



AAC Publications

Gyalsten, South-southeast Face

Nepal, Jugal Himal

Gyalsten seen from the Jugal Glacier above advanced base. The line followed on the first ascent, via the south-southeast face, is marked. A col on the frontier ridge, off picture to the right, was reached in 1955 by a British women's expedition. Photo by Tul Singh Gurung

In 1955, Evelyn Camrass, Monica Jackson, and Elizabeth Stark (U.K.) launched the first all-female mountaineering expedition to the Himalaya (albeit with male Sherpa support). By completing the first ascent of a high Nepalese peak, they proved to many that women mountaineers could hold their own in high-altitude mountaineering, an activity then dominated by males. Jackson and Stark wrote a book about the expedition, *Tents in the Clouds*.

After exploring the Jugal Himal and what is now named the Jugal Glacier, Jackson, Stark, Mingma Gyalgen Sherpa, and Ang Temba Sherpa climbed to the head of the Jugal Glacier and then up the south face and upper southwest ridge of a "22,000-foot" (6,705m) peak on the Tibetan frontier, which they named Gyalgen Peak after their sirdar. This peak was climbed subsequently by two Japanese expeditions in the early 1960s.

Fast-forward around 50 years to the creation of the "official" HMG-Finn maps for Nepal. The old Gyalgen Peak is now named Leonpo Gang East and given 6,733m. (Actually the map mistakenly names it "west," even though the higher summit, 6,979m Leonpo Gang a.k.a. Big White Peak, is to the west.) The map positions Gyalgen, now written as Gyalsten, as a 6,151m frontier peak some distance to the southeast (28°11'0.17"N, 85°50'16.76"E). The 1955 expedition referred to this mountain as Ladies Peak, and though they did not attempt it, they reached a col on the frontier ridge just to the south during their explorations. The mistakes on the map were discovered in 2005 when Camrass joined a primarily American expedition that planned to attempt the "new Gyalsten" but spent too much time determining which peak was which to mount an attempt (see AAJ 2006).

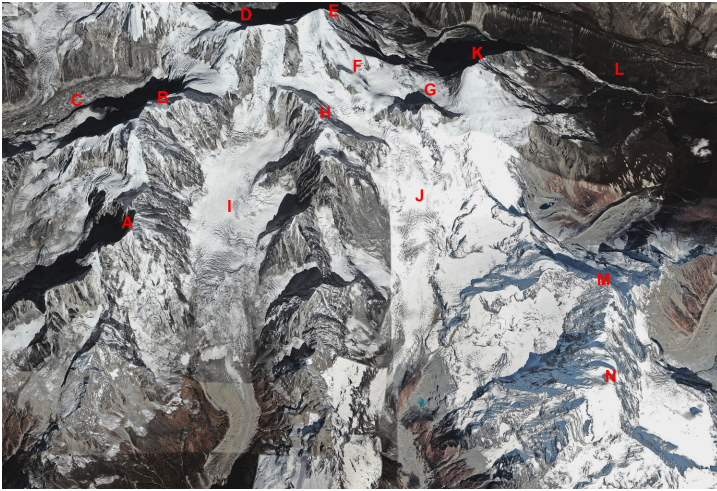
Gyalsten finally was climbed in the spring of 2019. In March and April, Maya Gurung's all-Nepalese expedition of six amateur members (two women and four men) and four professional Nepalese guides (lead guide Tul Singh Gurung) visited the Jugal Glacier to attempt Gyalsten. They established base camp at 4,470m (28°07'04.9"N, 85°49'32.8"E) on April 3, avoided the lower icefall of the glacier on the right by technical ground, and placed an advanced base at a site named Nyang Kharka (4,724m). They were stuck at that camp for several days in bad weather, and when it cleared one member was evacuated by helicopter and more food was delivered. On the 9th, an advanced team continued up the Jugal Glacier and set up Camp 1 at 5,180m (28°10'08.6"N, 85°50'38.6"E); the rest left at 10 p.m. and rested at Camp 1 briefly.

At 12:30 a.m. on the 10th the climbers all left Camp 1 for the summit of Gyalsten. Climbing through the night, guides Nar Bahadur Asthani, Ash Bahadur Gurung, and Tul Singh Gurung broke trail up the glacial arm below the peak and then fixed ropes up its steep south-southeast face. The last 200m were reported to be 50–70°. These three reached the summit at 5.30 a.m., then descended so they could escort remaining members to the top. At 11:30 a.m., the three previously named guides plus guide Samir Gurung and three climbing members—Maya Gurung, Milan Bahadur Tamang, and Sharmila Thapa—stood on the summit. They regained Camp 1 at 5 p.m. and continued down to Nyang Kharka by 9 p.m.

