

A photograph of two hikers standing on a snowy mountain slope. The hiker on the left is wearing a red jacket and brown pants, while the hiker on the right is wearing a black jacket and black pants. Both are carrying large backpacks and using trekking poles. The background features rugged, rocky mountain peaks with patches of snow under a blue sky with light clouds.

Hiking Club St. Stephen's College

Miscellany
2012-2014

In memory of

Rohan Kanhai Dutta and Sunil Chandra

**"Only those who will risk going too far
can possibly find out how far one can go."**

- T.S. Eliot

Executive Council 2013-2014

President	:	Suraj Jacob
Vice Presidents	:	Perna Dangi Sahil Joseph Singh
Secretaries	:	Vikas Bhati Shourya Awasthi
Climbing Captain	:	Divya Danielle Pant
Treasurer	:	Mathew Sebastian Pathippallil
Wall Incharge	:	Vikas Bhati

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Rohan Kanhai Datta and Sunil Chandra Memorial Fund

Every institution has a history. Institutions however can be distinguished on the basis of what they get from their past. Hiking Club, as we all know, has a rich past. It has justly earned many laurels in the past. Rock climbers like Rohan Kanhai Datta and Mandip Singh Soin, who in their time were counted among the best rock climbers in the country. Mountain climbers like PM Das, or Yusuf Zaheer, who while in college scaled Reo Pargayal, and later Leo Pargyal from the very tough South face. Or, a multi talented climber, photographer and artist like Sanjeev Saith. The list can go on and on. But then, Hiking Clubs past is not only its history. It continues to contribute richly to its present. The Easwaran Bharatan wall, on which club members have been honing their climbing skills for the past ten years was given to college by Rohan Kanhai Datta. Over years, Hiking Club alumni like Mandip Soin, Yusuf Zaheer, Dr PM Das, Ajeet Bajaj, and Vaibhav Kala have presented slide shows of their adventures and interacted with students. And now, we have the Rohan Kanhai Datta and Sunil Chandra Memorial Fund, in the memory of two of its very talented alumni. The idea for this fund was Mandip's. And if today it stands at more than Rs 23 lakhs, it is entirely due to his efforts. The fund will be helping Hiking club in its annual sport climbing competition and mountain climbing expeditions. This means the club will no

longer have the excuse of lack of funds to hold itself back. The following club alumni, and families and friends of Kan and Joe have contributed. Club greatly appreciates their generosity.

1. Ms Abha Kaul
2. Mr Akhil Chandra
3. Mr Alok Chandra
4. Mr Arjun Gupta
5. Mr Charu Chandra Sharma
6. Mr Dhananjay Nilkanth Date
7. Mr Dinesh Dayal
8. Mr Gautam Nair
9. Mr Jai Swarup Pathak
10. Captain Janardan Kapur
11. Mr Kishore Lahiri and Prof Nayanjot Lahiri
12. Brigadier R. D. Datta and Mrs Kusum Datta
13. Mr Mandip Singh Soin
14. Mr Pranav Karol
15. Mr Pratap Dube
16. Mr Praveen Gupta
17. Mr Rahul P Dave
18. Mr Rajiv Luthra
19. Mr Ranjan Pal
20. Mr Ravindra Pal Singh
21. Ms Reena Mittal
22. Ms Rukminin Banerji
23. Mr Sandeep Dayal
24. Mr Sishir Lall
25. Mr Sudhil Dahiya
26. Mr Sushil Dubey and Ms Brinda Dubey

27. Mr Viabhav Kala
28. Mr Yash Saboo

From this year onwards the annual St Stephen's College Open Sport Climbing is dedicated to the memory of Rohan Kanhai Datta and Sunil Chandra. The club has also decided to dedicate medals for best performances in the climbing competition to the memory of some of its alumni. These medals are (i) Rohan Kanhai Datta Medal for the best Lead Climbing (Male), (ii) Sunil Chandra Medal for the best Speed Climbing (Male), (iii) Dr P M Das Medal for the best Lead Climbing (Female), (iv) Ashok Bamzai Medal for the best Speed Climbing (Female), (v) Basant K Dube Medal for the best climber

in Junior Male category, and (vi) Easwaran Bharatan Medal for the best climber from Hiking Club.

Dr Sanjay Kumar
Staff Advisor



Hiking Club 2012-2014

To say that these years have been eventful for the Hiking Club of St. Stephen's College would be a dramatic understatement. Having been a part of two open sport national climbing meets, two national level climbing competitions, rafting trips, expeditions and about a dozen treks, we have had a ball of a couple of years!

With the starting of the semester, we highly enthusiastic first years were introduced to and completely taken by the climbing wall in college! Daily climbing sessions commenced pronto and everyday post lunch all Club

members, juniors and seniors would show their allegiance to the wall where climbing sessions would take place with gusto!

The first trek of the session was a ten day long escapade to the Garhwal Himalayas, that started at Uniana and ended in Kedarnath (2nd-12th October). Seven junior members were accompanied by our staff advisor, Dr Sanjay Kumar, all of whom brought back memories to last a lifetime.

Later in the month of October our climbers participated in the North Zone Climbing Competition held at the Jamia Milia Islamia

Campus from the 13th-16th of October and performed extremely well. Divya Danielle Pant, a first year student pursuing a degree in Economics from our college stood third in the Speed Climbing Competition and went on to represent Delhi and North India at the Nationals held from the 3rd to 5th of November.

The focus of the club then shifted towards the biggest events of the year – the annual club fest: 'Hike-a-Mania' and the '7th Annual St. Stephen's Open Sport Climbing Competition. The fest kicked off on the 1st of February going on for two days, followed immediately by the Climbing Competition on the 3rd February, which proceeded for the following three days, both of which were fulfilled spectacles! Purna Dangi, a first year student pursuing English Honours, did Stephen's proud with a third place finish in the women's Speed Climbing Competition. She has gone on to win more laurels for the college and has beautifully harnessed her love for nature, scaling some of the most pristine peaks of the nation!

