

A

Alang

M

Madan

K

Kulang



The Initial Set-Back

// I had made a request to Sachin if he could bring extra SABZI for me and Abhay. The call was made just few minutes before the following dramatic telephonic conversation took place. As usual, our cooking bai who is weak in mathematics had done some wrong calculations which led to NO SABZI for next day's lunch on Trek. //



Tring Tring

Sachin: Hi..

Isheet: बोला साहेब.

Sachin: There is some change in plan..

Isheet: {first reaction was that there is going to be CHATNI instead of SABZI} काय चेंग ?

Sachin: ऑफिस चा एक उरजेंट काम उद्या असल्या मुले माला येन जमणार नाही..

Isheet: Ohh.....

Sachin: Ya, I am sorry but you guys need to move on...

// It was like Team INDIA going for world cup final game without Sachin Tendulkar, in our case it was Sachin Pandit ☺ //

The BATTLE Begins

The forts of Alang, Madan and Kulang are situated in the Kalasubai (the highest peak in Maharashtra) range in Nasik district. Earlier these forts were in the captivity of Mugals, they were freed by Maratha warriors and later, with the fall of Pune, British got them under their control.

The dense forest at the base, long tiresome climbs (Kulang is known as the fort with highest climb in Maharashtra), the unending trudges...to add to all this, the rock-cut routes were blasted off by British to prevent the natives from using the forts. Since then these forts have become almost inaccessible and are considered as toughest forts to trek!

A total of nine warriors from KPIT, eight experts of InVenture, a 45 year old full of life woman from Denmark and two chaddi buddy of Chinmay started the unforgettable AMK trek from Pune on 6th Jan 2011 at 23:30 hours.

We reached Alang base early in the morning. It was freezing cold and dark outside, so we waited



inside the 20 seat traveller until the weather was clear.

Here we had our morning breakfast and some team introduction. After getting some safety tips from the InVenture experts, we marched towards ALANG – Our first destination to be conquered.

DAY 1

Fort: Alang

Region: Igatpuri

Height: 4500 ft (above MSL)

Grade : Very Difficult

It was a ½ km walk on a rough road which led us towards Alang. The mount looked HUGE. To add more trouble, we were required to carry luggage on our own muscular shoulders. The trekking started with moderate slope and rocky path. Slowly, Alang started to show its colour and within 30 minutes of climbing we could hear our own heart beats !! At the same time a lot of water bottles started coming out. The route was through huge bushes and jungle trees.

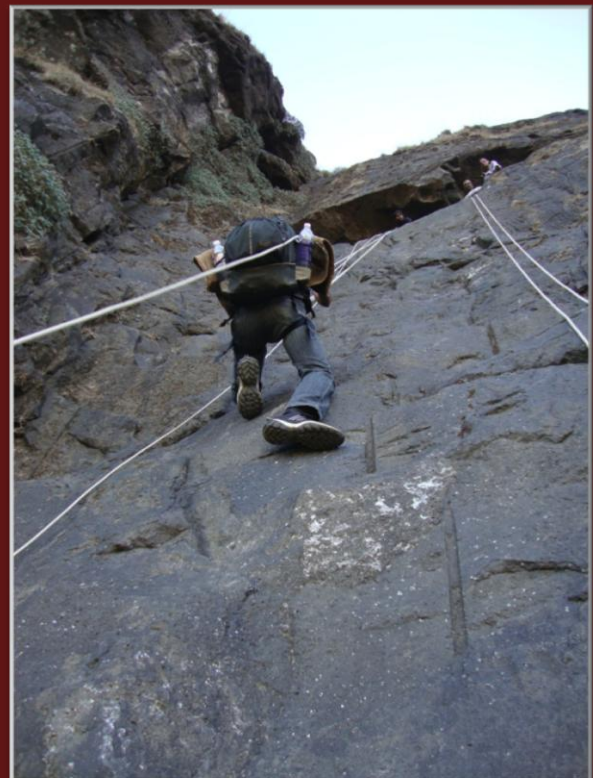
The fun begins – After some hard trekking, it was time to sit down on a narrow rock incline. Slowly, one by one food stuff started coming out from everyone's bag. Suddenly, by mistake a gentle push from one of the voyager caused Tushar's bag rolling down the hill at 45° with Rajdhani Express speed. Our eyes kept following the bag like we



follow a ball in tennis match. But Tushar being a happy going gentleman took it very sportingly and seemed worried only about the food inside the bag !! Finally, one of the villager went down in a pair of slipper leaving our Nike and Reebok shoes feel humiliated and brought back the bag and smile for Tushar. The scene was nothing less than the one in the movie "Vertical Limits".

