

UP THE MOUNTAIN

Camping, contemplation, and celebration in Lonavla

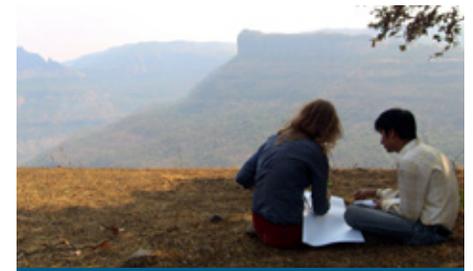


LONAVLA IS A FEW HOURS OUTSIDE OF MUMBAI. The green hills and silent, stunning valleys make it feel like another planet. Last weekend, we took 30 Youth Venturers - about half from this year's batch and half alumni - into the Lonavla countryside for an intensive two-day camping retreat. It was a memorable, moving experience. Away from all distraction, Venturers connected to each other in new and powerful ways, celebrating what they have achieved so far and creating the foundation for what comes next.

UP THE HILL, DOWN THE WALL This experience was as physically intense as it was emotional. The trek to the campsite took five hours up a long and winding path. We did it at night, arriving at our tents by about 1:00 AM. The next day, Venturers were leading each other blindfolded around obstacles on a forest ropes course. They spent the last morning rappelling down an ancient fort wall. **These activities challenged the group to overcome fear, to step outside of their comfort zones, and to trust each other** - all while having fun.



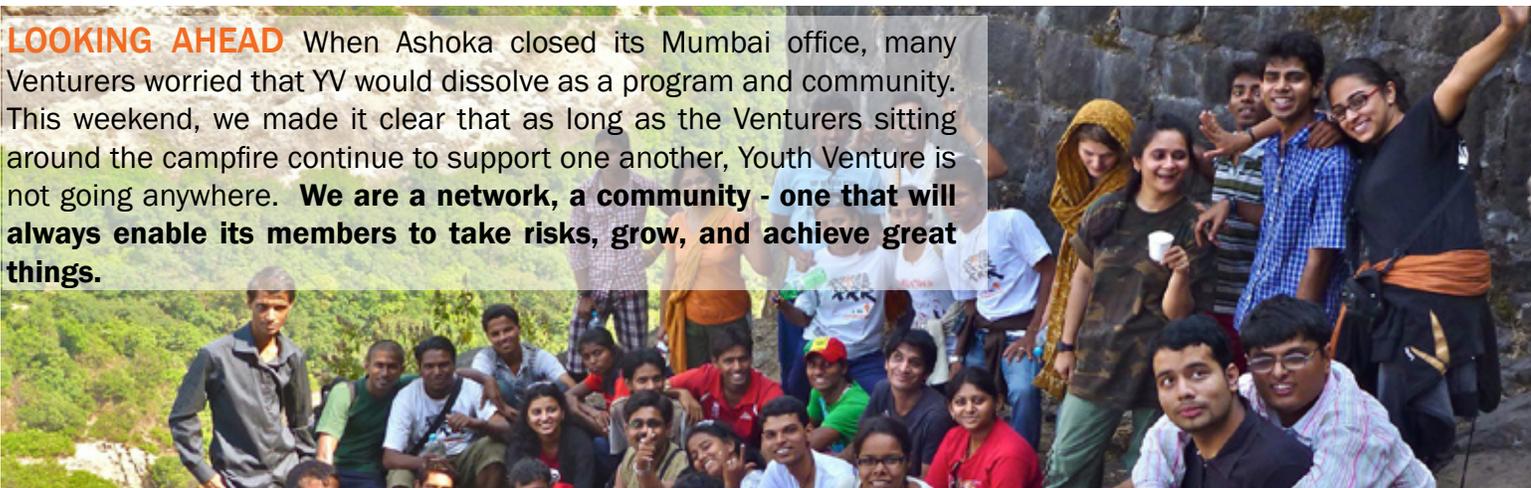
REFLECTION With guidance from expert facilitator and YV consultant Altaf Sheikh, Venturers looked back on their journeys thus far. They reflected on the challenges, accomplishments, and people that have shaped their path and perspectives. **Sharing these insights with other Venturers helped strengthen the sense of community.** "I'm lucky to be part of such an amazing group of passionate changemakers," commented a Venturer.



CELEBRATION In the past, we have celebrated the accomplishments of each year's Venture batch in typical Bollywood style - bright lights, celebrity MC's, and red carpet. This year, the bright lights came from a campfire and the MC's were YV alumni. The message **that real support and recognition comes from within this community of changemakers** made this "the best celebration in YV history," in one Venturer's words.



LOOKING AHEAD When Ashoka closed its Mumbai office, many Venturers worried that YV would dissolve as a program and community. This weekend, we made it clear that as long as the Venturers sitting around the campfire continue to support one another, Youth Venture is not going anywhere. **We are a network, a community - one that will always enable its members to take risks, grow, and achieve great things.**





I saw everyone mixing with each other, sharing and caring about each other. This was a platform for me to give back to YV - and I will keep giving back by bringing more dreamers into this YV family. I will make YV proud. That spark came from this camp. **SUMEET GADE, VENTURER**





It was a deep sense of fulfillment that I felt which started in July 2008 and culminated at the Lonavala trek. Sharing these intense and special moments with my friends and deepening the strong bond over the fire enriched my sense of belonging to a community that I am proud to be a part of for life. AZEER ATTARI, VENTURER