Accompanied by Dr. Rishi Nanda, Dr. Ankur Barua, and Ms Shweta Jain, were the students who intended to kick back and relax in the sun, surf and sands of Rishikesh. Beyond the eighty winks, white water rafting was the highlight of the trips to Rishikesh. Also in February, treated with renewed

enthusiasm, the climbing aficionados found themselves amidst the natural rocks of Lado Sarai, New Delhi where all that had been learnt on plastic was applied.

The Club winded up its activities for the 2011-2012 academic session with a trek conducted in collaboration with the Equal Opportunity Cell to Jageshwar, Dholchhena, from the 4th to the 7th of April. The year couldn't have ended on a better note for little did we know what was in store for us.

If 2011 started with a bang, 2012 was nothing short of a dynamic explosion of adventure! With the first expedition being to the Zaskar Valley in Kashmir, the Hiking Club broke the monotony of the two month summer overture. With a team of 7 members accompanied by Mr. Raghunathan, the two week long adventure of a venture was nothing short of a spectacle. The summer of 2012 is also one to remember with respect to the expedition to the Lahaul valley of Himachal Pradesh. Part of the 8 member expedition team that attempted the 6264 meters peak CB-13 was St. Stephen's and Delhi University representative, Purna Dangi! Enroute to summiting 100m short of the peak, the team came across the long lost remains of the historic crash of an IAF aircraft AN-12 from 1968.

With the boom of a start to 2012, the activities of the Hiking Club only went on to another level! Newly inducted members showed no signs of taking it easy at the Climbing Wall. Giving it their all, shedding tears, sweat and gal, their own talents did they manage to willfully harness and haul.

At the 19th North Zone Sport Climbing Meet Stephen's surpassed all expectations and gave the Climbing Fraternity a lot to talk about with a gold in speed, bouldering and bronze in lead Perna Dangi became the best female climber in the North Zone! The Hiking Club fest 2012-13, was done in collaboration with Harmony, the college Winter Fest gathered the biggest crowd for the obstacle course the 8th St. Stephen's Open National Climbing Meet was held from the 8th-10th of February and as it was expected, our climbers emerged victorious with Divya, Perna and Vikas bringing home 4 medals in all, a record haul for the Club and college!

Then came the highly impromptu, yet ever so organized trek to Patalsu (4200m), a peak nestled across the Solang Valley of Himachal Pradesh. Fantastic fun and frolic folly, this trip is one we shall never forget. Camping out in thigh-deep snow, hot springs to break the cold and the mouth-watering cuisine to

satisfy our seemingly infinite appetites, this four day break from the not-so-monotonous college life was sweet! With the academic session coming to an end, the white-water rafting trips to Rishikesh in March were on everybody's mind. Following a whooping response from the students, accompanied by Professors Ankur Barua and Dhruv Nagar, our highly accommodating hosts, Aquaterra, ensured that the trips to Rishikesh were, as usual, brilliant. The sanctity of the hilly terrain and tranquility of the river gave us something we all eventually look for and meander to- peace. [Done with the rafting trips, all of us then settled into our college routines.

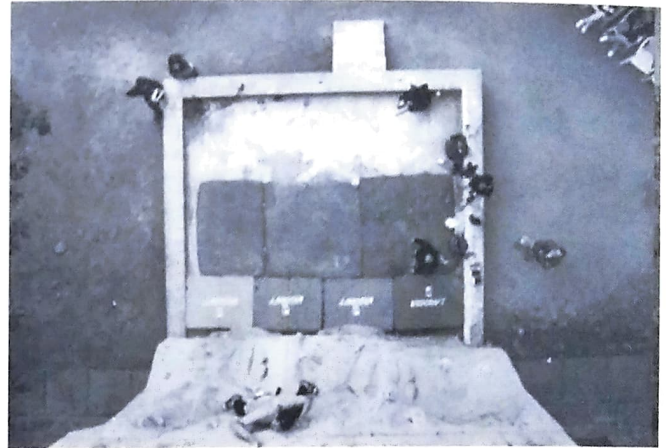
Summer 2013 was a busy one for members of the Club for it saw Perna Dangi complete her Advance course in mountaineering from NIM, Uttarkashi after which she did a ten day alpine trek across the Parang La following it up with a record breaking climb of the frequented Stok Kangri peak in two days. She was then chosen to be a part of IMF organized Climbathon, an alpine climbing camp where selected climbers from the country were to be trained under the the best climbers over 20 days in the Bara Shigri of Himachal Pradesh. She also did the Hiking Club proud, bagging two medals in the 19th zonal meet, going on to represent Delhi and

North India in the National meet. Suraj Jacob, too, completed his Basic Course over the summer from JIM, Jammu & Kashmir.

With a bunch of freshly graduated mountaineers, 2013 began with a tremendous amount of excitement! The first trek of the session was a 5 day long expedition to Beas Kund, with a team of 9 members accompanied by Dr. Rishi Nanda. This trip brought to the forefront some of the Club's most passionate members!

2013 came to a boisterous end with Club

members individually having gone skiing, camping, trekking, scuba diving, water-skiing and rock climbing in order to keep the adventure bug inside them alive and healthy!



