



# **miscellany**

## **2019-2020**

### **Peter Parkour**

A first year recreates through writing what the first climb feels like.

### **No Pain, No Train(ing)**

Two members describe the intense experience of training for the climbing competition.





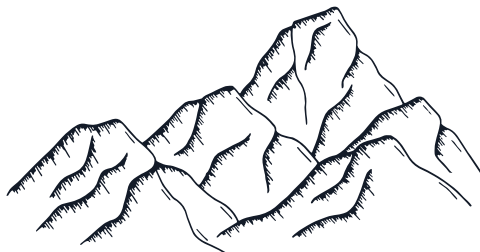
# HIKING CLUB ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE

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# Editor's Note

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Every member of the Hiking Club experiences a precise moment when they know they want to be a part of the club. For me, it was my first-year rafting trip that I had gone for knowing close to no one. However, I had a blast dancing and jamming to contemporary rock songs around the campfire and playing card games I did not understand. Looking at the exuberance around me that night, I finally felt like all the crazy things I wanted to do in life was normal. I felt like I was a part of something. The mind-blowing 36km of rafting definitely did not hurt either.

This year's *Miscellany* has been put together in the middle of a pandemic. There are hence notes of longing present in each article as every athlete has been cut off from the sports that made them feel alive. If you are a new joiner looking forward to all the club can offer, I assure you there is a world of experiences and a familial bond waiting to engulf you. I hope you enjoy all the indulgence and drive this society emulates, and discover your moment.

If I still have not convinced you to continue reading this journal, I give you the only reason that counts:

“Because it's there.”

**-George Mallory**

I would like to thank every single person who made *Miscellany* possible from the team to the authors and the photographers. I would also like to thank our Staff advisor, Dr Pankaj Mishra, and the Principal, Prof. John Varghese, for their valued guidance and support. Enjoy the ride, readers!

**Cicily Jacob**  
**Editor-in-Chief/Vice President**  
**Hiking Club (2019-20)**





# Getting High for the first time

## Shayanak Kundu

To make you understand what my first climb at the wall meant to me, I must take you back to class 12. Though I had always been a bright student, the "do or die" pressure of CBSE boards hit and affected me as a person. I set a goal for myself - to strive to be the best and never settle for mediocrity. One could say that I had never really been aware of my capabilities before: I had always had low confidence and never trusted myself to achieve my full potential.

I felt that I finally overcame my demons and went past my limits when I managed to get into the top college in the country. Though I was still plagued as a freshman by uncertainty and the air of a new environment, I was full of confidence and felt like anything was achievable.

This mindset of 'invincibility' is what I possessed during my first climb. However, I failed miserably. I had always set high standards for myself, and so this failure really bugged me. But there was something about trying to climb the Wall that led me to an epiphany. I realised that the Wall is a representation of life, how life was, is, and will continue to be: something in the making. There are some things that one simply cannot do on the first go. Sure, it is good to have a positive mindset, but things



can also be achieved slowly and with constant efforts.

Now, the Wall has become a getaway for me, a getaway from all my frustrations, anxieties, and dilemmas. It has humbled me, calmed my temperament, and shown me that it is alright to fail. It is alright to set high standards and yet fall short umpteen times. You can continue to surpass each obstacle. All you must do is take the shot every time you get a chance, without having the fear of failure. My adventures at the Wall, and with The Hiking Club in general, have made me aware of my limitations. There are many, but there is not one that can hold me down forever.



*The climbing team on a visit to the IMF Campus*



*Outdoor Climbing*



# Peter Parkour: The First Climb

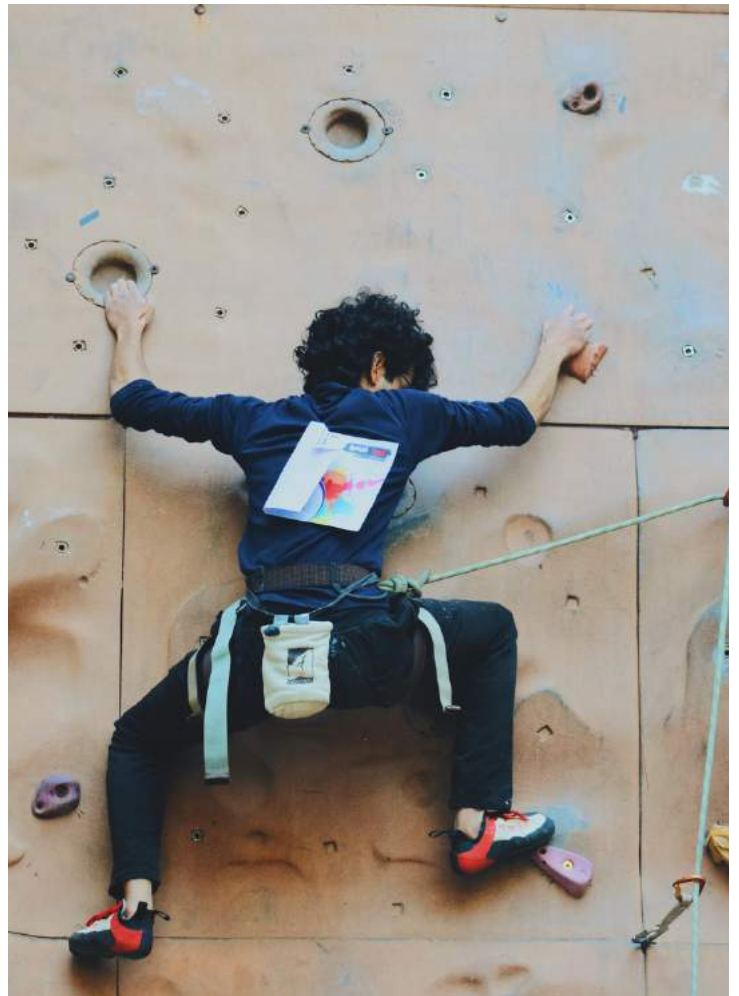
Shivay Nagpal

As humans, I think we have a primal need to climb and conquer. So, the orangutan in me was exalted when it first caught a glimpse of the St Stephen's College climbing Wall. This, coupled with the fact that legitimate monkeys can be said to frequent the area, made the Wall a very ape-friendly environment. After my initial body warm-up, some club members armed me with the climbing equipment. Before I knew it, I was wearing a harness and was ready for the ascent.

Nothing quite prepares you for that rush of adrenaline you get while climbing the Wall, especially once you start reaching the higher portions. As I went from one panel to the next, grasping and holding whatever I could get my hands on, I imagined myself falling straight down. You would think that after wearing all the safety equipment, that thought was unnecessary. However, my imagination seemed to have taken a life of its own. As my brain shut down, I heard a voice yell from below-

*"Put your right foot on the hold and your left hand in the hole!"*

At that moment, I swear I was unable to discern the difference between 'hold' and 'hole.' Height had got the better of my



intellectual capabilities, so much so that basic hearing and navigation seemed like advanced calculus. However, we can fear anything and everything as long as we have the motivation to overcome it, and trust me, the Hiking Club inspires motivation aplenty.

With sore fingers and aching muscles, I somehow made it to the seventh panel. There, my muscles gave way, and I let go, closing my eyes in acceptance of my fate. When the moment passed and I opened my eyes, I discovered that I was levitating due to the magic of the safety rope and gazing down on the world. The landing turned out to be very gentle, quite unlike the dramatic fall I had previously envisioned. I looked back up to where I had



fallen from and even though I had never tried climbing before, and my route had been relatively easy, I still felt smug about the distance I had managed to climb.