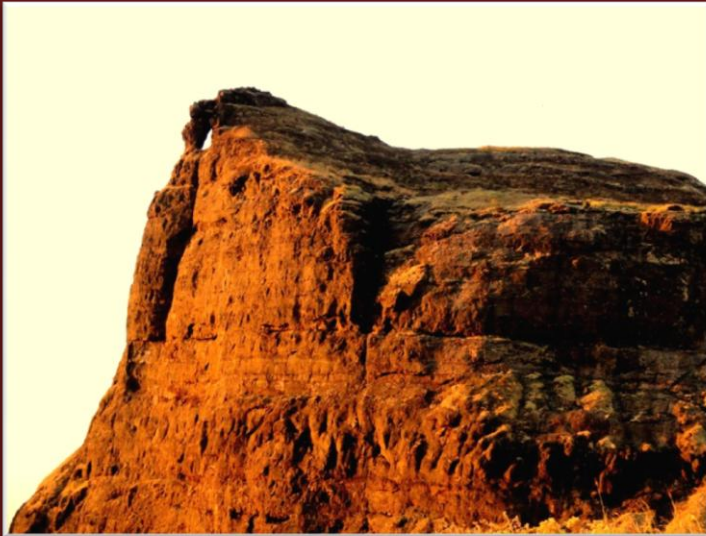
After little fun, it was time for some serious work. The very first rope climbing patch, not much in height and seemed like a warm up round to us. We were ready with our gears ON and waiting for respective turn. KPIT warriors gave the impression like they are quite COOL about the climb but everyone had butterflies in the belly ☺. Let me tell you, even though ropes are tied and locked you feel a kind of FEAR of falling down. Of course this is just while you do it for the first time. Here, the ropes were only for safety and actual climb was to be done with efforts put in by surplus loaded shoulders and worn-out legs.

While the people were climbing up one by one, InVenture guys were ready with another rope climbing patch. Stretch your legs towards a proper hold and pull yourself UP with your bare fingers. This hurts, some serious pain in finger joints and few rash on knees as our legs are always swinging just before or after the PROPER hold !! One mistake while climbing and.....NO you are not gone, the InVenture people had taken a great care for safety. Just to tell you, this patch was also scary and here again we all felt a kind of FEAR as this was a real rope climbing. I know earlier I had mentioned that fear is only while you climb for the first time, but I lied there !!



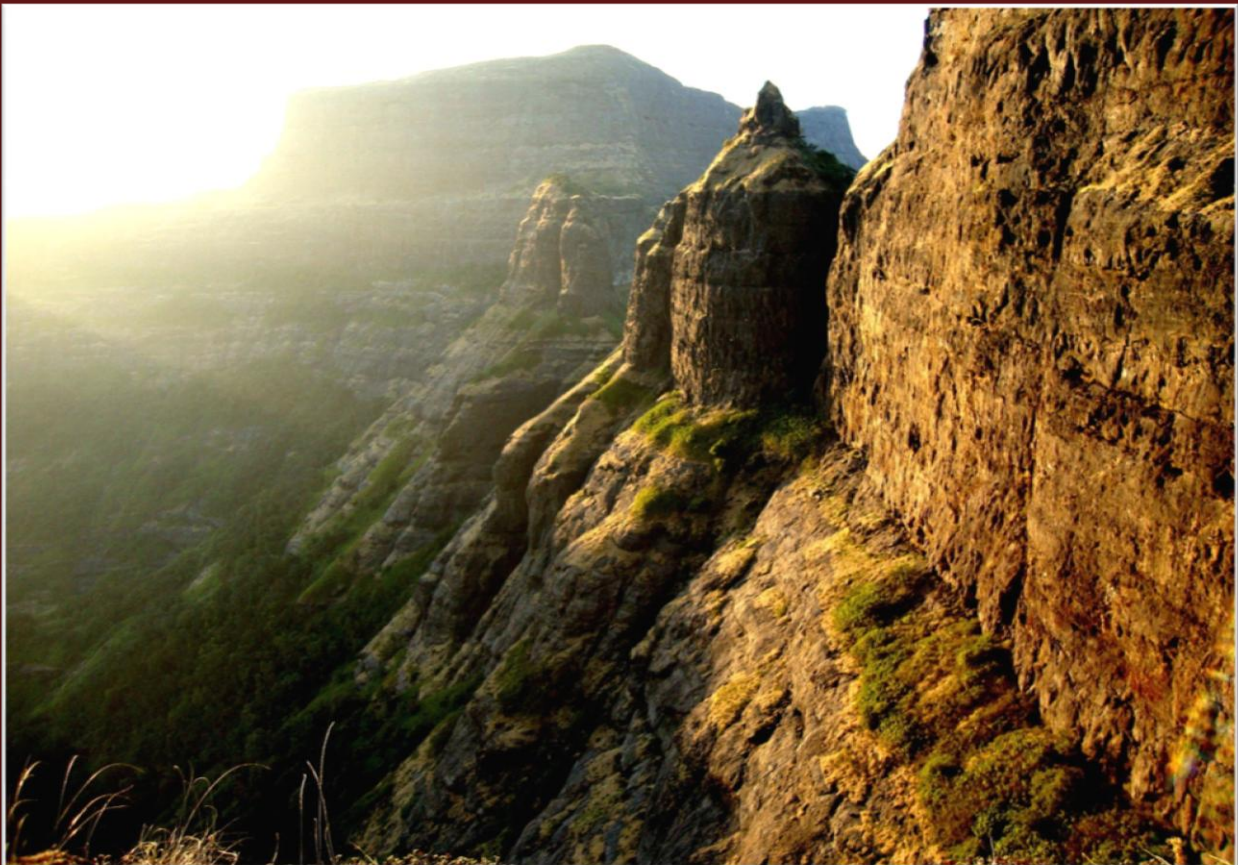
After these two amazing tasks, we completed our rest of the climbing. Now, we were on top of Alang. At 4500 feet, the landscape was

