



MISCELLANY

2019



“ Conquering Ourselves

*Lifelong memories
made during the
Kalihani Pass Trek*

Past Presidents' Reflection

*Former Club Presidents
take us back to their
days spent at the Club*

Family Away From Home”

*A Fresher looks
back at the year
gone by*



CHOOSE TO DARE

**HIKING CLUB
ST STEPHEN'S COLLEGE**

JOURNAL TEAM

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Udayvir Guha Sircar

EDITORIAL TEAM

Cicily Jacob

Amla Srivastav

Perna

Jerold Raj

DESIGN TEAM

Alex Prateek Shankar

Udayvir Guha Sircar

COVER DESIGN

Alex Prateek Shankar

COVER PHOTO

Angus Alphonso

EDITOR'S NOTE

UDAYVIR GUHA SIRCAR

BATCH OF 2019

"Give us your Intro" is something that is familiar to all Stephanian 'futchas'. But having to give it hanging ten feet off the ground is something you see happen only at the Hiking Club. It is at this moment that you are officially knighted into a brotherhood of individuals who stand for each other and push each other to strive, seek, and never give up. For every new member, the thrill and adrenaline is injected in right from day one.



To all those joining the club, remember that this club is like no other. Be it in participating in the day to day events, or partying away your problems at flat B1/55, the Hiking Club helps you escape the mundane daily routine of a usual college student. A daily climb at The Wall, or an escape into the mountains or river rapids during the mid semester break will undoubtedly refresh your heart and soul, and help you seek that desire for adventure inherent in every individual.

Miscellany 2019 is simply a small glimpse into the happenings of the past year as well as memories of members past and present. Through this journal, the Miscellany team hopes that everyone reading this can experience a part of the joy we received from the Hiking Club, and encourage you the jump into the exciting world the club can take you to. Further, to all former club members, we hope that this edition can bring back sweet memories of your time spent here.

As Editor-in-Chief, I would like to thank all members of the journal team for putting in the hard work to make Miscellany 2019 successful. Further, I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the journal, be it through articles or photographs. Last but not the least; I would like to thank members of our alumni for sponsoring and guiding us in helping publish Miscellany 2019.

Choose to Dare!

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ORIENTATION 2018



AMLA SRIVASTAV

The spirit of The Hiking Club can very well be defined in the wise words of Franklin D. Roosevelt when he stated, "The only thing you have to fear is fear itself." Firmly standing by these words, this club teaches one to truly overcome one's fears and limitations. In order to carry on its legacy of producing brave hearts from college, Hiking Club held its orientation for the batch of first year students of 2018-2019 on the 10th of August, 2018.

In the span of the 40 minute orientation held by The Hiking Club, the members conveyed the spirit of the club to the first year students by sharing their personal experiences of growth in this club, and describing to them the activities organized by the club. The members of this second oldest adventure club of the country elaborated on their experiences of treks, and the wonders and thrills of hiking and

climbing. They shared their experiences of how being a part of this club not only enriched their experiences in terms of challenging their capacities and stretching their potential, but also taught them many important life lessons about perseverance and persistence. The club proudly boasted of a bond among the members that goes beyond formal relationships and is equivalent to that of a close knit family.

The motto "Choose to dare", which has long been the foundational brick of this club, inspired the audience to not only become a part of this ambitious family, but also encouraged them to challenge their limitations and inculcate the idea that adversities and dangers do not exist in themselves, they are but a product of our own imagination.





CYCLING TRIP

SUHANI A.



The cycling venture coordinated by the Hiking Club of our college took place on the 7th of October 2018. The dawn that Sunday was enriched with a calm and soothing vibe as the members of the club gathered around the Vishwavidyalaya Metro Station and with much energy and enthusiasm we kick started the trip. With Joshi Emmanuel as the skipper, pairs were formed that cycled the distance together. We all had often explored Delhi via metro, bus, cabs, etc., however, the experience of exploring Delhi like this was different and had a special tinge to it.

We sailed through the soft morning breeze as we travelled along the Delhi Highway and had our first stop after 9 kilometers. We then relaxed, freshened up, and after a few rounds of chitchat, we continued our journey onwards with nimble and swift movements.

We then carried on our journey with nimble and swift movements. Around noon, there were discussions held based on people and their choices of food even though they served no purpose and the efforts went in vain as no one stopped for lunch! However, we did find respite in a glass of nimbu pani in the sweltering heat.

Covering 40 kilometers was of course a challenging task for us as we were all amateurs in cycling. We rode till Humayun's tomb, which was our ultimate destination. It was indeed a charming spectacle to see the intricate architecture of the tomb with the bright sun beaming in the backdrop.

After a successful jaunt to the tomb, we covered the way back to the metro station in a much shorter span of time. Though the journey left us exhausted, it left us brimming with love for cycling.

KALIHANI PASS TREK

*To travel, to experience, to learn;
That is to live.*

—— Tenzing Norgay ——









CONQUERING OURSELVES



A journey to Kalihani Pass

BETHAMEHI JOY SYIEM

BATCH OF 2019

There are a few things that define people, their principles and their life experiences. But more significant than both are the life experiences that build their principles and call them into action. For me, the trek that was to take us to Kalihani Pass became one of those; its defining moments found not in the victory at the peak but rather in flashes of memories – a bus journey of games and songs, simple meals shared by a campfire, nights of laughter, dark tales of the spirits of the earth (both true and untrue), a cold morning of whispers and imaginings, colder nights huddled together against the elements of the wind and darkness, strong helping hands, loose stones we almost slip on, and ice cold water of mountain streams we drink from.

We began as a group of eighteen, seventeen students accompanied by Akshita Ma'am, each of us joining the trek for our own separate reasons. For me, I longed for an adventure I did not know and with great fear I found myself amongst a group of friends and strangers that would soon share a bond that only the mountains can create. The hills not only challenge explorers with the natural elements of danger and risk, but also with the fear of being lost and alone. We became each other's family and friends as we realized we could not do without one another.