A Quick Week-end Scramble at Chadrakhani Pass (Nov 2-4, 2012) Sanjay Kumar

Better highways, faster buses and the penetration of road network into hills have meant that many shorter treks in the Himalayas can now be done during a week-end outing from Delhi. Hiking Club has done Nag Tibba, Binsar, Churdhar, Dyara Bugyal and the base of Indrhar pass treks over weekends in recent years. Our goal in the first weekend of November 2012 was Chandrakhani Pass, which even a decade ago would have needed a full week outing from Delhi. In fact, the above mentioned changes have altered trek planning options for longer treks too. For example, now it is possible to arrive at Manali from Delhi at 8am, have a quick breakfast, finish last minute shopping and proceed for Hamta, Beas Kund, Kalihind, Chandrakhani, or other treks the same day.



We traveled to Patlikuhl, 20 km before Manali in a Volvo bus paying Rs 900/ per person. We were asked to report at 5pm at Gandhi Market, near Minto Bridge, the bus was supposed to leave at 5:30; it eventually left at 6:30. Our entire reason for paying double the normal fare for a Volvo ride was to be able to trek enough on the first day itself to save a day, and the late departure did irk. We stopped at a place just before Karnal for dinner. It was a forced robbery of Rs 180/ per person for an atrocious buffet. We saw many other private and state operated Delhi-Manali Volvos stopping at the same place. Clearly, the owner of the place must have paid hefty bribes to bus operators for herding captive customers to his place.

The journey to Patlikuhl otherwise was comfortable. We did manage a decent sleep, the road potholes and curves in the hill section disturbing us barely. We were at Patlikuhl at 6:30, shivering in morning chill. Patlikuhl is no longer a mere stop on the Manali highway for crossing Beas towards Naggar. It has groceries and vegetable shops for stocking up for a trek. Its taxi stand has enough vehicles for taking a ride to trek road heads nearby. It even has a paid Sulabh toilet.



Our trusted guide cum cook Rinchen, veteran of many Hiking Club treks, arrived from Manali. Gopal from Western Nepal, was to be our porter. They also brought kerosene. After heavy breakfast of paranthas we left for Ramsu (about 13 km away, 5 km beyond Naggar) in a Tata Sumo (Rs 600/). We were on trail at 10am. The trail to Chandrakhani is well marked. Ramsu village herders regularly go halfway to the pass, upto Stelling and Ghalkarai meadows. Ramsu is at around 2200m. It has apple orchards, lots of oak, spruce and fir, but little deodar. The path goes through a shaded forest. Giant Horse Chestnut trees, which were in fall, take over after fir. Further up it is the territory of rhododendrons and Bhojpatra. Meadows carried a drab brown look late in the season but the view across the Beas valley was expansive and attractive in its own unique ways. No wall of high ice like the Nanda Devi massif graces the horizon here. The peaks are smaller, they do not loom over the horizon, snow-less dark ridges appear to be leading right up to their base. It is the distance which adds to their mystery. Starting from west



to north, there is the dome of Hanuman Tibba that juts above a barren ridge. The Makar Beh massif is to the north-west, biggest of the ice faces here; steep, straight and forbidding. Further to the north is Mulkila of central Lahul, while closer at hand is Dev Tibba, which appears a mere rump from this side.

There are many temporary stone structures erected by shepherds above the forest region. All were abandoned, only one or two had a water source close by. We had the lunch of packed paranthas in one of the meadows, basking in the warm sun. We camped at 4 o'clock near the highest meadow. The campsite is over a rolling meadow above a forest of bhojpatra. The pass ridge towards left is clearly visible from here. It was intensely cold, but standing around the campfire of the fuelwood collected mainly by Gopal, some by us had an absorbing discussion on Ghalib, Zauk, and Faiz. Vijaydeep and Mohamin peppered it with shers, Lucky gave it a turn towards melody with renditions of Punjabi sufi songs. Is Ghalib overrated? Are the spiritual readinds of ishq mere cover-ups for matters more mundane? Who is a better ghazal singer, Mehdi Hasan, or Ghulam Ali? On all these, we all had different arguments and opinions.

The Chandrakhani ridge sheltered the morning sun till late, but we were on trail by nine. A gentle climb leads to the ridge, and for about half a kilometer the trail is near the ridge top. The slope on the Malana side has a steep fall. When it seems the trail will be finally turning to the Malana side it switches back towards the Naggar side. At the chortens marking the pass we get to see slopes descending, and distant ice covered peaks on all sides. West, North-West and North have Hanuman Tibba, Makarbeh, Mulkila, and Deo-Tibba. Peaks of the Tosh glacier straddle the North East, the pyramid of White Sail being the prominent peak here. Right in front of us are lower peaks of the Malana Glacier area, with distinctly local and matter of fact names. Ram Chakor is a square block, Chhoti Ungli (Little Finger) and Barhi Unlgi (Big Finger) are thin rocky pinnacles. In the East are the peaks of the Pin-Parbati pass area. After many years, ours is the first Hiking Club team with no women members. A rush of freedom in open

space all around mixed with machismo overtakes students. Running around, Mohamin is the first one to take off his shirt. They are bashful when I aim my camera, but on some prodding give out a loud, bare chested hurrah. I try to register my presence in the gang by doing push-ups, with students counting and cheering.

At about eleven thirty we are off the ridge. The descent to Malana is very steep. The trail is nowhere risky or exposed, but is a real assault on toes. All through the trail is in open scrubland, and the bright sun is dehydrating. At couple of places other trails branch off towards Malana Glacier area, north of the village. Half way down we stop at a stream to have a lunch of boiled eggs and fill up on water.