Overall, my first real climbing experience was both breathtaking and terrifying. In the

future, I know my routes will become scarier and require more skill. I look forward to overcoming these challenges. If nothing else, I can officially say that I am now a step closer to fighting crime as Spider-Man.



*Training before the Climbing Competition*



*The infamous Spider-man pose.*



# Neverest

## Sudhir Sahi

The Premnagar WW-II POW camp internees included Heinrich Harrer, Peter Aufschnaiter and other members of the 1939 German Expedition to Nanga Parbat. Dropping anchor in Karachi just as WW-II barreled out, being Axis nationals, they were placed under surveillance and convoyed via Mumbai, Deolali and Ahmednagar to Premnagar. In those shackled confines, Harrer surmised, "this atmosphere is too different from the sunlit, lonely heights of the Himalaya... no life for freedom-loving men," and so, "... began to get busy looking for ways and means to escape."

Plucking up courage, despite initial blips, Harrer and Aufschnaiter crept through several Doon midterm touchpoints viz Mussoorie, Nag Tibba, Aglar valley, Uttarkashi and Harsil, finally peeling off the Bhagirathi to attain its tributary Jadhganga, and then just about managed to drag themselves across the Tsang Chok La at 17200 feet on the Indo-Tibet crest.

How all of this came about, despite the ever lurking spectre of re-arrest and Premnagar, at last enabling Harrer and Aufschnaiter to behold the Potala in Lhasa, is best read in Harrer's *Seven Years in Tibet*. In that closeted period, Harrer built a lasting bond with the Dalai Lama, all the while acquiring a sympathetic perspective of Tibet, emotively captured in his words:



*I follow all that happens in Tibet with the deepest interest for part of my being is indissolubly linked with that dear country. Wherever I live, I shall feel homesick for Tibet. I often think I can still hear the wild cries of geese and cranes and the beating of their wings as they fly over Lhasa over clear cold moonlight. My heartfelt wish is that this book may create some understanding of a people who will to live in peace and freedom has won so little sympathy from an indifferent world.*

Four decades earlier in 1903, John Muir, a Scottish immigrant, persuaded US President Theodore Roosevelt to join him on a three-night camping trip in Yosemite. Becoming the bedrock of Roosevelt's conservation policies, this trip led him to create five National Parks including Yosemite, the first 51 bird reserves, four game preserves and 150 National Forests, thus placing 230 million acres under public protection. This was not all. At age 73, Muir sailed the Amazon, absorbing its biodiversity, generally bewitched by the region's beauty. His legacy thrives, beyond the Parks and environment activism to his abiding love of the mountains:



*Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into the trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy while cares drop off like autumn leaves*

Reference to Holdy in this scenario reminds one of the British 1924 Everest Expedition when Mallory and Irvine disappeared, well short of the summit. Holdy had been invited to join the Expedition but withdrew as he wanted to bring his skis, leading to a frosty denial by Mallory, the team's demigod. Holdy would in all probability have paired with Mallory for the summit and known when to turn around in worsening weather, unlike the inexperienced Irvine.

One anonymous wag suggests that Mallory's abhorrence to ski arose from his going up to Cambridge and not Oxford, and that, to timidly misspelt Magdalene instead of Holdy's pucca Magdalen at Oxford! Nevertheless, Holdy made the first ascent of Kamet in 1931, smoked a pipe on the summit and carried his skis to Meade's Col, stumbling while returning into the pristine wilderness which he named Valley of Flowers. His handwritten Kamet diaries are still safe with me despite several (unsuccessful) publishing attempts. Suggestions welcome! Meanwhile, DSOBS President Rahul Kohli is very kindly uploading the diaries' full text on the School's online archives.

Finally, my take on Neverest, in response to a request regarding this year's (2019)

bizarre pile up:

The Hiking Club at St Stephen's College in February 1965 bade the third Indian Everest Expedition farewell. Our guests included Guru, modest supremo of many accomplishments at Doon, who characteristically stepped aside within reach of the summit to give a younger man the chance, having earlier declined to lead the Expedition, preferring the challenges of the route to the "dreary desert sands of administration". But by then the sport of mountaineering in India had already been dealt a double whack... the passing of Nandu Jayal in 1958 on Cho Oyu, followed by John Dias who succumbed to cancer soon after leading the second Indian Everest Expedition in 1962. The present summit queue photo is now the commonplace story of the Third Pole, as Everest is sometimes known. All that remains of the Everest mystique is for someone to climb it upside down or, better still, reduce the traffic jam by streaking up the Lho la, lowest point on the West Ridge, gain Hornbein and Unsoeld's route of 1963, and exit the "top" via the North Col to complete the Everest traverse... virtual nil baggage ensuring breezy passport formalities at Thyangboche and Rongbuk!













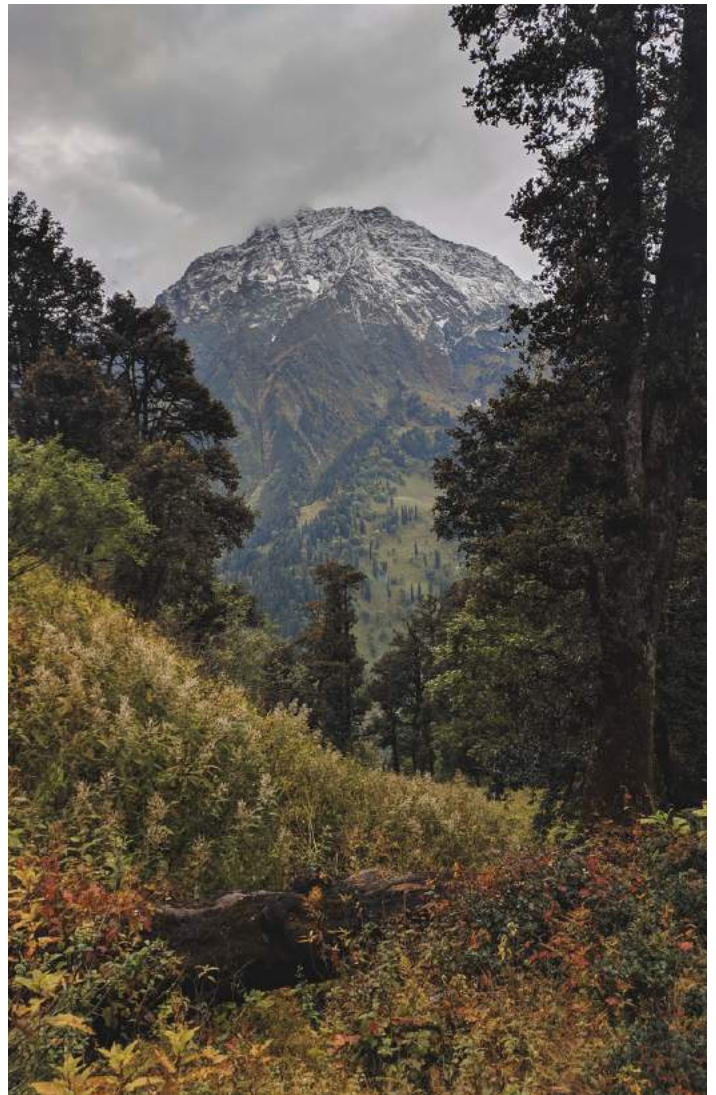
# Adventure of a Lifetime

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**Shivay Nagpal**

On your deathbed, you may wish you had worked harder, spent less time with your friends, lesser still with your family. You may reminisce fondly about all the evenings you spent alone in your house on Instagram. On your deathbed, you may be grateful for many things. You might thank God for helping you stay in that job you despised (taking risks has always been a murky business meant for irrational people). You might thank Him that you settled for friendships with complete wooden heads instead of trying to meet new people on the same wavelength as you. On your deathbed, you may be glad for not telling your loved ones you love them. You may think back on whatever it is that you were worried about earlier and not laugh at how insignificant those worries are. You may not think of a time that you had with a body that had not started falling apart yet, in an age more enlightened than any after it.