The journey began with the boarding of a bus at Majnu Ka Tilla, Delhi. That was the first night our team was rounded up and forced to get to know each other. After the first few hours of small talk, card games and some of us sleeping, we soon got into a big group playing "Contact", the game Shourya (later to be known as Shoru) described as the "highlight" of his last trip. Whether this would be the highlight for us or perhaps only one of many highlights would be a question that remained to be answered. We enjoyed the game and more and only after, we finally retired to rest, anxious and excited about what the next day would bring us.

Beginning the Climb

The next morning, we arrived at Patlikhul, a make-do bus stop on the outskirts of Manali from where we boarded vehicles to Hadimba Temple where we would meet with our guides, BhagatJi and NarenderJi, Dhalvir the cook, as well as Enosh, the assistant guide and former Hiking Club President. Little did we know that these men who would lead us up would not finish the trek with us simply as guides but as cherished companions. We began the journey with a happy group photo, sugary cookies, bananas, drinks of





water and our rucksacks on our backs.

The first day was filled with nervous excitement and also, for many of us, a realization that trekking was not as simple as it looks. The climb is hard. Yet, despite it being the first time for many of us, we were able to go on. The highlight of the day for me was finishing the steeper section for the day and reaching a meadow where Nitish, Cicily, Shorya, Angus, and I found an old couple sitting by an open fire tossing fresh rotis. They beckoned us to join them and with warm smiles, shared their humble meal of warm roti and cold potato sabji from a small tiffin box. As we thanked them and took small bites, this simple meal by the fire tasted like a meal fit for the gods. Mountain food is always the most delicious despite its unassuming appearance.

We went on after that and halfway through the day's trek, the winds started to pick up and we witnessed our first snowflakes. Higher up, we began to find patches of hard snow and some fun began with small snowballs being thrown at each other as we laughed and walked on. The terrain, even on the very first day, was varied, challenging and beautiful. We ascended through rocky, earthy, and muddy areas, climbed by snow-kissed slopes and went through traverses and meadows. We finally descended on to a beautiful campsite (Lamadung) at 6 pm. After some stretching and hot tea, the sun having already set, the hiking club leaders along with our guides

swiftly took out their torches and set up the tents. A hearty dinner by the fire would follow. The night would end with twelve of us squeezing ourselves into a four-man tent as Uday and I regaled everyone with our stories of spirits and ghosts. Amidst the warmth of huddling together, the joy of storytelling and laughter that would follow other stories, we began to find joy in each other.

New Adventures and Magnificent Views

The next morning began at 4 am for Cicily and I as we decided to brave the cold outdoors. We ended up running back to the tent some moments later convinced that a bear had been watching us. Whether that was true or not, what was clear was the adrenaline rush that came with both the fear and excitement of being in the wild. By 6:30 am, people were waking up and after morning chores and a breakfast of French toast, buttered toasts, and sweet tea, we left the campsite under a bright sun and a cool breeze. The day would be the most arduous for many but also, the most beautiful. It wouldn't be long before we faced two magnificent peaks, Deo Tibba and Indrasan. We went on and ascended through a tree line before we found ourselves stopping to a stunning panoramic of snow-clad mountains and a





clear blue sky. On our way, we would find that as the difficulty of the climb increased, the importance of simple luxuries like trail food (nuts, energy bars, chocolate, candy, etc.) could not be taken for granted.

The team was divided into those that were leading, those in the middle and those that tailed. But no one would go ahead without looking back and stopping for the others. That day, I trudged ahead with Aman, Nitish, Cicily, Shorya and Aditya (popularly known as 'Bisht'). The six of us followed Bhagat Ji, stopping from time to time, to go ahead only after spotting the next group. The team moved together. We were like a chain that pulled itself and teamwork was the spirit that carried us. This was no competition. It did not matter who was ahead or first to reach. It mattered that we all did. To me, leading was important because it gave my inexperienced self some confidence and willpower as I told myself that my mental strength would make up for my lack of physical strength. But what was most admirable was watching experienced climbers like the Trek Coordinator Joy, the Hiking Club President Parth, and others like Mayank and Uday, deliberately slowing their pace and staying behind to make sure that every one of us would go on, and no one was left behind.

As we went ahead, we climbed up snow-covered slopes and this time, the snow was soft and no longer patchy. The mountains were telling us we had come



higher than before. Many of us took advantage of the soft snow and threw snowballs at each other, wrote our names in the snow and rolled little snowballs on the side of the slope hoping it would form some sort of avalanche (though on second thought, I can't seem to understand why we thought dangerous avalanches would be an amusing sight). Whatever the case, we had our share of fun as we proceeded. As we neared the top, we were met with numbing cold winds and a view of glorious peaks. After stopping to put on more layers of clothing and of course, photographs, we began our descent towards the campsite. That was when our team suddenly broke off into two as some followed Enosh, while some others and I followed Bhagatji as he told us we'd take a shorter route.

We soon found that descending along a plain slope of golden-green grass was much harder than even the ascent on a steep slope as our toes ached and we saw our friends on the other side, seemingly faster and way ahead of us. Perhaps, the route was indeed shorter but maybe, Bhagatji had overestimated our skills at descent as we trudged on behind him very slowly. Uday went ahead using a technique of moving in zig-zags while the rest of us slowly followed on. I almost gave up when I realized that I could just slide down. I finally had to stop (though it was fun) as Bhagatji informed me of how dangerous my method was and of the risks of not being able to stop and perhaps even sliding to my death.



By 5 pm, the first batch had reached the campsite at Riyali Thach, while the eight of us behind were still coming down the slope. At the bottom of the hill, Parth and Mayank waited for us with a small reprimand for splitting from the group and not moving as we should have been. We were exhausted by then but we knew they were right and thinking of it now, even that mistake was a highlight. What's a trek with no mistake, reprimand or lesson?

Our group finally made it to the campsite to find the tents already up, hot tea and biscuits waiting. It was already dark and soon, it was time to dine at the newly set up dinner tent. Dining on a trek is an experience in itself. Due to the cold, everyone would huddle together and because of that very cold, the thought of dirty dishes to wash in freezing water was revolting. And so to minimize this need, all formalities are forgotten as plates were shared and passed from person to person. Hot coffee was poured into mugs that were again passed person to person as they sipped on.