We all have read about the aggressive aloofness of Malana. Rinchen and Gopal warn us not to touch any person, or thing in the village. Half a kilometer before the village a young woman passes us carrying a load of fuelwood. She is dressed Kulu style in pattu and head scarf. I avoid eye contact, but notice that she has a pleasant oval face, with big eyes and blood red lips, and she is wearing plastic shoes. We were told that there are private guest houses on one side of the village, where we can have tea. In search of tea we ended up taking a tour of the village. Men, sitting on verandahs, carefully avoided us, as we did the same. A number of village women, laughing and talking loudly, were washing clothes in the community taps, in the afternoon sun. Kids sled down on plastic plates on a gravel slope. They asked us for toffees. On one verandah a teen boy talked loudly about why marrying two women was better than one, just as two teen girls passed below carrying plastic jars to fill water. Men and boys rested, sunned themselves, wandered around, or eve-teased, while women and girls worked. This was the first class division in what is called an ancient republic. Malana is a properous village even by Himachal standards, which itself is among the more properous of Indian states. I can not help wondering if much of 'ancient republic' talk is not a cover up for marijuana trade.

At 3Pm we are resting on a platform beside the school sipping delicious iced tea made from the powder brought by Yasharth. Teachers in school are finishing up with the voting for state legislative assembly. We call Jari Taxi stand for a vehicle to take us to Bhuntar from the road-head three kilometers away. At five thirty we are loading our rucksacks on the Sumo operated by two friendly young men from Jari. For thirteen kilometers to Jari, the road is along the

Malana nullah. Road and hydroelectricity projects have softened the forbidding look of the legendary Manala gorge. It begins to get dark just when we cross Parvati at Jari. The road along Parvati is broader and much improved than what I remember from the Hiking Club Pin Parvati trek eight years ago. Many vehicles; cars and mobikes, pass us carrying locals to their homes in dusk. There is a big crowd outside a liquor shop. Our friendly driver enlightens us to the reason. Liquor vends were closed before and during elections. It is pitch dark, headlights of the old vehicle barely show the road ahead. We are beside Parvati. We can sense it, but hardly see it. Even though we all have had a jolly good time, we group sing the sad 'Jane wo kaise log the' from Pyasa.

At 8:30PM we take a Haryana Roadways bus coming from Manali. The bus is driven by a crazy driver playing excruciatingly loud Punjabi truck music. Mohamin can barely tuck in his knees in the narrow leg space of the bus seat. The small Lahuli man sitting besides me is refusing to stay inside his part of the seat. There is a silent tussle between us. Then he complains asking me to give him shoulder space, I ask him to remain in his side. We are unanimous that the bus journey is a torture. We get down at Chandigarh at 3AM, even though the bus is going up to Delhi. We have made up our mind to get off the Haryana bus, even if it amounts to spending half the night on Chandigarh bus stand. In fact I am looking forward to cups of tea from the bus stand dhaba, and even an early morning walk in the Sector 17 market. Vijaydeep has spent ten years of his childhood in Chandigarh, he has pleasant memories of the city and he too is excited about the night-out. But, as soon as we get down we see a Himachal Roadways Deluxe AC bus. We quickly check if we have enough money for the ticket to Delhi. Himachal bus is comfortable, and silent. No sooner has it crossed through the well lit roads of Chandigarh, we are all fast asleep.

Scaling Patalsu with the Hiking Club

Ankitha Cheerakathil

On the evening of 23rd March, Saturday, 2013, I was rushing around my room in Rez, hurriedly packing for my first snow trek with the Hiking Club of St. Stephen's College. This trek would be a defining moment in my life. I would discover the extent to which my passion for trekking and mountaineering lies (as well as my capabilities in the same), but that evening, all I could worry about was how on earth I could manage to pack and carry my ice axe through the Delhi Metro without frightening or hurting any of the other passengers! Most of the equipment that Perna Dangi had rented for the trek was completely unfamiliar to my inexperienced eyes. In particular, the snow boots that weighed a kilo each and the ice axe appeared remarkable. I finally hoisted my duffel bag onto my shoulder and rushed to the Kashmere Gate Metro Station to meet the rest of the team.

..... : Six of us had been struck with the thought of summiting Patalsu and we were determined that this would be accomplished no matter what! Perna had organized the expedition and roped in two local climbing friends who were qualified and experienced enough for the rather doubtful task of guiding aspiring mountaineers to the summit of Patalsu, a 4200m snow mountain across Solang Nallah. Divya, Perna, Vikas, Matthew, Lucky and I bought tickets for a semi-deluxe bus. The bus stopped at six in the morning in Himachal Pradesh for breakfast. We enjoyed our first acclimatization as we sat outside shivering with hot beverages in our hands. As we neared Manali, we made the bus stop at Kalath and got down, only to be greeted joyfully by one of our guides, Gopal.

We had planned on starting the trek at midnight, but Dinu sir, an expert instructor from ABVIMAS informed us that the weather forecasts had predicted rain that night. We decided that it would be better to leave the next day at noon, set up base camp halfway towards the summit, catch a few hours of sleep and leave early in the morning in time to watch the sun rise from the summit of Patalsu. After eight hours of profound sleep, I woke up before the alarm rang at 7:30 am. Gopal handed out our rucksacks and we set to work. Ajay, our second guide arrived then. The rucksacks were soon filled to the brim. I felt rather doubtful of my abilities to

manage it but decided to push all negative thoughts aside. I hauled it on and clipped everything into place, determined to do or die. After one last group photograph, we were crossing the bridge to the main road to wait for our ride that would take us to Solang.



Team members-L-R(1st row):
Ankitha, (sitting) Prerna, Gopal, Divya.
2nd row:Mathew, Vikas, Lucky, Ajay

When we got down from our Sumos at Solang Valley, we found a large number of tourists wandering around and admiring the wet snow lying on the side of the road. Here was I, on my noble mission to trudge through soft, fresh, knee-deep snow in order to climb steep inclines and summit a mountain. I had never felt more smug and content before in my life! We ate our last proper meal with the tourists at a dhaba before we set off.

