



AAC Publications

Baspa Valley: Devbhoomi and Alpbandariol, First Ascents; Charas, West Face, Naresh Good

India, Himachal Pradesh, Kinnaur

Looking north-northeast across the Rakcham Plateau. (1) Approximate lines of Latin Brother, (2) Rehab Line, and (3) Miquellink, each with about 600m of climbing and all climbed in 2019. Photo by Gebhard Bendler

Markus Kärle, Roman Mayerl, Christoph Schranz, Magnus Stangl, and I visited the Baspa Valley between October 9 and 25, 2019. The year previously, Hansjörg Auer, Max Berger, Much Mayr, and Guido Unterwurzacher had visited this relatively unknown valley and made the first ascent of Peak 6,050m (AAJ 2019). Hansjörg wanted to climb there again in 2019 but died in the spring of that year. He and Much had told me about the beauty of the valley and its potential—unclimbed 6,000m peaks and granite faces—so we decided to go.

We flew to Delhi and from there traveled two days by taxi to the small village of Rakcham in the Baspa Valley. On October 10 we hiked up the Gor Garang Valley to the so-called Rakcham Plateau, where we set up camp for the next few days. We had no porters, wanting to do everything by ourselves. At the plateau, we met Eneko and Iker Pou, who were part of a North Face team expedition.

Over the next two days, Christoph, Markus, and I climbed a new route up the south face of an unnamed granite peak of approximately 5,000m on the west side of the valley. We named the summit Alpbandariol (31°25'46.98"N, 78°22'22.68"E) and the route Rehab Line, climbing it clean but not all free (580m of climbing, 7b A2). We estimate the route can be climbed completely free at around 8a. We descended east in the couloir behind the peak to rejoin the valley. The same day, the Pou brothers put up a new route on the next peak further up valley (31°25'54.55"N, 78°22'54.87"E), climbing the east pillar, which they named Miquellink (600m of climbing, 6b, AAJ 2020).

In the meantime, Magnus and Roman had put up a new line on Hace and Charas (ca 4,850m, 31°25'27.60"N, 78°22'57.52"E), a peak on the east side of the valley climbed a month previously by the Austrian Alpine Club's Young Alpinists Group (AAJ 2020). The Austrians climbed a 450m line on the north face and west ridge at VI A1; Magnus and Roman climbed the more compact slabs to the right at 6b A1 (possibly 7b all free), joining the original line toward the top; they descended without continuing to the summit, naming the 400m route Naresh Good.

Bad weather arrived and we descended to Rakcham village, where we met both the North Face team and Much Mayr and our Austrian friends. We were invited to a big Indian wedding party and were impressed by the hospitality, which included heavy applejack (strong brandy)—this area is famous for its apple cultivation.

When the weather improved, we wanted to climb another peak. From Hansjörg and Much, we knew that a pass led west from the Rakcham Plateau to the Saro Gad (valley) and the foot of the peak Hansjörg and others had climbed in 2018, which you can see from the village. We wanted to look at other summits in this valley.

After a night on the plateau, we crossed the pass and went up-valley to around 4,200m, where we set another camp. The journey was far from easy due to extensive boulder fields. At 2 a.m. on the 17th, we departed for the peak immediately northeast of the one climbed by Hansjörg in 2018. [These

peaks lie on the ridge that runs southwest from Jorkanden (6,474m).] We snaked up the left side of the southeast face, finding ice and mixed terrain up to 70°, to reach the southwest ridge, which we followed (one 50m section of 70° ice) to the summit. By early afternoon we were on top. We named the peak Devbhoomi ("Land of the Gods," 6,057m, 31°27'40.49"N, 78°20'46.11"E).

We returned to the village and decided to focus on a few short rock routes accessible from the main valley. Christoph repeated Luger Hammer (8a+, first climbed around eight years ago by Alexander Luger), while I climbed a nice crack to the right that I named Bendler Hammerl (7a+).

— **Gebhard Bendler, Austria**

Images



Pitch two (7a) of Rehab Line on Alpbandariol (ca 5,000m).



The southeast face and southwest ridge of Devbhoomi (6,057m).



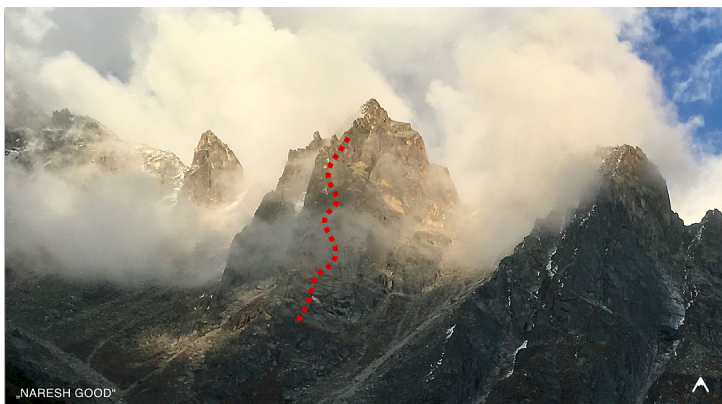
Climbing snow gullies on the southeast face of Devbhoomi during the first ascent.



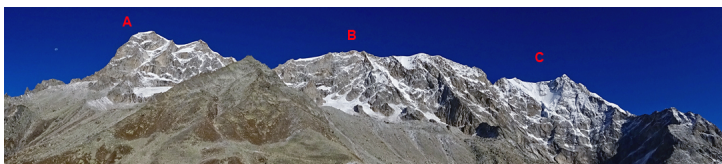
Gebhard Bendler on the lower southeast face of Devbhoomi during the first ascent. The Baspa Valley is below, and the nearer peaks on the south side are largely unnamed and rise to around 5,500m.



Christoph Schranz repeating the single-pitch Luger Hammer (8a+) in the Baspa Valley.



Naresh Good on the rock peak called Hace and Charas above the Rakcham Plateau. About a month previously, a group of young Austrians had made the first ascent of this tower via a route a little to the left (see AAJ 2020).



Seen from the southeast: (A) Peak 6,050m (climbed 2018), (B) Devbhoomi (6,057m), and (C) unnamed and probably unclimbed peak of around 6,050m.



Looking north-northeast across the Rakcham Plateau. (1) Approximate lines of Latin Brother (560m of climbing, 7c+, Spanish, 2019); (2) Rehab Line (580m of climbing, 7b A2, Austrians, 2019); and (3) Miquellink (600m of climbing, 6b, Spanish, 2019).



Rehab Line on the south face of Alpbandariol, a summit of around 5,000m north of the Rakcham Plateau.



The crux pitch three (7b+) on Rehab Line on the south face of Alpbandariol, a summit of around 5,000m north of the Rakcham Plateau.



Eneko and Iker Pou on the summit of an unnamed 5,000m rock peak above the Rakcham Plateau, having completed Miquellink (600m, 6b).

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