Post dinner, we all huddled together as Joy, Mayank, and Uday told us of a sacred mountain chant that every trekker should learn, a chant that had been passed on year after year in the hiking club as well. After a solemn time listening to the story behind it and then ending with the chant itself, we eventually found ourselves laughing away again. We would wake to hear an even

better version of the story from Enosh the next day.

That night, my trek buddy, Anna and I were supposed to sleep in the dining tent along with several others but we were cold and Anna was starting to run a slight fever. We were then pleasantly surprised and relieved when we got an invitation to sleep in the smaller and much warmer tent nearby. Parth, Mayank, Shorya and Bisht let us into their four-man tent allowing us to sleep comfortably in the middle as they lay on the sides of the tent acting almost as windshields. It's still a wonder how they survived the freezing cold winds that night while we slept like children in between, but that night opened my eyes to the beauty of sacrifice and friendship as we all struggled to survive the cold of the mountains.

The Uphill Struggle

The next day was different as our guides and Joy had told us of a changed plan. Harsh weather conditions had battered the road ahead and it was decided that a climb to stay at the Kalihani Base Camp would be impossible. It was further decided then that we would return to Riyali Thach after attempting to reach Kalihani Pass in a day's work. The trail was relatively easier than the previous day's but for me, this was to be the hardest day. My body no longer cooperated and I moved in utter pain. As



I walked with Poorvi, I told her about how I could only go on by reminding myself of mental strength despite my body testing myself.

With Akshita Ma'am, Poorvi, Cicily, Anysha, and Alcea, I followed Bhagat Ji traversing through meadows and forest patches till we finally faced the first challenge, a gorge and a steep descent to a very rocky river. There, we followed as Bhagat Ji and Enosh went forward rock to rock and crossed to the other side. On reaching, we were all exhausted and a few among us decided to stop there as it had already crossed noon and we had to return to Riyali Thach by nightfall. Nevertheless, some of us also decided to go ahead and only then, the real test began for me.

As we ascended a steep slope, I tailed at the end of my team as I looked to a never-ending blue sky, snow-covered white slopes and a gorge as deep as my despair. My closest friends, Uday and Raman were the only ones left with me as the others had walked ahead, and with their chants of encouragement, I moved ahead. I can almost hear their voices even now..."Come on, Beth", "You can do it" "We will make it". I was in pain but in that pain, I saw that there was still a way forward despite the challenge of nature's elements and my own weak body. That day, the mind won over the body when I persevered and finally reached the top.

At the summit of the last ascent, there was a heaviness in the air as we realized we had to return to Riyali Thach. We could not go further and we would not see the Pass. Yet despite that, we set our disappointment aside as we looked down to see the great distance we had covered so far and there, close to 13,800 feet above sea level, we looked to the great mountains and found that all we had done was worth it. It goes to remind us even now that no matter the uphill struggle, the view is worth it.

On the way down, the challenge was not over for me as I slipped on a few loose rocks and lost the big toenail on my right foot. Yet despite the excruciating pain, the thought of how much we had already covered as a team and a sad realization that I did not want the trek to end kept me going. We finally reached the campsite exhausted and paradoxically, happy and sad at the same time.

A Happy Birthday and a Beautiful End

We were up early the next morning as the sun shone and skies cleared. Packing the tents and our rucksacks, we began the journey in good spirits. On the way, we encountered a crystal clear stream and there, many decided it called for their faces



to be dipped in the running water. The terrain was gradual and everyone enjoyed the walk.

The day was particularly special for me as I found myself walking by Bhagat Ji alone and there I got an opportunity to glean from his many years of experience and wisdom. He is truly a man of the mountains and told me that I reminded him of someone he had led on the same path almost three decades ago in 1991. Listening to him speak of how he faced nature's harshest elements and more importantly, his love for mountaineering was awe-inspiring. I truly believe that our team had been blessed to be in the company of a gentle legend.

We reached campsite early that day and we had all collected dry wood for a campfire on our way. Soon, we got to building the fire and putting up the tents. Yet, a surprise remained. Raman, our friend was to celebrate his birthday with us and so a chocolate cake was brought out to his surprise. The cooks had outdone themselves as we were treated to a celebratory dinner by the fire. Campfire songs led by Alcea began soon enough and Aman brought out his speaker for all of us to dance to after some time. The night ended on a high for many but there was more for some of us. After the campsite had gone quiet and by the last remains of a bonfire that burnt on, Aman, Joy and I looked at a sky full of stars as we talked of life and all its twists and turns. We would make our way to our tents only by midnight.

The next day, the early morning chores and hustle-bustle was a familiar sight as we prepared to descend. The day's trek was a pleasant one, neither too tiring nor too

easy. We had all grown comfortable with each other and we descended with stories and conversations that took us to discussions on topics as varied as philosophy, politics, mathematics and also, friendship and family. Shoru, Akshita Ma'am, Nitish, Cicily and I spent hours walking down and also, thinking of hypothetical situations and how we would respond to them. Others joined in the conversation as some of us joined other conversations. The talking never stopped. I remember these conversations very fondly as by then, we all knew we were bonded and together, a small trek family.

When we finally reached Sanchur, Parth, Mayank, Shorya and Bisht held on to their rucksacks in a small gesture to hold on to the beautiful trek we had finished. They finally unloaded only when the vehicles that were to pick us up came by. Then, we all made our way down. The ride down to Manali was quiet, peaceful and nostalgic.

As I recall the trek and all that came out of it, I can only clearly say that for me, my moments of pain and struggle on the way to the top were the most significant part as I relearnt the lessons of strength and hope, taught to me in words. This time, I learnt them in action. We did not make it all the way to the Kalihani Pass. Fate and the weather had other plans for us. But then, we realized that we were not there to conquer the mountains. We went to conquer ourselves and that, we were able to do as we continued our push forward.

Today, I look back on the Kalihani Pass, not as a failed journey but an unfinished one. The journey is the beginning to more treks and more adventures with the mountains. And perhaps, one day, I may even return to touch the Kalihani Pass as well.

"It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves."

