



## AAC Publications

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### Taare Parbat, East Ridge To Northeast Top

India, Zaskar

**Anna Pfaff, Lisa Van Sciver, and I traveled to Zaskar in late August. With only a couple photos of peaks from various articles, our knowledge of its climbing potential was limited.** Accurate maps were unobtainable and Google Earth imagery was poor. So while we came prepared for a variety of climbing types and strategies, we were certain of only one expectation: This would be an unparalleled adventure.

We took the bus for two days from Leh into the Suru Valley. This broad valley first runs east to Ringdom Gumpa, passing the infamous Shafat Fortress, a massive granite wall dominating the roadside, and then south toward the Pensi La. Our goal was to investigate the Dalung Valley, the first valley to the west when traveling south from Ringdom. Over the next few days, with the help of horses, and after crossing the braided but relatively slow-moving Suru River, we established a base camp north of the Dalung River about two miles up the valley at approximately 4,250m. We found many inspiring unclimbed peaks, coupled with rugged approaches and a lot of loose rock, and settled on trying to climb a large massif that divided the Dalung from the Chilung Valley to the south.

In early September we established a high camp (4,800m) at the base of our intended objective, after crossing the Dalung River and ascending steep, grassy slopes and moraines for approximately 600m. On the 5th we left our high camp at about 4 a.m. and began to approach the east ridge of what we called Taare Parbat ("Star Peak" in Hindi), as it looked like a point on a star. In the dark we scrambled through loose moraines and permanent snowfields before roping up for the initial headwall leading to the ridge. The climbing on the headwall was primarily characterized by excellent water ice and mixed terrain. Once we reached the prominent ridge, the rock quality greatly deteriorated, and we took great care while climbing a 200m section of loose and detached slabs. Above, we unroped and made our way through third- and fourth-class terrain. The final pitch consisted of mixed terrain and some alpine ice to the summit ridge.

We ascended about 600m to the northeast summit at 5,600m. (The main summit is ca 5,630m.) We left one rappel anchor on the summit pyramid and then found a third- and fourth-class walk-off down the other side of the massif (toward the Chilung Valley). We eventually reached a snowfield and were able to loop back to our high camp. Our round trip from this camp was 15 hours. We named our route Unattached (600m, 5.6 WI3 AI4 M4, no bolts) in reference to the large amount of loose rock and generally feeling unattached to anyone and anything in this remote corner of the globe. There was no evidence of climbing anywhere on the route or the top, and furthermore we did not see a single other person in the Dalung Valley throughout the duration of our trip.

This expedition could not have been possible without the support of the American Alpine Club via the Copp-Dash and McNeill-Nott grants. We found it especially inspiring to be climbing in the same region where Jonny Copp and Micah Dash had climbed in 2007, when they did the first ascent of the Shafat Fortress. The locals still remember both men and told us stories about their charismatic personalities. For climbers searching for adventure and exploration, the Zaskar offers up some intensely unique and magical experiences.

Rachel Spitzer, AAC

## Images



Lisa Van Sciver checking out a rock peak toward the head of the Dalung Glacier.



Lisa Van Sciver climbing unattached slabs on the east ridge of Taare Parbat.



Rachel Spitzer climbing to the ridge on Taare Parbat.



Rachel Spitzer climbing the detached slabs on the east ridge of Taare Parbat.



Taare Parbat with the route up the east ridge to just below the northeast summit.



Spanning generations in Zanskar's Lalung Valley (two valleys south of the Dalung). Standing, from left to right: Kitty Calhoun, Anna Pfaff, Lisa Van Sciver, and Rachel Spitzer. Kneeling: Jay Smith, Jim Donini, and Jack Tackle.

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