Right? Not really! On your deathbed, you will have the sad realisation that the point of earning money was to use it to enjoy life, not hanker after it even more; that the point of having a long life was not to put off your plans till tomorrow but to pursue them today. And what better way of escaping these deathbed thoughts than frequent escapes into serene natural



landscapes that look like something out of Robert Frost's journal. To create memories that one could hide behind when the mind began to look for existential answers after seeing the pale horse approach.

Our trek to Patalsu peak, like all treks, brought me the most fundamental joys which, though lasted briefly, filled me with emotions that I had forgotten existed. The highlight of our little escape into the mountains for me was unconventional. It was not the Solang Valley, our base where all of us bonded and courageously looked up at the peak, hoping we would scale it; it was not the summit, for even after standing at what felt like the roof of the world, my mind told me that my being had



*The rising sun on the peaks of the Dhauladhar Range*

savoured an earlier moment more. It was the second day of the trek which stood out for me. That was, ironically, the day we—according to my estimate—walked the least. The night before, we had gone to our tents late even though Aditya (or Bishty, as we affectionately call him), the Club President, had warned us not to. I graciously defied his orders; the sight of the night sky took away any worry about the fatigue that I would feel the next day. The night was chilling and cold but the fire crackled and kept us warm. We talked about politics, love, war, drama, music, but also sat together and shared silence. It seemed like one of those few moments in life you teleport when your life is supposed to flash in front of your eyes.

Around midnight, we went to our tents

hastily, trying to preserve all the warmth that the fire had provided us. We curled up in our sleeping bags, getting ourselves ready for what was to be a day of extensive walking. However, we woke up to an unpleasant surprise the morning after. The clear night sky had transformed into a gloomy, grey setting. Suddenly, all of us got worried about the possibility of rain, for that would utterly sabotage our summit plans.

Nature had thrown a fit and we were forced to comply with her demands. She forced us into our small tents and made us ruminate over what exactly we were doing and look around. To not just be excited for what lies ahead, but what surrounded us then. I think the rain was an elaborate ploy to make us realize that pleasure is not only



a feeling you save for the summits and the peaks of trails and life. Rather, pleasure can be found anywhere, regardless of how bad the weather is outside. Our lesson learnt, nature decided to transform into a kinder entity by noon. Like a grandfather returning to his chambers after teaching his granddaughter moral story lessons and giving her chocolate, it graced us with the Sun and enough time to continue the trek as scheduled. The clouds cleared up, lighting the sky in what looked like an entire spectrum of colours, from the most welcoming pink to the calmest blue. The entirety of the Dhauladhar shone and glared. While everyone was packing the tents hurriedly, I delayed packing mine for a while and strayed a little from camp, this time to look back at the valley that we had left behind. I peered down at Manali, beautiful with all its glistening lights, only for the sight to get obscured by my own eyes- they had started to well up at the sheer beauty they saw.

We think that we weep when we experience moroseness. However, the absurd truth is that the older we get, we begin crying at things that are beautiful and good. Like two drifting lovers making up or a gruff, distant father showing vulnerability or a stream of water flowing near you beneath a starry sky. It is grace and loveliness that make us feel profound emotion, more so than grimness. We cry



*En route the Patalsu Summit*

because beauty ironically makes us recall the sad things in life. Suppose we were to create a robot that could cry at films, books, and sunrises. We would have to be cruel and ensure that the robot understands suffering, for it is only against the backdrop of pain that beautiful scenes become moving. Our tears at the sight of beauty tell us something: that our lives have become harder than before. Beauty draws our attention to our struggles and the things we want but find unattainable: reconciliation, forgiveness, and purpose. Our eyes well up at the brief vision of the grace we are exiled from most of the time. We ache for all the lost innocence of the world. Loveliness and goodness make the harsh truth of life starker.







# No Pain, No Train(ing)

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## Amla Srivastav

To prepare for the 15th St. Stephen's College Open Sport National Climbing Competition 2020, the college climbing team decided to hire external help. The team requested a professional climbing coach, Rohit Solanki, to help them train for the competition. The coach held training sessions twice a week (Monday and Thursday), and on remaining days the team practised climbing routes set by him.

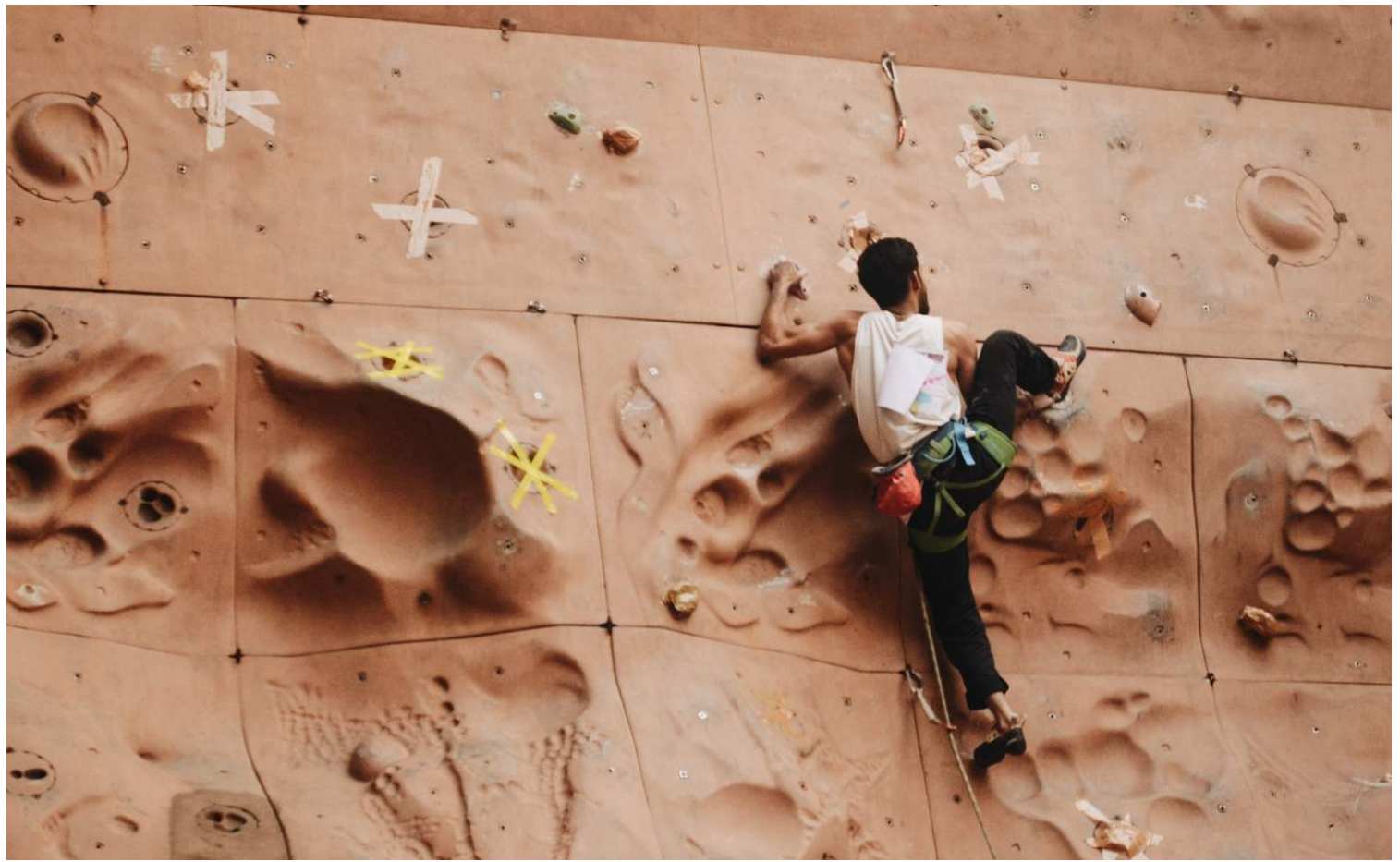
Just one day into the training session, we realised that the 'killer workouts' we had been doing to prepare for the competition, were not half as 'killer' as the ones we were required to do in our actual sessions. In the beginning, we would have barely enough strength left to train for climbing, post-workout sessions. But though the task was strenuous and arduous, the climbing team members rose up to the challenge. We continued to strive to improve our performances. During our training sessions, we were made to climb routes of varying difficulty: routes using only two holds per panel (making use of the same two holds for both hands and feet), routes with holds only on alternate panels, and routes with almost no handholds and foot-holds but making use of only the features and depressions in the Wall. The climbing and bouldering routes assigned to the members got progressively tougher with