—— Sir Edmund Hillary ——





THE HILLY LABYRINTH

AKSHITA GOYAL

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
DEPT. OF ECONOMICS.
BATCH OF 2014



Since my childhood days, I have explored and engrossed myself in the world of books. The black on white is what I did everyday- sometimes out of love for reading and sometimes by force of habit. Apart from books, my family was my sole driver and this never left space for anything else. So, I wasn't lost but I didn't mind wandering at this stage! When Joy asked me to accompany the Hiking club, I agreed but I regretted that decision many times before we left for the trek. How could I lead a group of 18 students with no 'experience' in hiking?

Little did I know that the students I am going with never needed a leader! They had done all their groundwork to increase their stamina and were now ready to take on the challenges the mountains posed to them. Right from shoes, 18-kg rucksacks, warm jackets, to headlights and gloves, they had prepped up suitably. The Hiking Club champs (Parth, Shorya, Aditya and Mayank) had braced themselves with extra supplies of dry fruits, medicines and even layers of warm clothing. Joy, our trek coordinator, had planned the trek with as much precision possible, enquiring about the weather every



day, plotting all feasible routes, and arranging rucksacks for everyone.

Beginning our sojourn with the bus journey, I was getting used to the idea of having these energetic and enthusiastic trekkers with me. Resisting the temptation of divulging the little details, I shall jump right into the priceless lessons I learnt from them.

First, Sitzfleisch is all that is needed to ace a race. Mountains dare your different variations of a face-off with a point of no return! When you are walking on a steep trail with snow all around, there is no escape. Shourya, the pianist, had a severe cold, so much so that he was finding it difficult to breathe at some points. He decided to take six to seven steps at a time and then pause for 30 seconds. Despite this rigour, he reached the campsite in time. Poorvi, my tent mate, refused to relinquish her rucksack despite feeling breathless. Alcea too exhibited great courage during the day and would end up being our DJ during the bonfire at night. Hence, it's not the survival of the fittest rather the survival of the persistent!

Second, you may be beaten and bruised but you can't be broken if you are to clasp the winning point. The everyday thrill of diverse terrain, higher peaks, and steeper slopes forced many of us to just keep pushing ourselves to limits unknown to us. Beth chipped off her toenail during the early hours of our daily trek coverage. She took her time to bandage it and kept treading on with a damaged toe, showing admirable grit for the last two days of our trek.





Third, humanity has no context and no contest. We had the good luck of receiving the warm hospitality of a bruno-black Himalayan dog who chose to give us company during the bonfire session. I even heard him growling at the approaching mules in the night when we were all resting in our tents. Nitish saved one of the rotis in his plate just so that he could feed the dog. This was very thoughtful as food there was a luxury even though our guide, Bhagatji, tried to give us all possible variety in meals. We even got a birthday cake made for Raman, up there on the hills! Another surprise was seeing Joy walk slower just so that no one trails behind. His actions bore testimony to the fact that when you walk together, you can walk farther and faster!

Fourth, you can pack for every occasion but good company will always be the best thing you could bring. Aman deserves mention here for he had been a constant entertainer for all of us. Right from outlining steps for washing utensils, to calling out shepherds in temporary shelters as 'Bro', we all had

our share of laughs with him around. Not to forget the hilarious firewood search episode and his obsession for Chawla's! I can't forget Raman's card tricks which were a great start to our mornings. With such dexterity, he could swap, swoosh and switch cards that one took a minute to understand what happened. Another person who added extreme value to our journey was Enosh. He was able to lighten the mood with his enigmatic sense of humour in all possible situations. For a dilettante like me, Enosh was a great trek companion!

To sum up, I think we had the much-needed rejuvenating and refreshing break from the mundane and busy city life. All of us, I would like to believe, were so engrossed in capturing every moment that the upcoming tough trails didn't bother us. The best way, therefore, to leave the ghosts of the past and fears of the future is to immerse ourselves in the present as if nothing mattered more.

I don't have an appropriate line or aphorism to conclude this account, so I shall say *"Choose to dare!"*



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14TH ROHAN KANHAI DATTA & SUNIL CHANDRA MEMORIAL OPEN SPORTS NATIONAL CLIMBING COMPETITION

AMLA SRIVASTAV



The 14th National Climbing Competition organized by the St. Stephen's College was a three day long event held between the 29th and the 31st of March 2019. The event was inaugurated by the staff advisor of the club along with the sponsors of the competition.

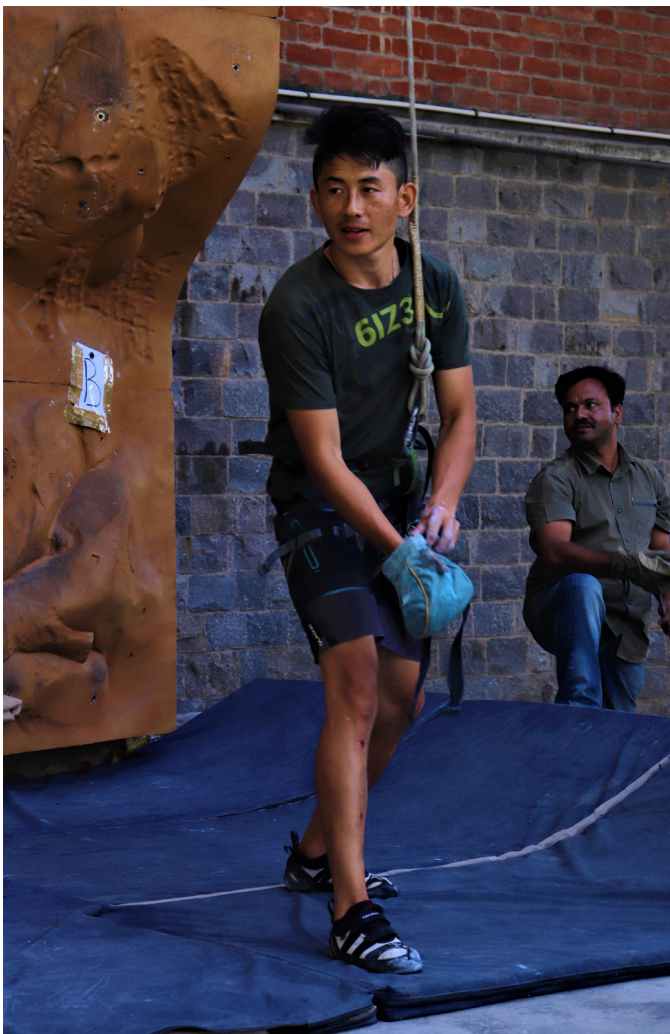
The first day of the competition began with the category of Lead Climbing starting with Under 16 girls' lead climbing and Under 16 boys' lead climbing. These were then followed by Open women's lead climbing and Open Men's lead climbing sub-categories. With four sub categoral competitions to organize with the given flow of participants was indeed a Herculean task as the members of the St. Stephen's College Climbing team were not merely present as participants but were organizing the whole event as administrators and managers too.

