



Dragpoche, First Ascent via the Southeast Face; Ganchempo, Northwest Face

Nepal, Langtang and Jugal Himals

From October 22 to November 5, Oswaldo “Ossy” Freire and I, both IFMGA guides from Ecuador, were based at Kyanjin Gumpa in the Langtang Valley. The weather was good, and we were able to complete two ascents.

Our first goal was Dragpoche (a.k.a. Yansa Tsenji, 6,575m). We established a camp at 5,100m on the south side of the mountain, below the Yala Glacier, which descends between Dragpoche and Yala Peak. The next day, we explored the glacier, breaking trail up to 5,400m at the base of the southeast face of Dragpoche, where we left a cache of equipment below the bergschrund.

At 11 p.m. on October 28, we left camp and reascended our tracks from the previous day. We then climbed the obvious couloir in the middle of the face. The first third was mixed terrain with difficulties up to M4+. Several sections of 90° ice in the constrictions of the gully were WI5. Once through this mixed ground, we progressed via less-inclined snow ramps up to 6,000m, where we turned right and headed directly for the summit. This last third of the face comprised alpine ice up to 70°. We reached the top at 7 p.m.

We descended the same line, downclimbing some sections and making 20 rappels. After almost 30 hours on the go, we regained our camp. On the following day we descended to Kyanjin Gumpa. We named the route *Between Fairies and Unicorns* (around 1,100m, ED M4+ WI5), after a personal experience lived during the rappels.

We had two days' rest and then headed east in the main valley toward Ganchempo (6,378m) in the Jugal Himal. We followed a secondary valley, the Nyangutse Chu, located between Ganchempo and Pongen Dokpu, and made camp at 4,600m on the west side of Ganchempo. The following day we gained more altitude to reach the start of the glacier that falls from the north side of the peak. We made a second camp 5,200m.

On November 3, we left the tent at 1 a.m., crossed the base of the glacier, and reached the fluted northwest face of Ganchempo. After surmounting the bergschrund at 5,600m, we climbed a couloir leading directly to the summit. There were short passages of 90°, but the average inclination was 55°. After 13 hours we reached the summit and then rappelled the route. We skipped passing the night at our top camp and continued down to 4,600m, arriving after 20 hours of action. We named our route *Cold Therapy* (ca 700m, AI4+) due to the low temperatures experienced during the climb.

— **Joshua Jarrín, Ecuador**

Historical Notes on Dragpoche and Ganchempo: Peaks far up the Langtang Valley were well-known in former days as targets for unauthorized ascents. However, there is no recorded ascent of Dragpoche. It was brought onto the official list of permitted peaks in 2003, when it was attempted by a commercially organized expedition that reached just over 6,100m on the east ridge. In 2010, two Japanese alpinists attempted the peak via the south face of the west-southwest ridge, reaching 5,800m before retreating. In 2022, Joshua Jarrín and friends made the first ascent of Peak 6,192m at the end of Dragpoche's west-southwest ridge (see AAJ 2023).

Bill Tilman attempted Ganchempo in 1949; the earliest known complete ascent was by an American party in 1971 from the southeast. Several teams have climbed lines on the northwest face, though most have not been direct. Three Italian climbers claim to have climbed the face in 2010 following a very similar line to the Ecuadorians.

Images



Between Fairies and Unicorns, the 2023 route up the southeast face of Dragpoche for the first recorded ascent of the peak.



Ossy Freire nearing the summit of Dragpoche. In the distance, left of center, is the northwest face of Ganchempo, which this pair of climbers ascended next.



Ossy Freire on the upper ramps of the southeast face of Dragpoche during the first recorded ascent of the peak.



The 2023 route on the northwest face of Ganchempo. Various other lines climbed on this face are not shown.



Ossy Freire climbing on the fluted northwest face of Ganchempo.

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