*Amla Srivastav*

each session. There were days when the members, with the hopes that the training session would be postponed, gladly welcomed unexpected rain on practice days. The rain brought along with it the hope of a little break from the backbreaking practice. However, that was far from what happened. There was no such thing as a 'rain check' when it came to our training. Sir made us workout in the gym on days when the rain made the Wall wet. The gym sessions were even worse than our routine exercises: the amount and intensity of the workouts left everyone sore, to the extent that common actions such as walking, sitting, and laughing hurt. Still, in the end, the workouts, however much we may have resented them, helped us improve our performance and increase our strength. All in all, our training with the coach drove one point home: "One does not stop the pursuit of their endeavour when they are tired; they must only stop when the task at hand has been achieved."





*Lead climbing finals, National Climbing Competition'20*



# No Pain, No Train(ing)

**Nathan Samuel Bagh**

Our usual winter evenings at the wall turned into unusual climbing sessions as our training for the national climbing competition commenced. Trying new routes and patterns set by our coach was both challenging and fun, but mostly exhausting.

The coach came by twice a week to train us. Throughout the training, he made us climb different routes for practice and taught us various efficient techniques to enhance our climbing. He instructed us on how to control our breath while climbing; how to relax before a tough move; how to belay correctly, and so on. We also had a classroom session where he taught us some basics about climbing and explained to us how the scoring system works for all three climbing events (boulder, lead, and speed). This was a "dream classroom" for all the climbing team members!

We were required to follow a workout plan that was designed by the coach. Some evenings he made us do drills, after which half of us hardly had energy left to climb. One of the most interesting things we learned from our coach was the "Indian toilet squat position." This was a position to be maintained by fellow climbers around the wall who were either waiting for their



chance to try the route or were simply observing it.

All in all, the training sessions were a great experience for all of us. Moreover, the training prepared us enough to at least secure a position in the qualifiers and not embarrass ourselves in front of professional Indian climbers. Most importantly, the hardships and challenges posed via the training increased our love for climbing and deepened the bond between the climbing family.





NCC'20



Collaboration with Evening classes students, SSL



# Leaps & Bounds: The Climbing Competition

**Ritika Rawat**



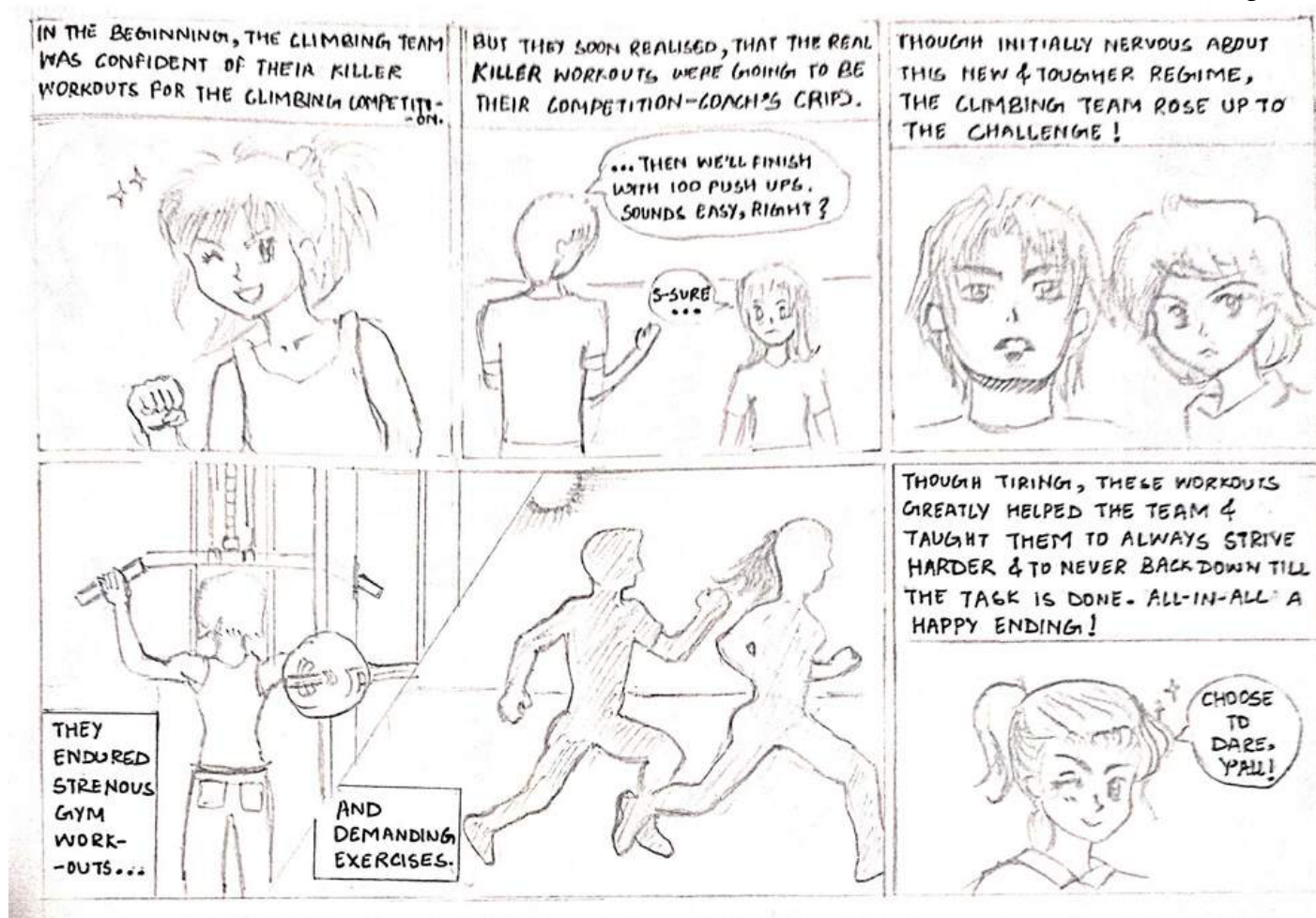
*Ritika Rawat, NCC'20*

Competition is not a battlefield; it is an examination hall where you display your skills. It is where strength means your ability not to defeat someone else but to perform.

