



AAC Publications

Fyanlabte West Summit, Northwest Ridge

India, Himachal Pradesh, Lahaul-Spiti

Twin-summitted Fyanlabte (6,065m) from Valley 4 Glacier to the north. The first ascensionists followed the right skyline ridge to the west summit.

In August, Rajesh Gadgil, Vineeta Muni, Atin Sathe, Rajendra Shinde, and I explored a branch of the Karcha Valley, where part of the team made the first ascent of a 6,065m peak on the watershed at the junction of the Karcha, Gyundi, and Bara Shigri valleys.

We had set out to explore the Gyundi Nala, but an initial reconnaissance of the entrance from Hull village on the Kaza–Kunzum La road (along the Spiti River) showed that the heavy rain and snowfall of the previous weeks would make it difficult for us to proceed into the valley with heavy loads.

We switched to Plan B, an exploration of the branch of the Karcha Valley leading to the watershed with the Bara Shigri. This is named Valley 4 on the Karcha Nala sketch map that appears in AAJ 2019. (Some members of the team had explored Valley 3 in 2018.) Base camp was established on August 8 at Gharelu (4,500m), the entrance to Valley 4. On the 11th we made advanced base at 5,000m in the valley and Camp 1 at 5,500m on the east bank of the glacier where it bends to the east.

From there we explored a possible crossing to the Gyundi Nala from the watershed ridge south of Ache Peak (which we climbed from the east in 2018). It was steep, with much loose scree and broken rock; a higher snow line earlier in the year would surely make this easier. However, a visit to the watershed ridge between our glacier and the Bara Shigri was most rewarding. This ridge forms a divide between our Valley 4 glacier and the Lion Glacier (visited in 1961 by the British women's Kullu expedition; see AAJ 2017) that flows north from Lion Peak (6,126m) before bending west then south around Central Peak (6,285m) to descend into the Bara Shigri. A crossing appeared straightforward. The ridge, with the two glaciers on its flanks and a peak at its southeastern end, looked like a butterfly. We decided to attempt this twin-summitted peak (32°15'28.86"N, 77°42'17.59"E) from a camp on the ridge at around 5,800m.

We were all grouped in the ridge camp on the 24th for a summit attempt, but on the following day received news of the demise of Vineeta's father. We both returned to Mumbai. On the 26th, via the northwest ridge, Rajesh, Atin, and Rajendra made the first ascent of the 6,065m west summit of the twin-summitted peak [the summits appear to be roughly the same height], supported by Lendup Bhutia, Vipin Sharma, and Phupu Sherpa. They named it Fyanlabte, which means Butterfly in local (Lahauli) language. Bad weather prevented further exploration, and the remaining members descended to the road head at Batal.

— Divyesh Muni, India

Images



The twin-summitted Fyanlabte (6,065m) from Valley 4 Glacier to the north. The first ascensionists followed the right skyline ridge to the west summit.



On the upper northwest ridge of Fyanlabte (6,065m). The glacier to the left is the Lion, flowing into the Bara Shigri, while to the right is the glacier of Valley 4 flowing down to the Karcha Nala. (C) marks the tents of summit camp at 5,800m. In the distance are peaks of the Chandra Bhaga Group.



The view down to the Gyundi Glacier from the watershed ridge between this and the Valley 4 Glacier of the Karcha Nala.



Looking across the upper Lion Glacier at Lion Peak (left) and Central Peak, both summited in 1961 by the British climbers Jo Scarr and Barbara Spark before their notable attempt on Shigrila (AAJ 2017). Lion Peak was climbed via the far-left skyline ridge, while the route to Central Peak is hidden.

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