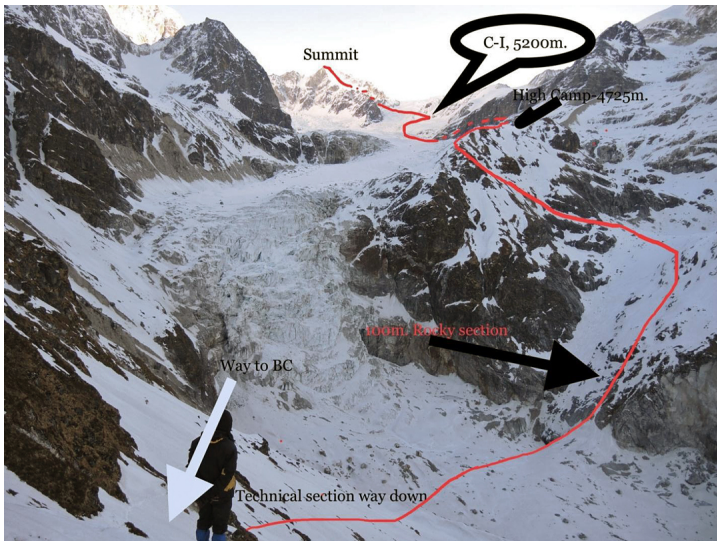
On the 11th all headed down to base camp, but en route Sharmila Thapa took a fall, injuring her back. A helicopter was called and evacuated her, together with the three main guides, to Kathmandu. The rest continued safely to base camp.

– **Lindsay Griffin**, with information supplied by Tul Singh Gurung, Nepal, and Rodolphe Popier, Chronique Alpin, French Alpine Club

Images



The Jugal Himal. (A) Peak 6,563m. (B) Dorje Lhakpa (6,966m). (C) Langshisha Glacier. (D) Leonpo Gang (6,979m). (E) Leonpo Gang East (6,733m). (F) Gumba Chuli (6,256m). (G) Gyalsten (6,151m). (H) Peak 6,591m. (I) Dorje Lhakpa Glacier. (J) Jugal Glacier. (K) Tsha Tung (5,995m). (L) Nyanang Phu Valley. (M) Yangri (6,535m). (N) Phurbi Chhyachu (6,637m).



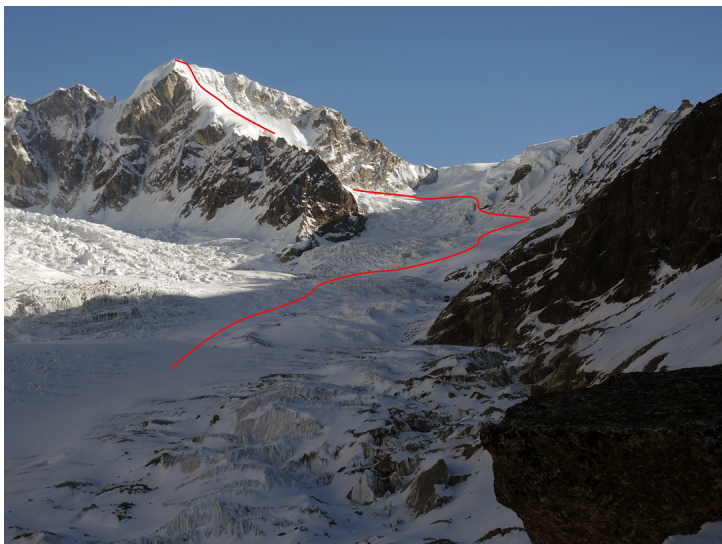
The route north to Gyalsten via an advanced base at 4,725m on the east side of the Jugal Glacier. In 1955 the British women's expedition avoided the icefall on the left.



Jumaring the lower rock wall on the ascent to advanced base at Nyang Kharka.



On the upper south-southeast face of Gyalsten during the first ascent. Behind is Phurbi Chhyachu (6,637m, first climbed in 1982 by a large Japanese expedition via the southwest ridge—approximately on the far right skyline). The Jugal Glacier is below right. The ridge on the left marks the frontier with Tibet. On the far side of this lies the Nyanang Phu Valley, leading from Nyalam to the south face of Xixabangma.



Gyalsten, as defined by the HMG-Finn map, seen from the Jugal Glacier above advanced base. The line followed on the first ascent, via the south-southeast face, is marked. A col on the frontier ridge, off picture to the right, was reached in 1955 by a British women's expedition.

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