I know of one such competition held every year, where each athlete uncovers their inner strength and abilities. It is an event where not only the winners get rewarded, but each participant departs with a lesson learnt. We all know this competition as the "Rohan Kanhai Datta and Sunil Chandra Open Sport Climbing Competition" organized by the Hiking Club of St. Stephen's College, Delhi.

My journey in the Hiking Club began four years ago in 2017. I was a total beginner with only a few months of experience. I felt nervous, stressed upon entering the gymnasium. The ambience of the place was at another level. Athletes crowded the front desk. The club members were welcoming and excited to have us there. The climbing routes were thrilling, and the height of the wall gave us chills. The members were very motivating, and they cheered their throats off not only for their team climbers but for each athlete. Thus, we felt a connection with them. My first year at the club was memorable as, despite being a beginner, I was able to get a podium finish. All this would not have been possible without the members' love and support. The annual climbing competition for me became a platform to see how far I have come. It is more like a climbing festival than a contest where we learn, interact, and make everlasting bonds. The efforts made by the Hiking Club, from their management skills to their creativity, ensure the competition's success. I remember the replica of the climbing wall the members created using cardboard and newspapers and holds made using clay. It looked stunning. From the merch to the cool sponsors to the unbiased jury of the competition, the members make it possible for deserving athletes to reach up to the podium.





Expectation



Reality



# FIRST CLIMB.









# (I'm) Possible: A Climber's Climb

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**Sangram Mallik**

Climbing is like a journey which shows you many wonderful places and lets you make friends all around the world. I chose to climb because there was a unique problem-solving aspect to it with a new challenge every time. Even after representing India in the World Youth Championship 2019 in Italy (Ranked 13th in the combined event!), Asian Youth Championship (Chongqing, China), Asia Cup (Bangkok), and competing in several national ones the sport has never ceased to amaze me. In the competition, there are three different disciplines Speed – where you climb as fast as you can, with people clocking 5.48 seconds to climb up a 15-meter wall! Then comes the second discipline Lead, where you have to climb as high as you can on the route while passing the rope through safety quickdraws and the third event is Bouldering where you climb up to heights of 5 meter without ropes and you have to finish as many routes as you can.

The climbing competitions test you to your core, as soon as you step into the isolation zone for warming up the adrenaline kicks in and you have to try and control it so that you don't waste too much energy. There have been times when it was my turn to climb last, with the crowd going wild and people expecting so much, and then there were some difficult routes that I had to face. Sometimes in the speed knockouts, it gets so tense that you can barely stop shaking before the race and then as you hear the beep, you let go.

During the Lead finals of the men category of St. Stephen Climbing competition 2019 I had the opportunity to climb last as I had placed first in the previous round. As the finals started, I realized that there was a huge Dyno (Jump) in the middle of the route, and I knew that it would become the crux of the route. Thanks to the amazing organizing team my favorite competition climbing song was played in the background during my turn. I started climbing. I reached halfway and my body position changed in a way that I couldn't even see the hold to the dyno but I put my faith in my memory and my motor skills and I jumped with all the power that I had left. To my surprise, I caught the jug at the end and the crowd went nuts and I knew that I had already won the competition which encouraged me to climb further on. I fell at the last move of the route and as the belayer lowered me to the ground people nearby were still shouting and I waved happily to the crowd. It was one of my happiest competition memories.

# Memories & Lanes

Lael John

The orientation for the Hiking Club, where my journey began, promised adventure and excitement. Safe to say, they did not disappoint. The first time I went to see the Wall, two things stood out to me: first, this was a space I felt like I belonged to and second, the club made me feel I belonged there. Becoming a part of the Hiking Club has led me on a journey that involves overcoming personal barriers, both physical and mental. This journey has been equal parts exhilarating—from climbing a route faster/better or simply with more ease than the first time I tried it—to being uncomfortable, in seeing how far others are willing to push themselves and also being frustrated at your own limitations.

While I cannot say much about the Hiking Club culture that has established itself over time (mainly because sadly, I have not been as regular at the Wall as I would like to be), I can say that once you join—there is no other word for it—you feel like a part of a family. You feel vulnerable yet free; you feel like you're in a safe space where you can try new things.

Nowhere is this feeling present more strongly than on the Hiking Club trips. This year, I was fortunate enough to go for the



trek to Deo Tibba (RIP; an unplanned YOLOBus breakdown in Himachal and a snowstorm forced us to summit the Patalsu peak instead). What the trip cemented for me was how inclusive the Club could be, how they ensured that no one got left behind.

Like I said, I have not been regular in going to the Wall. While this can and does make a member feel dissatisfied with themselves, what makes it worse is that your seniors, instead of getting angry, feel concerned and ask you how you are doing. That is saddening because you feel you have let them down. That is why I decided to stop coming to training sessions for the climbing competition (the Rohan Kanhai Dutta and Sunil Chandra Memorial Open Sport Climbing Competition). But the club



has given me a lot, and more than anything, I am grateful for the support and warmth I have received. The club is a safe space to go to when you are down and feel the need to do a bouldering route to make it go away. What I have learned is that you cannot climb without letting go of

everything else on your mind and focusing on the route at hand. I repeat my gratitude to my seniors, who made me want to be a better member of the club. I shall end with this: ain't no mountain high enough, we've been getting high since 1949.



*Sunrise at Hanuman Tibba Peak, seen from the Patalsu Base Camp*

# The Hiking Club: An Experience

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**Anmol David Lorenz**

From being something to brag about to friends outside campus to becoming a space of infinite memories, the Climbing Wall is where I have met the most fascinating people of our prodigious institution. It has been a place of substantial exertions and a lot more than that.

My involvement in this society began in 2018 when I was a second year. In the beginning, I was intimidated by the super-fit club members, and by the very thought of something as adventurous as climbing. The Wall, however, eventually became one of my favourite spots in college. All this became possible because of my helpful seniors, motivating batchmates, and some strikingly amicable juniors. One of my highest points in the club came in my third year when, to my astonishment, the members started referring to me as "Thanos." I had never felt so one with the club ever before.

From fitness regimes at the gym to some treasurable titles (see "Thanos"), my journey in the Hiking Club has been one heck of a ride. Here's a toast to all the memories and camaraderie!





# Rohan Kanhai Datta and Sunil Chandra Memorial Fund

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## Prerna

The Hiking Club has a rich history. It has given birth to many distinguished climbers such as Rohan Kanhai Datta and Mandip Singh Soin, who were among the best climbers in the country of their time; and mountain climbers like PM Das and Yusuf Zaheer, who climbed the Himalayan peak, Reo Purgyl. The multi-talented Sanjeev Saith (climber, photographer, artist) has also been a past member. Besides its unique history, the Hiking Club continues to set itself apart now as well. The Eshwaran Bharatan Wall, which the club members climb on to do this day, was given to the college by Rohan Kanhai Datta. Our members have also been fortunate enough to interact with Hiking Club alumni, like Mandip Soin, Yusuf Zaheer, Dr. P.M. Das, Ajeet Bajaj, and Vaibhav Kala, through talks and presentations. In the memory of our two incredibly talented alumni, we have the Rohan Kanhai Datta and Sunil Chandra Memorial Fund. The idea was given to us by Mr. Soin, whose ardent efforts have made the fund stand today at upwards of lakhs of rupees. The fund helps the club host its annual sport climbing competition. Therefore, the club no longer has the setback of insufficient funds keeping it from performing its best. The following club alumni and families and friends of Kan and Joe have contributed to the fund. The Hiking Club greatly appreciates their benignancy.

