

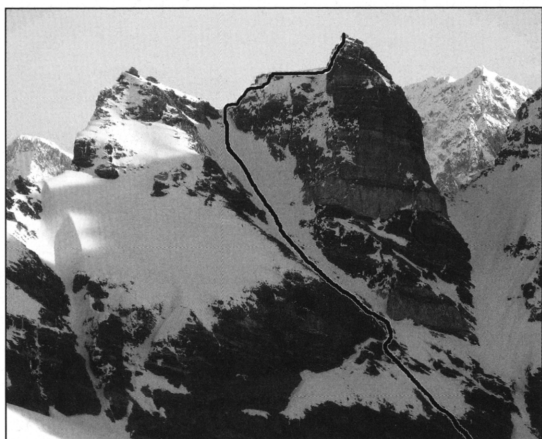


Shanti (5,687m) above the Panpatia Ice Cap, showing the line of the first ascent on the east face and south ridge. Alan Tees

Panpatia Glacier, various ascents. A nine-member group of Irish climbers and trekkers, most of whom had never been on an expedition, made first ascents of four modest peaks above the Panpatia ice cap. The climbing party comprised Martin Boner, George Carlton, Martin Hasson, Valli Schaffer, Andrew Tees, and I.

C.F.Meade first visited this region in 1912. In 1933 Shipton and Tilman came in search of a legendary easy passage through the mountains between the holy temples of Badrinath and Kedarnath, reputedly used by a priest to conduct services in both temples on the same day. The route they found over the Satopanth Col and Gondharpongi Valley was desperately difficult, and they barely survived. In 1984 two Indian mountaineers disappeared during a similar mission.

One possible route linking the temples would be over the Panpatia ice cap. There appears to have been little exploration of the Panpatia Glacier until Jagdish Nanavati penetrated the val-



Thendup Tower on the northern rim of the Panpatia Ice Cap, showing the route of the first ascent via the south couloir and west ridge. Alan Tees

ley in 1963 during an exploration of possible approaches to Nilkanth. In 1989, Duncan Tunstall and friends crossed the complex icefall at the head of the valley and reached the ice cap, descending back to the valley by a "scree gully" to the north, thus avoiding the icefall completely.

The years 1995 and 1997 saw two more unsuccessful attempts to reach the ice cap, by C. Ghosh and Harish Kapadia, respectively. In 1999 Anindya Mukherjee, starting from Madmaheshwar (Madhyamaneshwar), went through the col and reached the ice cap but had to retrace his steps due to the illness of his

companion. In 2000 a British group with Martin Moran's Nilkanth expedition climbed two peaks in the Vishnu Ghar just east of the glacier. They then breached the icefall (PD+), continuing over the ice cap and through the Panpatia Col (5,200m) to make the first complete crossing from the Panpatia Valley to Madmaheshwar.

In June 2007 a team from Kolkata led by Tapan Pandit reached the ice cap and col by a route north of the icefall, which they named Parvati Gully. This is possibly the route used in 1989 by the British team. The Indians continued across the ice cap and descended safely to Madmaheshwar. Until 2008 no one had attempted any of the Panpatia peaks. I met Anindya Mukherjee in 2006 and we hatched a plan to climb in the Panpatia. Our approach in the spring of 2008 was from Badrinath up the Dumkal Kharak Valley and a crossing of 4,500m Holdsworth Pass. We established base camp at Unini Tal, just below the snout of the Panpatia Glacier. Over two days, expedition members and the four remaining staff carried loads to an advanced base camp at 4,400m on the glacier. We avoided difficulties on the icefall by a rightward traverse off the glacier to steep ground and an icy couloir (Parvati Gully?). This led to the ice cap, where on May 30 we established a high camp. The following day all six members of the climbing party, with Anindya Mukherjee and Tindoop Sherpa, summited Pt. 5,687m. We named the mountain Shanti (Tranquility) Peak. We made the ascent from the east to a col on the south, then up mixed rock and snow on the east face, and along the narrow summit ridge. The route was around Alpine D, but the route of descent, on the west side, is easier (PD or less). The following day was scheduled for rest and acclimatization, but five members climbed the spur above high camp and named it Nasta (Breakfast) Point (5,296m). It provided a superb viewpoint for the entire area.

On day three the party planned to cross the ice cap to climb an attractive, chisel-shaped peak on the far side, which would also give views down Shipton and Tilman's "Bamboo Valley." However, that night it failed to freeze, so the party spent three hours plowing through soft snow before climbing the north summit of what we named Panpatia Ridge. This is an unimpressive looking mountain of three humps. However the ridge is knife-edged, corniced, and proved time-consuming. Therefore, we reached only the lowest of the three summits, via a couloir on the east face (D).

The next morning only two of our team, plus a Sherpa and a guide, were keen to tackle the rock tower (dubbed Thendup Tower) between Shanti and unnamed Pt. 5,841m. Approaching from the south they climbed a rocky gully to reach an obvious snowy couloir leading to a notch between the two summits. Exposed mixed climbing along a short ridge, again about D, led to the higher summit. They descended by rappel to the glacier. Three days later we were back at the road.

ALAN TEES, *Ireland*

CENTRAL GARHWAL

Kamet, southeast face, Samuri Direct. One of the outstanding climbs of the year was the first ascent of Kamet's previously unattempted but much admired southeast face, by the Japanese couple Kazuya Hiraide and Kei Taniguchi. They left advance base camp, below the wall at 5,900m, on September 28, reached the 7,756m summit on October 5, and descended through snowfall on the normal route, reaching base camp on the 8th. Their route, Samuri Direct, featured crux sections of AI 5+ and M5+. An account of this climb by Taniguchi is a feature article in this *Journal*.