I made the same mistake as all amateur trekkers. I started off at a hurried pace and tired myself out in half an hour. I started dragging behind the rest and Gopal was assigned to the rear to make sure that I was all right. After walking a short way, we reached a village where we sat down and pulled on our snow boots. Gopal remained at the rear and helped me whenever I landed flat on my back on the snow. This happened too many times for me to dwell on. It was the first time Matthew and Vikas were encountering snow, but I didn't see them falling down every five minutes!



Ajay paving the way in knee deep snow before tree line.

Encountering the dirt and rocks near trees was no easier unfortunately. They were steep and difficult to ascend. I was getting rather short of breath and took every chance to rest since pushing my body to such extreme limits was too new an experience for me. Fortunately, my tendency to fall became markedly less as we progressed. The others stopped to take photographs and I used the opportunity to move slowly ahead, until only Ajay and Gopal were in front of me. By the time base camp was in sight, I was plodding along resolutely ahead of the others.

We reached base camp after ascending a particularly steep incline. It was a relatively flat expanse of land, dotted with trees. As soon as we stopped, I became acutely aware of the temperature. The cold increased with every minute as night descended. I tried to help the others as they gathered firewood, but no amount of exercise seemed to help me in conquering the cold. Tents were pitched quickly, before daylight faded. Noticing my extreme reaction to the cold, they pushed me inside one of the tents while they made a bonfire. I zipped up the tent and felt better as I waited for them to prepare a meal.



Team encountered hard snow once at a higher altitude.

When dinner was ready, I emerged out of the tent and ran quickly to the fire to keep myself warm. My clothes were wet from falling too many times in the snow and I was eager to dry myself. I had never encountered near freezing temperatures before in my life and just couldn't believe how cold it was.

After finishing dinner, I decided to retire quickly to my tent wanting to get as much rest as possible before we made the summit attempt early next morning. I woke up at 3 am the next morning to find Prerna and Divya in their sleeping bags next to me. It was extremely cold and I could hear our pronounced breathing inside the tent. We were lying on rock hard snow with only a thin mattress to cushion us, so the conditions were hardly conducive for me to go back to sleep. I tossed and turned, but couldn't go back to sleep. I felt refreshed and realized that I was completely rested. I also realized that the only way to stop feeling so cold was to get down to strenuous exercise. I roused Prerna and Divya so that we could set off as early as possible.

Wanting to check the temperature outside, I stepped outside the tent. I was extremely relieved to find that I could cope with the cold better than the previous evening. After everyone gathered their essentials and were ready, we started moving towards the summit.

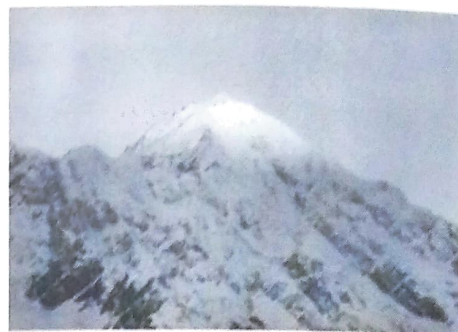
The incline was like nothing I had encountered before. It looked almost like 90 degrees to me while in reality, it was probably only 60 degrees or so. Gopal was by my side, encouraging me at every step. After what seemed like eternity, we finally crossed the tree line and reached relatively flat expanses. Everyone had stopped to catch their breath there and eat something as refreshment.

The sun was about to rise. We could see a golden glow on the tip of the Hanuman Tibba. The white peaks surrounding us made an incredibly gorgeous sight. We moved further up and then stopped to heat snow for drinking water, since we had completely run out of liquids by then. But I didn't want an extended break and started moving ahead after taking several sips of water. That was when I noticed a throbbing heachache and nausea. Coupled with my exhaustion, I was unable to move. Gopal took out the first aid box and handed me a pill for my headache. There was no way I could move up, at least not until the headache had passed. On my insistence, they decided to leave me there to rest and follow the others to the summit, which was just two hours away.

After half an hour I sat up and found myself in what appeared to me to be paradise. My surroundings were so beautiful that I had to pinch myself to make sure that I wasn't dreaming. I opened a packet of biscuits and started munching on them, still absorbed in gazing at the beauty around me. After my meal, I sat for an hour in a stupor, stunned by the sight before me.

When I reflected on the fact that I had missed my chance to summit Patalsu, I did feel a little sad. However, I had to give myself a pat on the back for having reached that far. Because right then, none of it mattered. I had the most beautiful view in front of me and I wanted to enjoy it as much as possible. Who knew when I would be given the opportunity to see such spectacular beauty again in my life?

I sat there peacefully for two hours. Divya called me on Ajay's phone with which they had left me in case of any emergency(amazingly the phones catch the Solang village reception) after they had reached the second summit of Patalsu. I reassured them regarding my health and congratulated them as well. They were planning on moving towards the first summit after they hung up, but without Vikas and Lucky. The former had fever and the latter had a headache.



Sunrise on Hanuman Tibba



Negotiating the ridge



Resting at Summit 2 with the Summit in the background.



The increasing slope as team nears the summit

When they began their descent, it was Ajay who arrived first. It was a sight to watch him gliding down the slopes on his rain shield. I was longing to try it as well, but he said that it was best if I didn't. Instead, I climbed behind him on the plastic sheet and off we went! I realized then that the rain shield moves at such a pace on the hard snow that it really does require skill and practice to steer and brake it.

That's how we descended to base camp in considerably less than half the time it took for us to reach the summit. The others were also using their rain shields to descend, but it took ages for them as they didn't have Ajay's experience.

