerlander northeast pillar start (1993) to the north pillar.



Simon Gietl on the steep mixed ground of the Japanese Ramp.



Shivling from the northeast (not every route visible is marked). The foreground rocky peak on the right is commonly called Baby Shivling (ca 5,500m). (1) East ridge (1,300m, 56 pitches, TD+ UIAA VI+ A2/A3, Bettembourg-Child-Scott-White, 1981). (2) Northeast face (1,300m, UIAA VI A1 85/90°,

Bernascone-Manoni-Rosso, 1986). (3) Shiva's Ice (1,100m, WI5 M6, Gietl-Messini, 2017). (4) Northeast pillar/North pillar, South Tyrol start (1,100m, Hainz-Kammerlander, 1993, finished up Japanese Route). (5) North pillar, couloir start (first ascent unknown, though the couloir was certainly climbed during an attempt in 2000). (6) North pillar, original Japanese Route (1,200m, 52 pitches, 3,000m of fixed rope, Fujita-Kubo-Yamamoto, 1980). (7) North pillar direct finish, Shiva's Line (1,100m, though only 400m of new climbing, UIAA VII A4, Huber-Wolf, 2000). (8) North face to northwest ridge (1,400m, IV+/V 70°, Hiraide-Taniguchi, 2005).



Simon Gietl traversing toward the start of the lower water ice on the northeast face of Shivling, with the Bhagirathi peaks behind.



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