The second day of the competition included the semi-finals and the finals for the Lead Climbing subcategories. The second day flowed much more smoothly as the flow of the work had set in even for the first years who were organizing this event for the first time.



Finally, on the third day, Speed Climbing took place. All the sub-categories of this segment were covered on this day. This brought the competition near conclusion and everyone broke for a short interval as the judges tallied the score of the participants. The event was successfully concluded with the sponsors, Boulder Box and Chocolateworx, handing over prizes to the worthy winners of the respective sub-categories. On the whole, the event turned out to be a success in two important senses. Firstly, the level of competition, which was provided by the participants to each other, indeed made it a nail-biting experience for the audience. Moreover, this gave a much-required exposure to the first year members of the climbing team as they buckled up their shoes for the next year. They learnt not only lessons about sharpening their climbing skills but also on how an event is managed at such a large scale. All said and done, the reason why the event was pulled off smoothly was because the teamwork made the dream work.







RECOLLECTIONS



RISHWA MATHUR

CLUB PRESIDENT

BATCH OF 2018



The Hiking Club had become a regular and yet a very special part of my college life. Climbing every day at 3 became such an obsession that spending Sundays at home became difficult, the summer break in June was even more problematic although treks during the mid-sem breaks kept me occupied. Even now, if I ever walk past the café or Alnutt gate, I make it a point to take a sneak-peak at the wall through the leaves of the gigantic neem trees in Allnutt court. If the time is right, I go see people climb, maybe just for five or ten minutes but I have to do it. Sometimes when I walk towards the café, bank, or the main corridor, my mind wanders elsewhere and I subconsciously find myself walking towards the gymnasium only to realise my mistake midway.



The first time I went climbing was with my classmates in the second semester. I had not attended the Club's orientation, I did not know anybody who was a member of the club nor had I heard much about its activities. The only reason I went was to do some

activity to become just a little more fit. We went for a warm-up run around the university, wore harnesses with generous help from our seniors and did our first climb. Needless to say, I was hooked to climbing.

The wall is just a ten metre structure built against the gym wall, what could possibly be so great about it? And how many times can one possibly climb the same wall, not for three whole years for sure? These are some questions that only people who have never climbed will ask. Someone who has climbed knows that climbing is also about the trust between the climber and the belayer, it is not an individual sport but one in which other climbers and even spectators are equally involved, giving their tips or 'beta' and cheering and shouting at the top of their lungs.

At Hiking Club, apart from the "C'mon!s" and "Allez!", the 'cheering' involves threatening not to belay, the threat of 50 push-ups for everyone in case of a failed climb on part of one person, hitting the climber with worn-out shoes (maybe that's how they got



worn-out?) and giving calculated free falls.

The wall is a self-sufficient island where you can eat (and cook. We have stoves, kerosene, and rations), sleep (on mattresses or on certain places on the wall) and climb. Just climb and your team will surprise you with unexpected support and unconditional love.

I remember, during my first competition, I was stuck on a hold for about ten-fifteen seconds trying to figure out my next move. Suddenly out of nowhere I heard people cheering for me, "C'mon Rishwa!", "He's good yaar!". I looked down to find our President Vikas and Vice-President Shourya clapping and jumping. As I tilted my head down and looked at them, in the same line of sight, I saw a big off-white jug waiting to be used as a foot-hold for my right foot. I stepped on it and moved higher, now at the fork of the left-wall and the right-wall, just where the side-wall begins,

about a meter from the sixth clip. Why had I not seen it before? "Rishwa, one-minute left", the judges announced on the mike, but I was still stuck at the fork. After about twenty seconds of "C'mons!" and "Allays!" there was a ten second silence, me, my teammates and the audience, everybody thinking of the next move in unison. The clock struck 4min 30s and I got a command from my VP, "Rish! Go mad!". I did a dyno, leapt with all four limbs simultaneously and slapped the wall as hard as I could. That climb is my favourite climb to date!

I wish the current team all the best and hope they have even more fun at the wall, during treks and the rafting trips! Being a part of the Hiking Club has made me a lot more confident, patient, sympathetic and the otherwise quiet person, a little jovial. I can't thank the club more. Work hard, climb harder! Keep climbing and choose to dare!



AMIDST THE RED BRICKS AND THE WALL



AMANDEEP KAPOOR
*CLUB PRESIDENT
BATCH OF 2017*



Khanna said, “Bhai vahan deewar pe kuch log chad rahe hai, chal dekh ke aate hai.” That was how I came to know of the Hiking Club. The goosebumps of the first climb and the mid-air intro is what hitched me to it. Getting to know people from various courses and states was an added bonus. I am amused by how we as futes managed to put up with training sessions and runs, the dread of Mozart leading, Vikas’ motivational abuses, and Eno’s comfortable grin. Shouts of ‘Allez boy focus’ and ‘Ayega ayega’ during climbing were as inspirational as Army war cries.

Climbing the wall teaches you humility and perseverance. One has an unusual love-hate relationship with it. The former because it was an escape from the college worries and the latter because climbing it satisfactorily was a big myth. The urge to perform better in the next climb in every member resonates with the injuries our fingers would suffer. Nevertheless, I firmly believe that the only curves worth dying for are at the climbing wall.