beyond belief. An easy long walk got us to a five star hotel where we were going to spend our night,



the Alang caves. Muddy, rocky, warm and full of visitors were the two amazing Alang caves. We kept our bags here and had some quick breakfast. We then left for a site visit around the hill meanwhile InVenture guys prepared hot soup followed by Veg Pulav and Shrikhand for dinner. Having dinner with some fantastic people around you under sky full of bright stars and in freezing cold is an experience which cannot be described and only be felt.

Finally sleeping bags were out and we were in. I was in sleep even before eyes were closed ☺. Fun, drama, fear, excitement, getting dead tired, coming closer to nature - It was a day never to be forgotten.



DAY 2

Fort: Madan

Region: Igatpuri

Height : 4500+ ft (above MSL)

Grade : Very Difficult

We started our journey towards fort Madan around in the morning around 11:00. Yes, 11:00 as there was no office and no one to ask about the status of the given tasks. Sorry Bosses, but we felt Great !!

First up, Rappelling. A “piece of cake” task once you have done rope climbing. The only thing to increase the heart beats is height from which you have to look down and put your first step down the patch. Once you are through with that, what required to be done is pulling up the rope with legs again finding the right holds. You are down in seconds as half of the work is done by self-weight. This rappelling was followed again by a simple rappel. Yes, you got it right. This is the same place where

we did our warm up rope climbing on first day.



The picture beside shows active participation from ReVOLO !! Finally, we were done with Alang and now it was time for some deadly turns and narrow steps with deep valley on one of the side always to accompany till the top of Madan. It was advised not to look down while climbing just to avoid

horrifying feeling. It was hard to maintain eye balls straight on the narrow steps, but tempting eyes couple of times rolled towards deep valley and boy what a stroke it was !!

After getting some heavy strokes, we were again ready for our second rope climbing. A 90 degree, curvy climb. The curve made things difficult as you don't see the person who is guiding you from the top. So until you are visible for some tips from top, you are in safe hands of GOD. Actually, it only appeared difficult but Dhaval and Saurabh made things simpler by providing extra help in terms of PULL from top.

It was followed by a life threatening climb on a narrow and pebbly path. But everybody made it safely helping and guiding each other. A great showcase of Team Effort under





extreme pressure condition was under demonstration.

Here we are, on TOP of Madan. With no energy left whatsoever, I just sat down for some time waiting for others to climb. Harsh, who still had some energy went up and discovered cave location. As we reached the cave, snakes were ready...Yes snake and not snack. ! Lakhan, the local villager who

was with us as a path finder killed the snake gently. WE kept our bags in the cave and started moving towards The Sunset point.

The Sunset was the most amazing part of this fort. As you can see in the pictures, it was a life time moment. We quickly identified the best places to sit on a small rocky top and just waited for sun to call it a DAY.

Moving ahead - Sitting beside fire meant for cooking turned out to be a campfire idea for me, Chinmay, Prasannas and Tushar. And there we were, setting up the campfire. Well it turned out to be a greatest idea of the whole trek. Slowly the crowd sat making a perfect round and having HOT soup served to us by the InVenture cookies...!!



Ohh yes how can we forget Amit who just built the perfect pulse for the evening. Bringing in the Guitar and some of the best songs. Not to forget the Danish song sung by Lene out of which very little we understood but very nice of her to come forward for it.

Dinner at Madan – Kanda bhaji, Alu bhaji and Tikhat mirchi bhaji ☺. Well this was just a start and was soon followed by a Pithal-Rice.



It was finally time for much needed rest. Dreaded by the earlier snake incident near the cave but there was no other lavish option other than the cave so cave, me, sleeping bag and some sleep !!