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

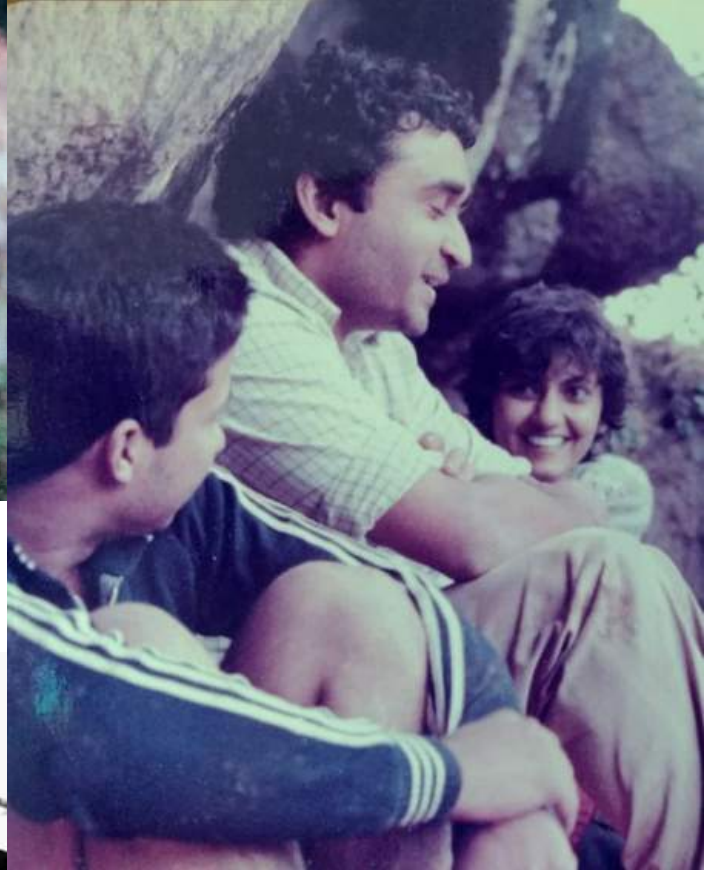
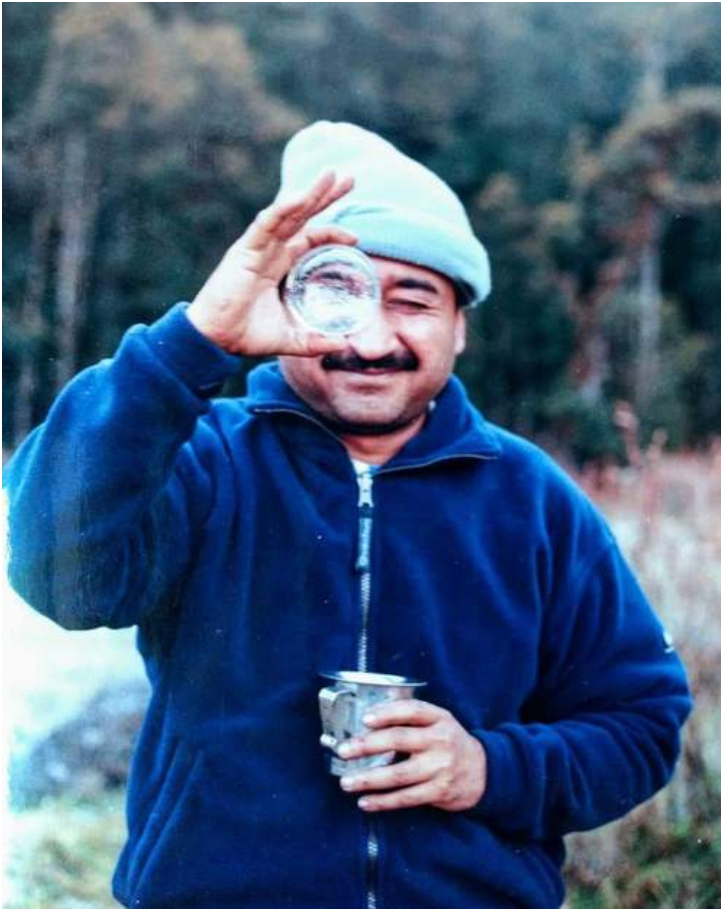
17. Mr. Rahul P. Dave
18. Mr. Rajiv Luthra
19. Mr. Ranjan Pal
20. Mr. Ravindra Pal Singh
21. Ms. Reena Mittal
22. Ms. Rukminin Banerji
23. Mr. Sandeep Dayal
24. Mr. Sishir Lall
25. Mr. Sudhil Dahiya
26. Mr. Sushil Dubey and Ms. Brinda Dubey

For the past 8 years, the annual St Stephen's College Open Sport Climbing has been dedicated to the memory of Rohan Kanhai Datta and Sunil Chandra. There are also laurels for the best performances in the climbing competitions dedicated to the memory of some of the club's alumni: (i) Rohan Kanhai Datta Medal for the best Lead Climbing (Male); (ii) Sunil Chandra Medal for 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 best climber in Junior Male Category; and (vi) Eshwaran Bharatan Medal for the best climber from Hiking Club.



*The Eshwaran Bharatan Memorial Wall*





*Rohan Kanhai Datta, a pioneer of outdoor rock climbing in India, is one of the people after whom the HC memorial fund is named.*

A woman in a purple shirt and climbing harness is seen from the side, looking up at a tall artificial rock climbing wall. The wall is covered in various colored climbing holds (red, blue, green, yellow, black) and has orange geometric patterns. Other climbers are visible at the top of the wall. The scene is indoors with bright lighting.

# Coming of age of artificial rock climbing in India

**Siddharth Rastogi**

Climb Central Delhi

Both natural and artificial rock climbing have been around in India for several decades with excellent variety of natural rock available throughout our vast nation, from the beautiful and world renowned climbing in Hampi and Badami down south to Suru and Sethan in the far north.

Artificial rock climbing has historically found its champions in several mountaineering institutes and federations around India such as **IMF, NIMS, HMI** among others. These institutions have made all-year-round climbing available to climbing enthusiasts through quality infrastructure.

With humble beginnings of rock climbing and bouldering walls in these institutes, private participation for the sport of rock climbing has also grown steadily as evidenced by several schools, colleges (including the climbing wall at St. Stephen's College), and private investments by entrepreneurs who support and want the sport of rock climbing to grow.

Across North America, Europe, and increasingly in South east Asia, rock climbing facilities have progressed at a rapid pace since early 2000s. The types of walls in such facilities have also changed from the earlier prevalent 3D-featured walls (those that mimic



real rock) to clean geometric walls that use volumes and innovative holds to create infinite combinations and ever-changing routes that continually challenge even the most advanced climbers.

Sports Climbing in India continues to be a very niche sport and the Indian populace remains largely unaware of climbing as a sport. Majority of those that have heard about climbing, view it as an extreme sport or a one-time recreational activity. Privately operated climbing facilities such as **Delhi Rock** – New Delhi, **Equilibrium** – Bangalore, **Fit Rock Arena** – Chennai and others are the pioneers for the sport in their city and continue to play an important part in helping grow the sport.

As sports climbing continues to gain traction globally, such world-class facilities cannot be far away in India. In the last 2-years, new facilities that have opened include **Let's Play Climbing** in Bangalore and **Climb Central Delhi** and **BoulderBox** in New Delhi. There is growing interest by other entrepreneurs to invest in this sport in cities like Pune, Mumbai, Chandigarh, and others.

**Climb Central Delhi** is one of six Climb Central facilities operating across Asia in Singapore, Philippines, Thailand and India. **"Everyone Can Climb"** is the motto of Climb Central. With a unique approach to their facilities and systems, Climb Central takes pride in introducing sports climbing to beginners in a safe and non-intimidating way. Advanced climbers also find plenty of variety at Climb Central facilities due to the rich, multifunctional facilities. Climb Central also has auto-belay stations that allow climbers to practice without the need of a partner.