Going on treks on shoestring budgets, you learn to live life the ‘jugaad’ way. I also realised that the laws of physics

and space are somewhat not applicable on the Hiking Club trek team, 13 people easily slept in a 6-man tent! On a rainy night in a trek, snug into your sleeping bag, and listening to the plinking of raindrops on the tent roof, like nature playing a metronome to lull you to sleep. Wake up early and witness the colours these mountains don. You can’t help falling for the artwork nature is into. HC essentially was my pass to the place I love the most, Himachal, my home. Being a Pahari boy, it was always my tryst with mountains since my childhood to climb these majestic beasts. Standing at 5200m with a worldview that no camera can offer, is a moment of reverence. It’s only there that you realise what Mallory meant by “Because it’s there.”

There were always seniors you could look up to for guidance. When you are put in charge, there always is that loneliness of command but also a comfort of having people around whom you can trust. This trust is not built sitting around in an armchair enacting prime time news debates. It’s built due to shared pitching of tents, ice-cold water face washes, pushing yourself and others on unyielding ascents, singing terrible songs around a bonfire, sharing the rucksack of an injured





fellow and sharing life notes under the crystal clear sky. This camaraderie exists due to a bond which exists only in facing the odds of nature together. Our progression through college years was accompanied by many successes and failures at the club. Motivational seniors and 'the next climb would be better' psyche made us move forward. This positivity is something every HC member carries on with themselves into the life post college.

HC gave me tons of unforgettable experiences. I have come under a raft, been thrown overboard by violent rapids, completed a 24km mountainous

race with blood blisters twice, explored virgin lands, tasted exquisite wine from local guides, drank milk from a nomadic shepherd in the middle of nowhere, made a sea mermaid out of an exchange student, climbed rugged natural rock faces, and had a face to face encounter with a fox at 2 am while being on watch for a friend taking a dump!

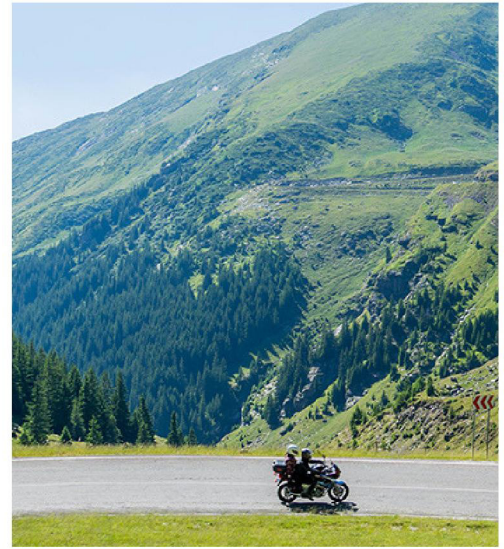
So if you ask me, was all of this worth it? The answer will always be, Hell Yes!

So in toto, Hiking Club was inarguably the best part of college. The cherry on top was my council members and over-energetic futches. It was an honour and privilege to lead them; they made a President look good.



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AN EPILOGUE: HIKING CLUB (2013-16)



ENOSH SINHA
CLUB PRESIDENT
BATCH OF 2016



*“With every passing breeze,
From strength to strength and peak to peak,
Hiking Club stands firm in togetherness,
With new adventures to seek.”*

This dates back to July 2013. As a ‘futchu’ who felt the classroom learning was rather overwhelming, I realized Delhi University’s aura was a lot more than just academics. So I decided to attend a few orientations held by the clubs and societies of the college.

During the 45 minute lunch break I rushed to the Seminar Room which was already jam packed by the time I got there. I managed to find a seat in the last row minutes before the lights were turned off and a slide show of the recent activities of Hiking Club took off with a peppy music in the background. I am sure all the ‘kiddos’ had their hearts pumping super fast as the enthralling slides flashed one after the other. The rich legacy of the “H-club” was introduced by Suraj Jacod (President), Prerna Dangi (V.P), Divya Danielle Pant, Shourya Awasthi, Mathew Sebastian and Vikas after which we were asked to join them on a climbing session at the Easwaran Bharatan climbing wall post

lunch. Back then, little had I known that the wall would become my refuge in the coming months.

The Hiking Club, established in 1949 happens to be one of the oldest clubs of its kind in the country with achievements unmatched by any other institution at college level and has numerous feats to its name in the areas of rock climbing, rafting, cycling and mountaineering.

Months rolled by and a few students were regularly spotted climbing the wall. They were Abin, Jordan, Paritosh, Anu, Melvin, Uttkarsh, Iraj and Girish. Over the next few months, treks, climbing sessions at IMF, natural rock climbing at Lado Sarai and the infamous rafting trips became highlights of the year. The annual Rohan Kanhai Datta and Sunil Chandra Memorial Sport Climbing Competition was undoubtedly the most memorable experience for me since we got a chance to meet the best climbers of the country, some of whom



were to even represent the country in Olympics the next year.

Apart from Vikas, Suraj, Mozart and Prerna Dangi, who have continued to set example even to this day, we were fortunate to have a few faculty members who joined us on treks and inspired us to the outdoors namely Prof. Sanjay Kumar, Prof. N. Raghunathan, Prof. Nanda and Prof. Bikram Phookun.

The baton was passed down to Vikas and Shourya in July 2014 and the climbing sessions took off with even greater participation from the first years: Aman Kapoor, Chandani, Felix, Steven, Allen, Shivam, Sameer, Ambika, Vanessa, Shivangi and Rishwa.

An expedition to Deo Tibba's Base Camp was organised in October during which the team braved the foul weather and excessive snowfall. The annual invitational competition and the rafting trip were also a hit, as always. Hiking Club took over 'Takeshi's castle/obstacle race' during Harmony as a substitute to its previously held fest 'Hike-a-Mania.' The session ended with the weeklong Doditaal Trek in summer break of 2015. This being my first college trek, taught me a great deal about hiking, right from planning, organising to leading a team, my mentors being Vikas and Dr. Sanjay Kumar. After a challenging and rewarding experience of crossing over from Gangotri side to Yumonotri it was for Paritosh and me to lead the club during the next academic year. We started with a cycling trip to India Gate and then to Qutub Minar which was held



on the Independence Day. The climbing team expanded with many motivated climbers from first years Vivek, Dimash, Hlutea, Lisa, Rishab, Gaurang, Chinmay, Riya, Kashika, Supriti, Sara, Jessica and Hriati. Next, we competed at the North Zones of Sport Climbing held at I.M.F. With a lot more junior members signing up for the October trek we managed to organise two treks simultaneously, one to Chanderkhani

Pass and another to the Kalihani Pass base camp. We were given a chance to participate in a two-day long 'The Himalayan Adventure Challenge,' organised by Aquaterra, which included hiking, rafting and cycling.

