



## AAC Publications

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### **Gaurishankar (to Point 6,850m), south face, Peine Prolongée**

Asia, Nepal, Rolwaling Himal

Gaurishankar's twin summits were mistakenly considered by early explorers to be the highest in the world. For both Hindus and Buddhists, the peak has deep religious significance. To Hindus, Gauri, the name ascribed to the 7,010m south and lower top, is the goddess of fertility and beauty, while Shankar (the higher, northerly top at 7,135m) is not only the god of destruction but also of reproduction and restorative power.

The south face, above the Tongmarnang Valley, does not reach either summit directly, topping out on a rounded crest at ca 6,850m, behind which there is a slight dip before a long, gently angled snow slope rises to the south summit. The history of attempts on this steep and technical face is poorly recorded. Poles made the first significant attempt in the spring of 1983, coming in from the left to gain the steep, shallow couloir left of the impressive central pillar. Wiesław Grzybowski, Lech Kiedrowski, Andrzej Mirga, and Tadeusz Preyzner reached ca 6,000m before making a difficult retreat in heavy snowfall.

A 15-member Slovenian expedition made the first ascent of the face in November 1983. The Slovenians reached the base of the shallow couloir from the left, then moved out left and climbed a hard rock wall and technical mixed ground, eventually placing Camp 3 at ca 6,300m. Between Camp 2 (ca 5,500m) and 3 was much rockfall and icefall, so the climbers could only work on fixing the route early in the morning, when it was cold. Slavko Cankar, Smiljan Smodie, and Bojan Sret left Camp 3 on October 31 and climbed to the southwest ridge, joining the 1979 British route at ca 6,500m. They continued up the ridge, bivouacking in a snow hole at 6,600m, and the following day reached the summit of Gauri. Three days later Franc Papevnik and Joze Zupan followed. The Slovenians made no attempt to continue to Shankar. At the time this was one of the most technically difficult climbs completed by Slovenians to a 7,000m summit.

In 1985 the shallow couloir was attempted by Tsuyoshi Ohizumi and Kensaku Sakai. The Japanese pair climbed in three days to 6,100m, where Sakai fell and hit his head. They bivouacked and descended the next day, but at 5,900m Sakai fell again, this time to the bottom of the face. Ohizumi was unable to locate his body. In 2011, Stefan Glowacz, David Goettler, and Klaus Fengler arrived to attempt the impressive central pillar, but the weather was so bad they were only able to climb a rope length before giving up.

In post-monsoon 2013 Mathieu Détrie, Pierre Labbre, Mathieu Maynadier, and Jérôme Para also experienced a long spell of bad weather, though this gave time for acclimatization. When it set fair on October 20, the four left their 4,900m bivouac and slanted up right above the bergschrund to gain the shallow couloir, stopping for the night at 5,900m. Next day they got up at 3 a.m. and climbed the couloir till 7 p.m., bivouacking at 6,500m. Above the couloir, a rightward-slanting ramp led to the base of the headwall. On the 22nd they were almost blocked two pitches below the top by a steep and difficult rock band. Here, they lost much time trying several options before winning through and reaching the small but distinct top at ca 6,850m, the apex of the south face. The rock had been universally poor, but fortunately the climbers had been able to stick to ice more or less throughout. There was no time to continue to the summit of Gauri, so they rappelled. (Parties climbing the southwest and southeast ridges of Gauri most likely would have bypassed this high point, so the top was virgin.) The trials of the 1,900m French route are reflected in the name: Peine Prolongée (ED WI5+ M5 A1).

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## Images



The south face of Gaurishankar. (1) Southwest ridge (1979, to Gauri). (2) Polish 1983 attempt and high point on south face. A similar line was followed by Japanese in 1985. (3) Slovenian route (1983). (4) Peine Prolongée (2013). (5) Southeast ridge (1984, to Gauri).



At the top of the diagonal ramp on the south face. From here the route went right, around the skyline, then up to gain the site of the second bivouac.



In the ice couloir of the south face.



A hard mixed corner on the south face of Gaurishankar.

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