It would only take four hours to reach Solang Valley so the fact that everyone seemed to have headaches or fevers didn't pose a serious problem. I helped Prerna, Ajay and Gopal to pack everything up quickly. Descending is always easier, but I made myself exhausted by trying to glide down. Therefore, Gopal became my assistant once again and helped me down to the village, where we changed out of our boots into sneakers. We caught a taxi back to Kalath, where we changed quickly into warm clothes, packed our bags, returned the equipment we had rented and caught a bus back to Delhi by 9:30 pm. I couldn't believe that it was all over within just two days. But the fact remains that my attempt to summit Patalsu remained one of the defining incidents in my life. I will always be grateful to the Hiking Club and our guides Ajay and Gopal for helping me reach that far.



Divya, Mathew and Prerna at the summit of Patalsu, 4200 mtrs and Ajay behind the camera

Zanskar: Darcha to Phuktal over the Shingo-La

Leila Gautam

Group: Mr. Raghunathan (the trek-in-charge),
Krishan, Yasharth, Brijesh, Manku, Leila, Suraj,
Arnav, and the two guides/cooks Rinchen, Lalchand

We left Delhi on the 29th of June, in the evening, from the ISBT at Kashmere Gate. We reached Manali the next day at around eleven in the morning. The town was blessedly cool and you could even see the snow-capped mountains from the town. We set off on the next day to cross the Rohtang pass and entered the Ladakh valley the next morning. I understood why people constantly used the cliched 'heaven-on-earth' phrase for this place. There were not many trees in sight just unbelievably green meadows and tiny flowers all over. We stopped at *Koksar* for breakfast " parathas and an omelette. We were still in Himachal Pradesh. Kashmir would come only on the third day of trekking after crossing the Shingo-La. The Sumo left us at the official starting point of our trek " at a campsite called *Palamo* near *Darcha*.



Towards Shingo La

This was our first campsite. It was a large, green meadow, with a wide orderly stream splitting the place in two. We were surrounded by snow-capped mountains on all four sides. We planned to spend this day at *Palamo*, and the next to get acclimatised.

It was a two-hour walk on the road to the next campsite *Zanskar Sumdo*. We camped with a group of Israelis who would be with us till a point on our route. The next day was the steepest, nastiest uphill journey. We were going up to the campsite *Chumik Nagpo*, vertically higher by 600 metres. The uphill started immediately and we had to make our way up a seemingly endless, sandy and slippery incline. I slogged on, determined to put on a respectable show, and succeeded to some part. I found myself needing to breathe deeply even for plain walking which due to the high altitude seemed like an endless walk. The sweet relief of reaching the campsite was indescribable.



From Chumik Nagpo



Glacial Lake on top of Shingo La

We were going to cross the Shingo La Pass at an elevation of 5100 m. The trek would be comparable to the one the previous day. We had to cross a number of glaciers, and a steep, relentless uphill slope until we reached the Pass. Snowy peaks on all sides, and right underneath the pass, surrounded by snow, was a lake of the purest blue-green. The Pass itself, where we rested, had a cairn with a number of Buddhist prayer flags, as all these passes do. We ate paranthas there. The downhill journey was the loveliest bit. I was ecstatic that I'd managed the tough part as I slid down large stretches of snow, ran the downhill, and arrived at the Lakhang campsite exultant.

We left Lakhang and set off towards Kargyak. This would be a very long plain walk of about 20 km. We had many stream crossings on the way (we were walking alongside the Kargya Chi River) but since it was morning, the sun-melted ice hadn't reached them, and they were at their lowest spate. It was a long and very dusty walk. From the lush, green meadows of earlier, the landscape was now bare, rocky and dusty. The mountains were composed entirely of stone with hardly any green cover. Landslides were to be seen everywhere and often, our path was covered with boulders that we had to navigate. We passed a doksa a place where the people were herding their yaks and dzos (yak-cow hybrid), and collected some curd from here. Rinchen would make kadi for dinner. We also started finding chortens. These, Mr. Raghunathan told me, are cenotaphs, not tombs. They were all along the way, just springing out of the ground everywhere. Chortens are stone structures, higher than a man is tall, the shape of onion bulbs.

We reached the Kargyak village later in the afternoon. It was surrounded by fields but the village itself had around five houses. I think that was because we were at a very high altitude as we went lower down, living might be easier, and the villages might have more houses. Our campsite was fifteen minutes away from the village, right alongside the river Kargya Chi.



Phuktal Gumpa



Wedding at Kye

After the decision to visit the Phuktal Monastery before turning back, we proceeded to Yaal. Phukta, a long walk along the Zanskar. The monastery was set on the mountain, as if it were part of the mountain and had grown there. The cliff and the stone walls merged. It was huge, as large as a village a large number of rooms, interconnected by madly sloping passages. A single, sacred juniper tree sat atop the structure. We made our way up to the main temple,

the balcony giving us a magnificent view of the green valley. We watched the monks eat their midday meal. Large buckets of rice and dal the simplest of food. I think they followed the Tibetan Mahayana sect of Buddhism with the Dalai Lama as their leader. We saw lots of pictures of him along the way in homes and in hotels. I think the entire Ladakh region we trekked in was closer to Tibet in its culture and ways than to India.

We turned back, to return the way we had come. Instead of camping at Kargyak, we would camp at a nearby place called Kye. We would spend an extra day as a rest day, to help us recover from the trek. We had heard of a marriage that would take place at the Kye village and all decided to go along and have a look. We were not without hopes of being fed, and a fortnight of being deprived of non-veg made our mouths water at the prospect of a marriage.