The annual climbing competition, rafting trips, Takeshi's Castle and trek to Dayara Bugyal in March were equally memorable like the ones organised previously. Towards the end of term, Ankit Wachhal, a veteran trekker and a product of Hiking Club, successfully led a trek to Gomukh Tapovan.

My fondest memories of college happen to be of setting up routes and challenging each other at the wall, peddling hard against the whizzing monsoon drizzle, observing the sun as it sets behind the distant hills, making the best of friends on treks, experiencing snowfall on campsites in summer months and plunging into the mighty rapids. At each of these instants I have found myself overwhelmed with exhilaration. These little moments that I experienced as a part of Hiking Club are memories that I continue to cherish.



SECOND HOME



*Tonight as I sat down to write,
A flash back of memories came to my mind,
Those empty trails and mighty rocks
Those challenging routes and panel falls,
That gushing water & adrenaline rush,
Those happening sleepovers & late night talks,
The bunch of people who together flocked,
Is it something I leave behind & walk ahead,
Or are these memories that keep resonating in
my head*

- Sameer Sagar



“My time in college can literally be visualized as a series of treks and all the other activities of the club with a few classes in between...”

says **Ambika Mallik**, an adventure junkie and a beloved member of the Hiking Club of St. Stephen's College. The memories of holidays spent with her family, conversing with the mountains and the sighing with pure content at reaching the top, and the fact that her childhood was filled with sports, is what attracted her to the club. She also remembers the camps with *idiscoveri* and *INME* during her school time that fuelled her courage and spiked her interest in the club.

When asked about her favorite activity, her enthusiastic reply was treks. *“My first trek with the club is one of my favorite memories simply because it made me realize how much I love trekking. I felt a huge sense of satisfaction at completing the trek because my physical state at that time was questionable which made it risky and no one including my family, knew what to expect.”* Its inspiring to see that nothing in her way stopped her not even herself when she felt she couldn't do it.



“There were multiple times when I was on the verge of giving up- but I didn't and all because of the support that I got from the club”. Reminiscing about the random lunches and sleepovers that they had she reveals her love for the club, “what I really love is how welcoming the club is and the sense of belonging that it provides, all thanks to the people that I met and the experiences that I shared with them.” The kind of obvious affection and faith that she has in the club is what keeps the unity intact, *“It made me believe in myself a lot more because I realize that no matter what, I can always carry on as long as I don't give up”.* The Hiking club has given something to keep in our hearts forever.



FINDING A FAMILY AWAY FROM HOME



AMLA SRIVASTAV

When I first walked into college, I never thought I'd be establishing such meaningful and hopefully lifelong friendships, let alone finding a family that would become my safe haven from the pressures of college life. Hiking Club, however (much to my surprise), ended up providing me with both the aforementioned attributes in the relationships I established therein.

My first encounter with the Hiking Club was rather accidental. In the second week of college, I accompanied one of my newfound friends to the college Gymnasium just to see it, as I had never explored that part of college before. But before I knew it, my seniors dragged

me to the Climbing Wall of the college. Next thing I know, I was hanging midair, giving a formal introduction and singing Korean songs. I pretty much made up my mind I wouldn't be joining this club anytime soon.

Even my presence at the orientation of the club was yet another accident. My friend (ironically the same one who had asked me to accompany him to the Gymnasium) had been complaining about how he hadn't eaten a morsel of food since morning, so I thought I might as well share some of the lunch that I had packed in my tiffin, with him. He told me he was in the seminar room waiting for the Orientation of the Hiking Club. So I walked into the room, thinking that obviously, after giving some of the food to him, I'll go out and have my lunch in peace and get ready for my next class at 2pm. But clearly, that wasn't meant to be. The ever so persistent seniors of the Hiking Club 'persuaded' me into staying back for the orientation, yet again.

The greatest irony lays in the fact that between my friend and I, because of whom I always accidentally got caught in Hiking Club activities, I was the one who ended up staying in the club. In retrospect, I feel like these two incidents may have been the best 'accidents' of my college life. Despite the amount



of love I may harbor for the club and the people in it, my moments at the Climbing Wall weren't always rosy. Putting yourself through a lot of exertion while only being able to take a small step towards your goal can be mentally very taxing at times for a person. I was no different. Trying my best but making, at least what I thought of it, negligible progress did not generate any good feelings. Instead, this seeming lack of improvement, discouraged me to an extent where I started wondering why was I even putting myself through the arduous physical work when I simply had no scope for improvement. However, what made me fall one step short of quitting the club was the love, effort, dedication and the investment of time that the third year and the second year seniors had put in all of us first years. As killing as disappointing myself was, I could not stand the thought of disappointing the people who had put in so much effort and energy on me and truly, genuinely believed in my potential. It was surprising how at times they told

me I had done a good job at the wall on days when I couldn't even complete a single route. Later did I realize, the main aim was never actually to 'complete' the route. The true goal had always been to accept the challenge of doing the route and then trying to do it.

Looking back at the one year that has passed, I wouldn't want to change a thing about my experience at the Wall. I even realized that whatever little progress I was making, which seemed negligible to me initially, although did not make me one of the best climbers, but it definitely brought me a long way ahead from where I had started.



FIRST YEARS' EXPERIENCES



Hiking wall is my favourite place on campus. I still remember how when I first saw it I felt that it would be impossible for me to climb. But with practise and with the help of our lovely seniors I got better at it. Hiking club is more than a club, it is more like a family to me!