Climb Central believes that once an amateur has been introduced to climbing, they will understand the benefits of the sport and some may go on to make climbing a part of their fitness routine. Those who look to challenge themselves and seek variety



IMF Campus, Delhi

will want to try other climbing facilities in the region. As has been the case in Singapore, where Climb Central originated, opening of a Climb Central facility has acted as a catalyst and a gateway for the proliferation of the sport, thereby contributing to increased climbers at other climbing facilities.

New Delhi is blessed with 4 excellent climbing facilities including IMF, Climb Central Delhi, Delhi Rock and Boulder Box in addition to the climbing walls at St. Stephen's College, Mira Model School, American Embassy School and natural crags at Dhauj, Lado Sarai, Sanjay Van etc. It is not surprising to hear a buzz in the climbing community that Delhi is gaining popularity for climbers as a preferred destination for the variety it now provides.

**Author:** Siddharth Rastogi is Director – Climb Central Delhi and a recreational climber. He can be found climbing at Climb Central Delhi with his three children on the weekends and weather permitting, on the crags around Delhi.

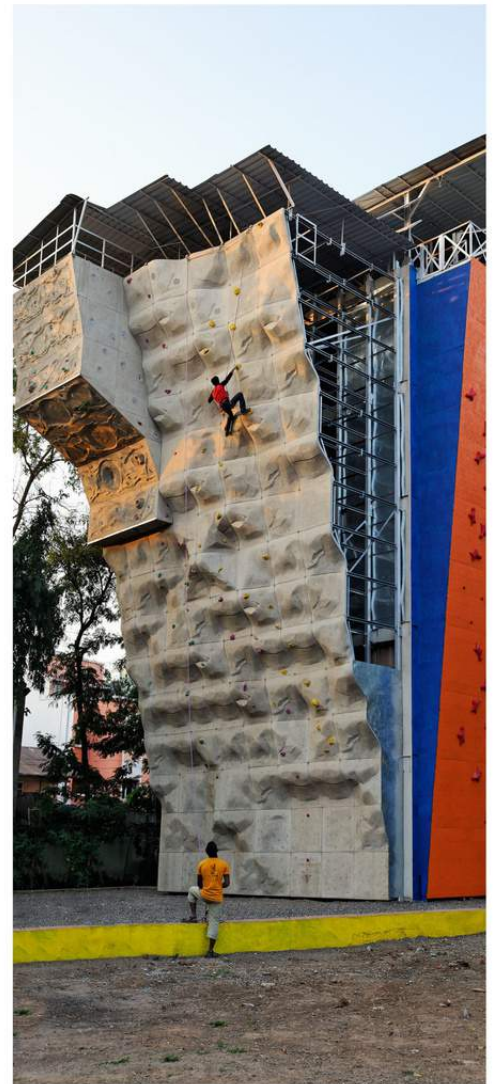
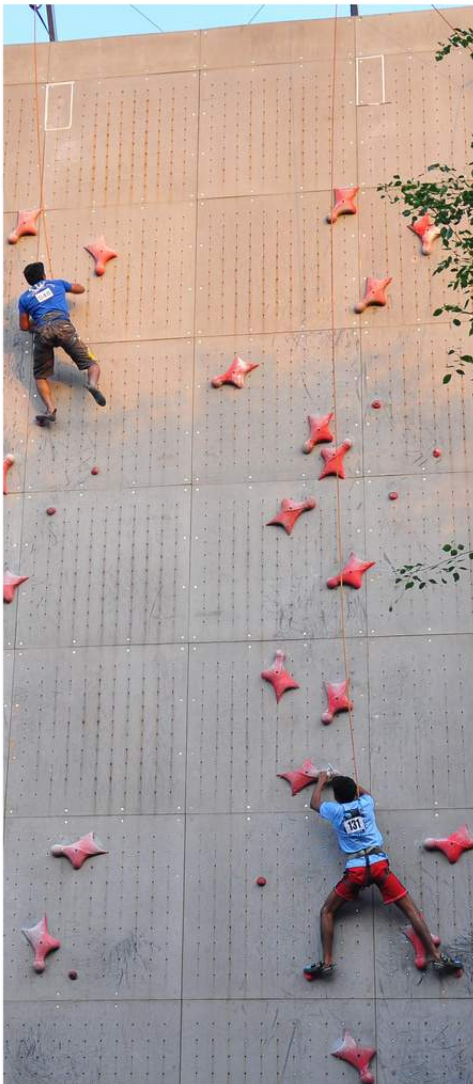
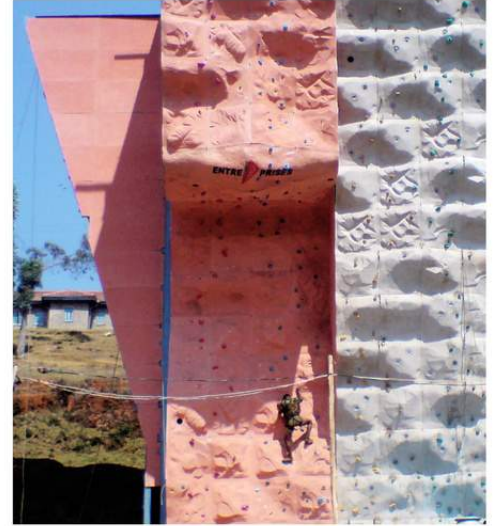


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# The Cycle of Indoor and Outdoor Climbing

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## Yadu Bhageria

BoulderBox Delhi

At the World Indoor Climbing Summit in 2018, I met a wonderful human being from Australia. He said he had never climbed outdoors and yet he had founded an impressive climbing gym facility in his hometown. "How can he have never climbed outdoors!?", screamed my mind when I first heard this. Is someone really a climber if they haven't climbed outdoors?

John Muir wrote "The mountains are calling and I must go." The pursuit of climbing is an offshoot from the pursuit of mountaineering and has grown through the years. It is now a field mature enough to nurture its own different breeds: bouldering, traditional climbing, and deep-water-soloing (DWS) to name a few. As the co-founder of BoulderBox, I deal with the newest breed of climbing, indoor climbing.

Indoor climbing started with small walls to train climbers directly for the challenges faced outdoors but it has since evolved into a complete sport with dedicated facilities. One where an athlete can conquer challenges solely in the indoors, be it pushing their grade boundaries or winning international competitions like the Olympics. Many individuals today start their climbing journey not on the rough surfaces of an outdoor monolith but rather in the colourful landscapes of plastic holds and cushioned floorings. I encounter plenty of climbers on a daily basis that have never climbed outdoors. Many patrons of BoulderBox too have only ever enjoyed the ups and downs of climbing on wooden walls, literally and



*Outdoor Climbing*



emotionally. But that does not, and should not, diminish their identities as climbers.

The climbing community is diverse and houses members from different breeds. Many climbers dabble in more than one of its forms and that helps bring a variety of perspectives and experiences to the fore. Helping others explore new experiences is a worthwhile pursuit in my mind. It is natural, then, that we want to introduce indoor climbers to the outdoors and vice versa. This process can have many challenges but the help we have had is great. A number of individuals have spent a considerable amount of time developing and nurturing outdoor locations around Delhi to facilitate our efforts to familiarise people with new experiences. Mohit Oberoi has been at the forefront of this project for decades and Jammy (Tenzing Jamyang) with Delhi Climbs has been doing amazing work in recent months. I believe it is our responsibility at indoor facilities to be able to foster this connection and to strengthen our collective community. We must encourage the cycle of indoor and outdoor climbing.