It was morning, and a simple white covering had been erected at the village. Underneath, the lama conducting the proceedings sat at the head, and the bride's relatives sat on one side, and

the groom's on the other. The bride was from Kye and her bridegroom of Yal. She would be leaving her village, and was weeping loudly, as was customary. She wore bright robes and a jewel-studded headdress. The groom's relatives performed a slow, stately dance at the wedding. People carrying buckets of food and drinks moved throughout the seated assembly of people. They gave us tea, and then chang, the local alcohol made of fermented barley. Certain members of our group happily

consumed vast quantities of chang. They also gave us rice, and vegetable. I found the food near inedible, but was awed at their generosity we were nothing more than gate-crashers, essentially, and here we were, being fed with such equanimity from people who barely had enough to make do for themselves.

We then set on, essentially along the same route, but at different campsites. We stopped at many villages, and I saw the way the Ladakhis lived. There seemed a simplicity and a harmony to their lives though I can't even begin to imagine how difficult things would get for them in the icy winters. Living in a camp within a tent deprives you of almost all privacy and people shed layers of artifice that are so easy to put in the comfort of city life.

Rafting Trip 2012

Iraj

On 24th February 2012 the second rafting trip departed from college at 10 o'clock in the night in two buses with a strength of 2 teachers and 65 students consisting majorly of third years. The mood was that of excitement and major impatience to arrive at our destination. The bus journey was an all nighter so that no time would be wasted and we would start rafting as soon as we were settled down in our respective tents at the camp. The bus journey was an uplifting and musical one with everyone playing and at times singing in a cacophonous manner. It was also a wee bit bumpy with occasional instances of heads banging on the roof of the bus. On the way we digressed a little and stopped at some highway dhabas to feed our travel hungry stomachs. When we arrived at the Rishikesh Bus Stop we switched into tinier buses and began an hour long journey to the camp which was approximately 25 kilometers away from main town Rishikesh further into the hills. Upon nearing our destination we walked down a hill and crossed a bridge over a beautiful rivulet and arrived at our camp, a picturesque camping site at

the bank of the rivulet with every necessity and even a volleyball court. Immediately after arriving everyone chose their tents without any hassles and began to settle down and freshen up. After that our rumbling stomachs were greeted with warm and crispy bread pakodas and then we were off on our quest to raft down the river Ganges!!!

Grumbling about stiff backs and numb buttocks we boarded our tiny buses and departed for the beach where our rafting began. Another hour later we had reached our destination and all the numbness and stiffness was gone. Everyone got dressed in the life jackets and helmets in five minutes, eager to get into the raft and have the time of their lives. However before we departed we were instructed about our rafts and precautionary measures and then, after choosing



our rafts we were off! As soon as our raft left the sandbar, our minds went ecstatic and the next four hours were a blur of pure joy and exhaustion. We conquered strong and popular rapids, like The Three Blind Mice, Roller Coaster, Golf Course, Tee Off, etc. and enjoyed every spray of water and tumble in the rapids. After our initial rapids we were allowed to jump into the river and swim around with impunity as long as we didn't go too far away or come under the raft. Luckily no such

thing happened and all the people who dared to brave the chilly water had the time of their life. However one of the most anticipated event was cliff jumping. Every daredevil in the trip excitedly ran up the rock that jutted out of the cliff twenty feet about the water and sat on the top trying to find the guts to jump. Finally after a few brave hearts jumped everyone else mustered the courage to do so and followed their lead. The rafting ended a little beyond the famous bridge in Rishikesh, Lakshman Jhoola. Apart from two people who had broken their slippers, everyone was overjoyed and tired, eager to be back to camp to fill their stomachs and have a nice time discussing the events of the day. At night, there was a festive mood in the air and everyone went a little away from camp and enjoyed the warmth and light of the bonfire. After that almost everyone went back to their respective tents and enjoyed amongst themselves. Everyone was so tired that most people ended up sleeping before dinner, while a handful went on a night trek and were entranced by the beautiful night sky so clearly visible in the Himalayas.

The next day we departed for our hike after a light breakfast. The captivating view we got on our seven kilometer long hike was worth all the hunger gnawing at our stomachs as we reached a cute little temple at the top of the hill we had climbed. While some sat down and talked, most took to exploring their surroundings and climbed every tree safely accessible and enjoyed the nice warm sun and panoramic view. On our way back to the camp our guides played a trick on us and took us back to our camp with an additional four kilometer detour. At the end of the hike most of us were so hungry that we ran straight to our camp the moment it came into view. After a rather filling lunch we packed our bags rested and waited to depart back to our college. In the evening after a commemorative group photo everyone picked up their bags and settled into the tiny little buses which had got us there. Once again we reached the Bus Stop and changed into the bigger and more comfortable buses that had got us to Rishikesh and began our journey back home. Our return journey was just like the one we made when we had begun our trip; cacophonous and bumpy in the beginning and silent and sleepy towards the end. On 27th February 2012, 3:00 a.m. we had arrived at the end of our journey and at the college gate everyone went to their respective places to sleep and to reminisce about a never to be forgotten trip.

Mid-Semester Trek to the Beas Kund

Shreshta Venkataramanann

Not just for a hiking novice- even for the truly seasoned trekker- the Beas Kund trek of October 2013 was nothing but a marvel. The trip had a little something to offer to everybody's sensibilities and it was not just the hike, but the entire trip as a whole, that managed to creep into everybody's hearts as one of those memorable getaways that one will forever cherish.

Thanks to the fantastic coordination of the Hiking Club at College (Vikas Bhati, you da man), the trekkers didn't have to worry about anything- be it the travel, the stay, or even the hiking gear- everything was accounted and taken care of. And so, with (surprising) doses of well-preparedness, the small contingent of the Club set out one sundry evening, with Dr. Nanda from the Philo department in tow, to embark upon a not-so-tough trail in the Kullu Himalayas.



The way to Beas Kund is full of tiny streams



Gopal, our young Buddhist guide with the Seven Sisters in the background.