- Poorvi



Being a lazy person with zero physical activities, The Wall can be quite a daunting place. But once the climb starts, there really isn't anything like it. You feel like pushing yourself harder each time to get that adrenaline going. Hands down my favourite place in college.

-Anysha

As daunting and scary as the activity may seem, hiking is an exhilarating, fun and gratifying experience. I can bear testament to the fact that you don't need to be super fit or well-built to climb, all you need is a little bit of heart and courage. Choose to dare and come to the hiking wall!

-Charisma



I have always been scared of heights, but when I heard about the hiking wall I actually thought why not go and try it. Initially I was nervous but then touchwood I had very good seniors with me who encouraged me to climb the wall. Though I could hardly climb, the experience was awesome. I not only tried climbing the



wall, but also learned to challenge my phobia each and every day. I don't know when will I ever reach the 10th panel but I will try every day, not only because it is fun but somehow or the other the wall encourages me too challenge myself. Choose to dare.

-Shreya

From "Where is the climbing wall in college?" to "I'll find out!". From "Climbing!", to "Climb on".

Even though it's been only a month and even without any experience till now, we've learnt a lot and every day we go, we learn something new, something which excites us so much that it brings us back to the wall the next day.

From putting all your trust and your life in the senior belaying you, to actually letting go of the wall and

being brought down safe and sound.

Not only do we learn things about climbing and falling at the wall, we even make new friends everyday and get to know our seniors better day by day.

Just seeing the videos of the previous trips/treks brings the excitement in me to go and enjoy the beauty of nature at different altitudes.

Also it's just amazing to see friends of mine who are afraid of heights come and try climbing the wall 'once', after which the 'once' becomes a regular thing.

Lastly, the seniors are so kind and helpful in everything whether it be related to the club or not, that the closest seniors to me till now are from the Hiking Club and I would really ask all of you, to at least come and climb the wall, 'once' as long as you have the chance to.

-Angus



VATNASAIM

POORVI GUPTA

My favourite trek memory is a story that our trek guide and super senior Enosh told me. It was the toughest day of our climb. My rucksack was weighing me down and I was gasping for breath. At the same time, I was trying to make sense of some surreal happenings of the previous night. But that is a story for some other day.

Here's what Enosh said:

Once upon a time high up in the mountains where the air is clean and people are few, there was a woman. An old woman with a heart as big as those lofty mountains and hair as white as the snow that covered them. No one knew where she had come from. Partially because they had never heard her speak. And partially because (as far as anyone could remember) she had always been there in her small shack by the stream. She spent her days helping the shepherds who passed that stream. Occasionally some trekkers would also wander into that area, only to be greeted by her warm smile. She would help them in every possible way she could. One such year, a couple from a foreign country came to visit the mountains. They probably planned to stay for a longer period and liked that part of the hill so much that they erected a small hut of their own near our old woman's shack. Now neither could she understand their language nor their sophisticated equipment. But every time she met them, she would greet them with her kind smile and twinkling eyes. Occasionally she would also go to their

hut at night time to share her food with them. It was a perfect arrangement for both parties. One such night she entered their hut and gestured them to go to her shack to get some extra wood that she had earlier collected. The couple left and the woman was now alone in the hut. The foreigners always smelled very weird. But today she could smell something else, something strong. She thought that maybe she had grown too old and had begun imagining things. The couple returned and started lighting the fire. She was feeling uneasy and excused herself. She went out and gazed at the stars. She silently prayed to the mountain spirits, thanking them for the beautiful life she had.

Nature always helped her. She always had enough. She smiled to herself and turned back. She gasped. The fire was spreading towards the hut. She quickly went inside and frantically gestured to the foreigners to leave. They could not understand what she was trying to convey. She pushed them outside. But alas! she could not escape. That night - the stars gazed at the earth. They burned as they saw an old woman with a kind heart and twinkling eyes burn.

The old woman died. But her story lives. It is a ritual amongst the trekkers and herders who cross that stream to remember the old lady who sacrificed her life for the likes of them. Enosh asked me to silently pray to her. He said that in her name lies the enormous energy of the mountain spirits.

But what's her name I asked. Well, he said. She was a beautiful woman with a beautiful name. Her name was.... Vattnasaim. Vattnasaim, I repeated. Vattnasaim. I agreed.





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IN THE MEMORY OF ROHAN DATTA (KAN)

*FROM THE ARCHIVES OF
MISCELLANY*

SURBHI SINGHVI
FORMER CLUB SECRETARY

Rohan Datta, who was more popularly known as 'Kan' in college, passed away on the 6th of January, 2009. Mr. Datta, who was in college from 1975-78 was one of the star climbers in college and rubbed shoulders with people as proficient as Mr. Mandeep Soin, Mr. Sanjeev Seth and Mr. Mohit Oberoi. Although he mostly frequented climbing in Karnataka and Gujarat, he did rock climbing all over India and in Europe. It will not be an exaggeration that Mr. Datta along with his climbing buddies like Mr. Mandeep Soin and Mr. Mohit Oberoi took rock climbing in the country to a new level of technical finesse.

He and Mr. Soin were amongst the first ones to scale the Sarvana Durga rock face in 1984-85 near Bangalore, also called the Deepavali, which is one of the toughest rock faces in India. They and Mr. Oberoi also pioneered and opened many routes in rocks around Delhi. Many of these routes have been described in a book written by Mr. Oberoi of which Kan wrote the preface.

His loyalty to college and friends was



undying and our college climbing wall stands as testimony to this fact. Mr. Rohan Datta and Mrs. Kavita Datta donated this wall in the memory of Mr. Easwaran Bharatan who lost his life in an accident during an expedition to Mulkila, which Mr. Rohan Datta was also a part of. It was his desire that the college wall should be used to popularize and advance the sport of climbing in and outside college.

We are proud to say that within the limit of our resources, we have kept our promise to Kan. Every academic year, a large number of college students come for week long climbing exposure at the wall. Since 2004, The Hiking Club has had a very active sport climbing team. We have also organized a Zonal competition on the wall.

The Hiking Club is deeply grateful to him, not only for his contribution to the establishment of the wall but also for his active involvement in club activities. He continues to remain a great inspiration to us all.



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