**Author:** *Yadu Bhageria is a partner at BoulderBox Delhi.*

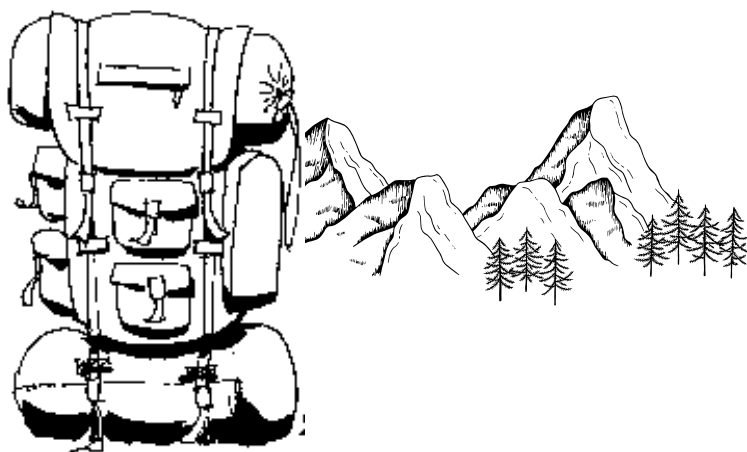
*BoulderBox Delhi*



# The Other Climbers

**Dr. Sanjay Kumar**

(Originally published in Miscellany 2004)



This is the first issue of Miscellany in more than a decade. All credit for making it a reality goes to student office bearers of the Hiking Club. Seshadri, the Club President, Nitin, the Club Secretary, Sudhanshu, the Editor of Miscellany, and other members Isha, Bhavya, Sahana, Vatsala, Mehak and Aakash have worked on the journal with enthusiasm and commitment. They have brought varied talents, tastes and idiosyncrasies in to making what it is.

It is easy for a staff advisor of a student club to write a moralising note for the club journal, and I am afraid I might end up doing just that. Nevertheless, I cannot help writing what I think is important.

All of us have our own, some very personal, reasons for going to mountains. Though we often dwell over these reasons, we rarely give much thought to conditions that make it possible for us to hike or climb. Perhaps the most important of these preconditions is the presence of mountain men and women who are prepared to ferry our luggage and gear, pitch our tents, cook for us, and guide and help us in tricky situations for a wage, the only thing we give them in return. Over years I have met many such men, and I think it would not be inappropriate to narrate a few tales about them.

Ram Singh was the most business like *pahari* man I have ever met. He was the *chowkidar* of Phurkia rest house on the Pindari Glacier trail. *Chowkidars* we met in other rest houses used to prepare food for guests in return for nominal *bakhsheesh*. Ram Singh however was running a proper dhaba in his rest houses, where he provided meals for a fixed price of Rs. 4.50 and treated the rest house kitchen and utensils as his personal property. Two days ago we had met his father in Khati village. He had asked us to remind Ram Singh to send him money for tobacco. Ram Singh's response was dismissive, '*Buddha sathia gayaa hai*'. My friend and I were on the Pindari Glacier trail right after our twelfth standard exams in the early eighties, long before it was turned into the Mall Road of Himalayan hiking. Phurkia was the last rest house on the trail. We had to walk seven kilometers ahead to have a look at the glacier. I remember Ram Singh not because of his professional air or because I had thought him to be a scoundrel for the way he treated his old father. Ram Singh is etched in my memory because the lunch he gave us after our visit to the glacier remains one of the tastiest meals I have ever had. It was a simple fare with spiced up aaloo tamatar sabji and chapatis baked on a chulha. Yet the aroma



of freshly baked *atta* and the sight of his *subji* were very potent appetizers and I polished off a number of *chapatis* in no time.

Last year I was really fortunate to have Fateh Chand and Pyare Lal as our climbing guides. Without them my descent from the camp below Bhrigu Lake with torn ligaments in my left knee would have been infinitely more arduous and painful. They cut steps for me and held me from both shoulders while my feet and stick faltered on slippery slopes. Between Ram Singh and Fateh Chand I have met a number of pahari men. Yashpal, the dashing young man of Jagatsukh, who guided me across the rock face on the Indrasan Nullah on way to Chhatru, and who when I last heard was caught up in a police case of smuggling *charas* to Goa. Milon Subba of Pelling in western Sikkim who cooked wonderful noodles for us with just cabbage and garlic at Tsoska when we were rained in for two days, and who told me how he courted and married his Bhutia wife as we drove out of Yuksom in light drizzle with mist rising from oak and pine forests. I have been a buyer of services of these men and perhaps for them I was nothing more than a buyer.

I noticed Kushang Sherpa's name for the first time in the museum at the Himalayan Mountain-eering Institute in Darjeeling. He was mentioned as one of the very few climbers to summit Everest from the very difficult Kangshung face. Later, I also found out from a website that he is the only man to have climbed Everest from all four directions. Kushang is an instructor at the HMI. Among the instructor community at the HMI, which itself is something of an elite club, Kushang is deeply respected for his achievements. For the trainees of the HMI though, this toughest of the climbers is also the most accessible. His loud laughter is as appealing as is the sheen in his naughty eyes, He rarely misses a chance to play pranks on trainees. On being asked why go to Everest, George Mallory is supposed to have replied 'Because it is there'. Though this answer is much celebrated in climbing literature I cannot help sensing in it a self-assurance trying to hide its lack of critical awareness with a cut and dry assertion. After all, one does not decide to go to all places that are there. Humans have been seeing mountains for ages and only in recent history have they thought of climbing them. For every man who decides to climb a mountain there have been hundreds who have considered the same mountain to be an object of worship, rather than a stone to step on. Climbing is thought about only in certain cultural milieus and a degree of material resources is a prerequisite for it. It is an expensive adventure. I asked the same question to Kushang Sherpa. It was evident that he did not want to give a reply, but I persisted. '*Kya Karein! Jana Padhta Hai*', he said finally with a very visible irritation. No doubt Kushang is modest to the point of being self-effacing and feels shy talking about himself. Yet his answer was more than just a personal statement. He started his professional life as an expedition porter at the age of fourteen. He

never went to a school. Instead, going to mountains was simply a question of survival. There, with a fair amount of hard work and natural flair he fashioned himself into a remarkable mountaineer. Yet even now, he does not think he ever chose to be a mountaineer. Very unlike Mallory, who chose to be at Everest.

It is men like Kushang who make it possible for thousands of mountaineers and hikers to visit the Himalaya every year. In the Himalaya at least, climbing and hiking remains a colonial adventure. No expedition to any significant peak before the eighties was possible without an army of porter men and women, prepared to put themselves in harm's way, for the sake of someone else's sport in return for a cash wage. And frankly, even middle class Indians can afford to hike and climb in Himalaya only because wage rates are among the lowest due to endemic poverty.

One way to see such men and women is as mere providers of services in return for cash. Yet, do not we mountaineers and hikers kill something of the mountain spirit in us when we see them only as a pole of a cash nexus, standing opposite to us? Would it not be worthwhile reflecting why *they* go to mountains?



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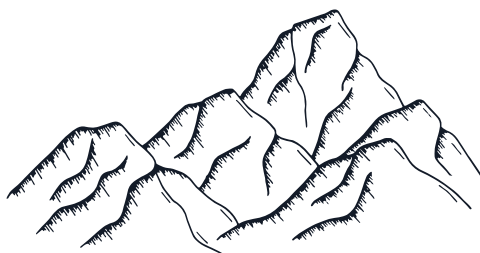
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