One overnight bus to Manali later, we had reached our starting point- Dhundi. We pitched our tents, made sure our rations were well-stocked, and then prepared for a good night's rest in anticipation of the next four days' work. Morning greeted us with a picturesque view of Hanuman Tibba, bathed golden in the rising sun's rays. A hot breakfast of bread (minus the butter unfortunately, as our stock had been pilfered by the midnight visitations of a gerbil) and tea later, we set out for our next stop, Bakarhatch, 2000 feet higher up than Dhundi. On the way, we intrepid explorers crossed beautiful sceneries of pine forests, rumbling streams, rolling hills, and the endless expanse of the blue sky. It was breathtaking indeed.

Having reached Bakarhatch, we set up camp, and then prepared for the night dinner. One team was dispatched to scour for firewood; another, to assist in the cooking; and the third, for the clearing of the campsite. It was much fun seeing the teamwork at display- nobody grumbled, everybody pulled their weight, and no one was caught dilly-dallying. It was as if the mountains had cast some spell of fastidiousness on everybody, and that's why, when our guide, Gopal Bhai, told us that the mountains were the most enchanting of all places on Earth, we found it easy to believe him.



Pitching Tents at Beas Kund Camp

The next day was the most important one, as it involved reaching our final destination- Beas Kund. Legend has it that Rishi Vyas used to use the Beas Kund for his daily ablutions, and so, even today, this mountain tarn is revered by the people of this region, and believed to have holy powers of cleansing. And reaching this area of serenity was no small affair- our route was fraught with perilous moraines, steep slopes, and glacial faults- and so, when we finally arrived, it was with a sense of accomplishment.



The Team

When we finally saw the Beas Kund, we realized that it was completely worth the gruelling conditions of the trek. The kund was coloured a brilliant blue, and was so clear that we could see the coin that we had tossed in sinking into the watery depths even twenty feet below the surface. The eleven of us just watched in silence as we took in the beauty before us; and then, before we knew that the time had passed, we had to head back down to base camp.

And so, with our minds, hearts, and stomachs filled with the wonderful memories of the Beas Kund trek, we made our way back to civilization (much to the displeasure of most, I'd daresay); and one rickety Haryana State Roadways bus journey later (we are never going to forget how there were people literally everywhere inside the bus), we were back where we had started from, New Delhi.

At Beas Kund, our nights were spent in playing cards, Werewolves (Manku di, I know you're the killer!), tending bonfires and then singing around them, and star-gazing. Our mornings were spent in haste doing all our morning businesses, and our afternoons were spent in sweat and tiredness as we made our way to the next stop. It was almost like a parallel universe to which we all enjoyed running away to, albeit briefly.

Props to the Hiking Club for being so awesome and giving us such a trip. And lastly, I would like to ask, who lives in a pineapple under the sea?

From Spiti to Ladakh: A photo Essay

Prerna Dangi

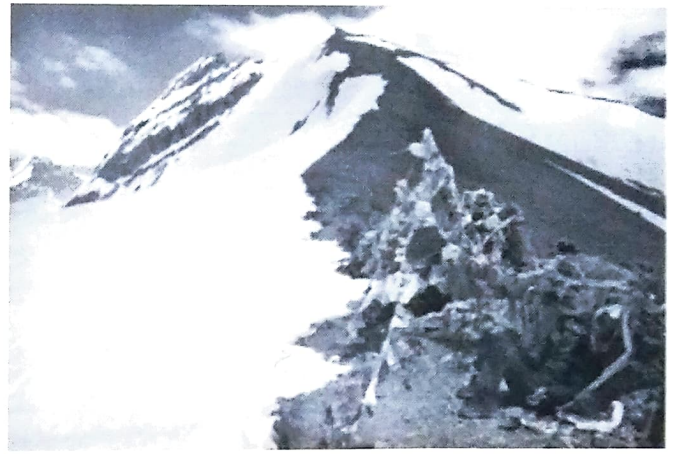
An photographic account of an alpine trek across the traditional trade route between Spiti, Changthang and Tibet, popularly known as Parang La, referring to the 5600 metres high pass that separates Spiti from Ladakh and is the source of the Pare Chu river. In a self sustained team of 4, we walked for 10 days to cover the distance of around 106 kms starting from the high altitude village of Kibber and ending at the highest salt water lake in India, Tso Moriri during the last days of June, 2013.



The trek starts from DumLa, the high altitude meadows of Kibber, a breeding ground for Spiti horses and Yaks. One then has to cross the Sangapalug Nala to reach the second camp at Thalkat.



A short walk from Thalkat brings into view the 19,600 feet peak Kanamo right before entering the gorge through which runs the Rang Nala.



The panoramic view of the Spiti side taken from Parang La which stands high at 5600 mts. Ladakh emerges on the other side starting with the glacier that gives birth to Pare Chu river.



The glacier opens into the Changthang valley of Ladakh and Pare Chu comes out in scattered streams along the vast river bed. The trek continues along the river for 2 days where one has to cross the stream several times.



At Racholammo Camp, before turning into the wet marshland of Norbu Sumdo, home to the Tibetan Wild Ass; Having a lunch of rusk and peanut butter for calories to burn.



The last camp just before touching the Tso Moriri is the vast and windy Kiangdom region where traditional Mongolian tents can be found with nomadic shepherds flocking their sheep and yaks. The vastness of Ladakh's cold desert landscape dawns in these final days as the turquoise blue of the lake looms ahead deceptively for hours. At 15,075 feet, the Tso Moriri is the largest of the high altitude lakes in the Trans-Himalayan biographic region, entirely within India. On the last day we prepared our final meal next to the lake in a small picnic that culminated with us taking a swim in the icy blue waters.

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