DAY 3

Fort: Kulang

Region: Igatpuri

Height: 4500+ ft (above MSL)

Grade: Very Difficult

Everyone was up and running by 06:00 today, the last and most exhaustive day. The challenge for the 3rd day was to get down from Madan, climb up Kulang which has steep slope and again getting down from Kulang. But the good news was that we had to keep our luggage at Kulang base. Someone would keep an eye on the luggage meanwhile the team will conquer Kulang and come back. Unfortunately, I was not that SOMEONE who would wait at base for luggage so one more exciting journey.

We came down from Madan quite fast as rappelling was now an easy task for us. We started climbing the steep slope of Kulang and it seemed a never ending climb. The Kulang appears so huge that it is quite difficult to keep your moral UP against it. To add to the difficulty was a terrific 2000+ feet view deep in the valley.

But we did it again, this time in a very short duration. We were quite a PRO to do this !!

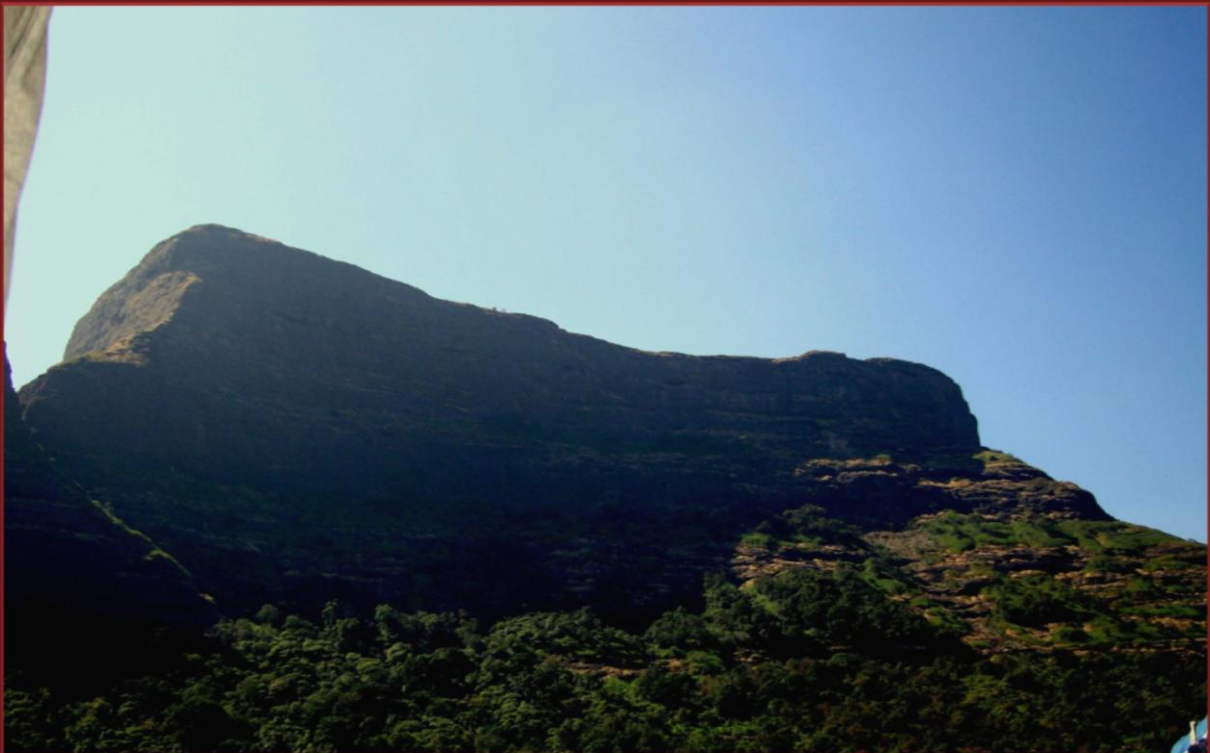
We sat there for some time, filled up the empty water bottles and descend. I felt like just sliding down through the bushes and rocks but gave a boost and started using the path meant for safe descends.

We reached to the spot where bags were parked and started walking towards a village where dinner was waiting for us. Pithal-Bhakri, Shrikhand, Sonpapadi and Kanda sabzi was the menu. We ate to the fullest and waited for the bus to come.



Some fun was still left – To our surprise, the bus driver was missing and so was the bus. The driver was drunk and had some issues with delay in schedule, what we understood by the mouth publicity. It was time for campfire and another round of Guitar by Amit and Gaurav. Everyone was quite patient and enjoyed the moment thoroughly.

Soon the InVenture guys arranged a pickup in which all of the 20 members with luggage somehow managed to fit in like some kind ad for Fevicol. !! It was a memorable 30 kms journey to a small village nearby where another bus was arranged. After waiting for almost six hours we started our journey back to Pune.



Adventurously yours,

*I
IMP
I M Patel
Isheet Madhukant Patel*