



“चांदनी”

राजगड: रात समयी पदयात्रा

30th March 2011

I M Patel

Rajgad:

Around 4500 feet tall, 40 kms from Pune is the King of forts and fort of the King Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Shivaji maharaj spent almost 26 years here and was his capital until he shifted to Raigad for better opportunities.

There are three flat terrains or plateaus (Machee) around namely Padmavati, Suvela and Sanjeevani. And at the centre is Bale killa made out of volcanic eruption.

We went there to witness the unchallengeable, undisputable and unconquerable fort, at night just to keep things little easy!! 500 feet above it is Bale killa, tall and tough to climb with a Grand entrance gate. The plan was to reach till Padmavati machee at night, have some sleep and conquer Bale killa in the morning.

The beginning:

As usual, it was very exciting. The group was going to trek almost after four months and what a beginning with a night trek.

The night treks are usually very challenging as of course the vision is little difficult, judgement of foot steps must be calculated carefully and you need to always move with the pace of the group otherwise chances of being lost are high and which may make your journey little more adventurous!! But the positive side is that you sweat less and you can't see the top, which makes the target seem achievable!!

The plan was to gather at Warje bridge at 19:00 hours and start the fleet from there. As usual 19:00 is IST and we could only move from there at 20:30 hours. It was nice to see 5 cars moving in line and the cold breeze just added the required flavour.

Konica, Prateek, Samiksha and Santosh were coming for the first time and new into the group, through my reference and dependent on me, glad you came and made it guys 😊.

We had our first stop at a petrol pump near a small village, just to get the fleet in line. Prateek, a new bee to the photography didn't want to miss a chance and in no time captured this wonderful snap of The Village Petrol Pump!! Moving ahead, we reached the base around 22:30 and had our dinner.

The climb started at around 23:00. Road full of small rocks and animal dung will always give you a typical feeling about the beginning of a journey from the base village. For this you need not go near and smell the dung, the feeling will come automatically with experience, just keep walking and watch your steps :-D.

Four new excited along with my rusty pair of legs started ascend together. Five minutes later, five became four and soon four became three. Turned around and heard Samiksha saying to Prateek "I am tired, my stamina is over, need to sit for 2 minutes". My eyes were wide open (reminded me of the Engineering time when eyes used to open this wide after seeing the mark sheet!!).

Santosh was the only one who had the vision and soon understood that her bag needs to be carried right away to avoid carrying bag with the owner after some time!! We started again with Santosh carrying two bags. The only thing in my mind at that time was to get Samiksha and Konica at Padmavati machee as soon as possible and keep some people behind us for safety, with the help of Prateek we started to move fast but the overload put Santosh little behind!!

After some time we could here Santosh yelling at us from down with different names like Kutto / Kamino etc... Samiksha immediately realized that Santosh is having tough time. The "realization" spark led her to move even faster (With in-between show-off of concerns like: "Bechara Santosh, kahan hoga"!!), to our surprise.

The terrain was quite difficult at times, getting narrow almost to the dimension where we could hardly move out of line. Who knows better than Konica, who continued to believe the space is available for two legs...but there came a spot which could hold only one. Unaware about the nature's tough plans, Konics slipped almost in to the valley.

She timely held me and fortunately I didn't slip. She continued to exist and after a little laugh, we were back again on track!!

Coming back to Santosh, we soon realized, Kutto / Kamino yell was out of range and we could not hear Santosh anymore :-D. Santosh, seriously speaking, the only reason to keep moving was to get the ladies at the top soon as the path was unknown and all the guides were climbing with a rapid speed. Hat's off to your stamina, except for little sharing by me, Amar and Prateek, you did it all.

Moving ahead, we continued to climb at a rapid speed, now Amol was also in accompany. Few slips here and there but we managed to reach to Padmavati machee in about two hours.



Look at the faces and missing Santosh!! He arrived few minutes later, with yelling, lots of it!!

The stay:

Padmavati machee: cold breeze to relax, an old temple to stay and a moon light shining lake (snapped on right). The perfect host for the late evening, amazing.

While others went to sleep, Amol, Abhay, Santosh, Prateek, Konica, Samiksha and me decided to stay awake for a while and enjoy the silent night.

After long chats and few wickets down, "Let's do something interesting" by Sam



led me, Santosh, Prateek and Konica to get up and walk here and there in the dark, ofcourse under the leadership of Sam. We soon found a company, two sparkling eyes staring at us. Torching it we realized that it is no human and time to say bye :-D. We slowly made our way and took a sharp 90° turn to walk away silently.

Sitting on the edge, we started re-collecting and sharing some old memories. Laughing loud, made some social soul from different group get up from his sound sleep and walk towards us. A miserable man with torch stands meters away and says "Logoki social life hoti he, zara samjo, sone do, yehi problem he India ka". One of us whispered very very softly "trek pe ake sona ye kansi social life he". He turned back "han yehi social life he", we were taken aback and stunned, the night was so silent that even whispers were loud :-D.

We then decided to join the social group and walk towards natural bed, at 04:00.

The Sweetest good night:

Santosh was the first one to start the proceedings with plating, others still sitting and wondering. Amidst darkest possible silence, came a voice in a very sweet tone "Good night Santosh". All the heads turned towards the speaker with blank expression, speaker was none other than Samiksha!!

We immediately knew the interpretation "Santosh, do not forget my bag tomorrow". Santosh too hit back the "Good night Santosh" with "Mein kal bag nai uthane vala, kutto / kamino" :-D.

The new dawn:

Getting up at 06:00, most of the members decided to climb the Bale killa, where as Sachin P, Santosh, Vikram, Vikram1, Rahul and me decided to extend and enjoy the sleep we generally miss every day.

The gang was back at around 08:30, a small photo session and we began descend.



The end:

As decided, we started to descend in group. The challenges of climbing down are different. For example, lot of braking to avoid slip might cause knee pain, the momentum and weight might take you little further than intended!! Keeping all this things in mind and team incompetency, we decided to take careful steps and increase the pace once confident.

There came a spot where everyone who were ahead of us was taking a break for some Nimbu pani. Like a little kid, I thought this was an opportunity to move ahead of all :-D!! I whispered to Samiksha that we need to run, base is just minutes away and this is the time for a rapid fire round to make it into the top 10, and tease everyone!!

Sam looked in no mood and was just busy worrying about her glowing skin!! Still, dragged her to the



victory point at a fast pace and yes we made it into the top 10 :-D!!

The view of the car parked gave a sign relief. Overall, one more fantastic and memorable trek. Mahesh had said, this is a warm up trek for something even bigger and exciting. Looking forward to it 😊.

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Please find some photos below





