

Into the Gyundi – almost

Gyundi is relatively large valley, with three glacier draining in as Gyundi East, central and west. To its east is Spiti and to west the great Bara Shigri glacier. This valley had seen one major exploration by Joss Lynam in 1958. He entered the valley from the Losar Pass (in the north) and crossed a pass to the Bara Shigri glacier, both challenging and now more dangerous being broken down. Few parties followed this route, till the Loser pass only, (Arun Samant, 1994) and climbed peaks at the border of these valleys, namely Fluted peak (6139 m). In 1995, Kaivan Mistry and myself made an attempt to cross into the Gyundi from the Ratang valley to its southeast. We could not cross the pass and later in 2010 realised how lucky we were- as the Eastern Gyundi, where we would have crossed into was blocked by steep walls on two sides and it would have been an epic struggle to wriggle out of it.

In July-August 2011 three of us followed the Karcha valley, always wondering why there are not many expeditions here. At first from the Rohtang pass we drove along the Chandra river, almost till its head at Batal. Except for the first river crossing, rest of the valley had no difficulties and mules could be used till almost its head.

In three days we reached the head of the Karcha valley with great views of Karcha Parvat, Fluted peaks and many unnamed peaks around. There was no difficulties till here except the first river crossing and our mules also reached here easily. The pass to Gyundi was not too difficult except that it required a 12 hour day to cross it as otherwise mules will not find grass to survive. As we were about to do that a freak snow storm deposited snow on the pass and we had to wait at least three days for it to clear. Gyundi was still to remain a mystery to me though we know the route now. Not wasting time we changed valleys and climbed in to a valley to the south where the highest peaks of the valley are located; 'Chemma', 6105 and 6065 m and two other peaks above 6000 m. On 6 August 2011 we climbed up steep scree slopes to reach a point 5525 m (18,125 ft) which we named 'Thula' ('great person' after Lynam who was first to explore this area.) From the top we had terrific views and Dr and Mrs Limdi, who had climbed their first peak in the Himalaya, were moved to tears.

Enough excitement for us in two weeks, but there are peaks in the Karcha valley to keep climbers busy for a month or more.

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