

THE ASCENT: CONQUERING CHANDAGIRI ON TWO WHEELS

A CALL FOR HILLS

DATE: OCTOBER,2013

In the clear, golden days of October 2013, well before the sleek cable cars began ferrying visitors to its summit, Chandagiri Hill stood as a rugged challenge, a destination for those willing to earn the view. The festive spirit of Dashain hung lightly in the Kathmandu air, and with a free day ahead, my father, my uncle, and I decided to answer the hill's call. Our steed? My uncle's trusted motorcycle. Our mission? To conquer the dirt track and discover what lay atop this prominent peak southwest of the valley.

The Brotherhood of the Bike

There's a unique camaraderie that forms on a bike journey. My uncle, an experienced rider, took the helm. My father, sitting in the middle, became the navigator and commentator. I, the youngest, took my place at the rear, holding on tightly, my eyes wide open to absorb everything. The thrum of the engine beneath us was a song of anticipation as we left the paved roads of Thankot behind, the urban sprawl giving way to the outskirts and then, finally, to the foot of the hill.

The Path Less Traveled: A Test of Grit and Grace

This was no smooth, blacktopped road. This was the old way—a raw, uneven track of red dirt and loose gravel, carved into the hillside by time, weather, and occasional jeeps. The journey immediately became an adventure in itself. The bike skidded slightly on loose stones, and my uncle expertly maneuvered around deeper ruts and potholes. We ascended in a series of switchbacks, each turn revealing a more breathtaking vista of the Kathmandu Valley slowly unfolding beneath us.

We passed through quiet clusters of oak and rhododendron trees, their leaves dappling the path in shadow and light. The air, thick with dust from our passage, grew noticeably cooler and fresher the higher we climbed. There were no crowds, no noise—just the sound of the engine, the wind in our ears, and the occasional call of a bird. We stopped at a wide bend, cutting the engine to truly appreciate the profound silence, broken only by our own breathing. The entire valley lay before us like a detailed map, hazy in the afternoon sun.

The Summit: A Reward Earned

After what felt like an exhilarating eternity of climbing, we reached the summit. The sense of accomplishment was immediate and palpable. We had made it, not by a modern marvel of engineering, but by sheer grit and a determined machine.

And the reward was beyond words. The 360-degree panoramic view was absolutely staggering. To the north, the entire Kathmandu Valley stretched out, a basin of civilization. On a crystal-clear day like ours, the majestic, snow-capped Himalayas formed a jaw-dropping white barrier on the horizon—a sight so sublime it felt almost spiritual. The iconic Chandragiri Hill, still undeveloped, was a vast, open field of grass with a small, simple temple dedicated to Lord Bhaleshwor Mahadev. It was quiet, sacred, and felt untouched by time. We offered our prayers, sat on the grass, and simply soaked it all in, sharing a simple packet of biscuits and warm tea from a thermos. It felt like we had the entire mountain to ourselves.

Epilogue: A Memory Etched in Time

The ride down was just as thrilling, requiring careful braking and balance. We returned home covered in a

fine layer of dust, our bodies tired from the journey, but our spirits utterly uplifted.

That trip to Chandagiri in October 2013 remains one of my most cherished travel memories. It captures a specific moment in time—before the convenience of the cable car, when the journey was an integral, challenging part of the experience. It was a day of simple pleasures: the bond between father, son, and uncle, the thrill of the ride, the triumph of the climb, and the humbling grandeur of a view we felt we had truly earned. It was raw, authentic, and perfect.



Figure: At

chandagiri Kathmandu valley view behind us.





Figure: Before the existence of cable car a deity worshiped by the locals.



Figure: Good Boy Me.