

The Wari La Pass here is 17,427 feet above sea level. One should check with a doctor to see if there is any need for carrying oxygen cylinder. Since I had travelled from Srinagar to Leh by road without any problem I did not think I would need one. As I reached Wari La the weather took an ominous shift. The scariest part of my journey had now begun.

It was a snowstorm, the first of my life. It felt like a nightmare without any way to wake out of. With the visor of my helmet down I could see nothing but 'white' on a road that

had sheer mountains on one side and hundred feet ditches on the other, with frequent turns. If I pulled my visor up, it felt like needles were stinging my face. I stood to think for just a minute and realized my bike's tyres were drowning in the snow accumulating around the bike! The relentless gush of winds sent a chill into my very bones. By this time all my fingers were stiff and I was becoming unable to move them at will. To move forward and get away from the storm seemed like my only option for survival, as opposed

to hypothermia, so moving on was not much of a choice! The snow also made the road slippery and made caution a must. Just as I felt that I had been riding for an eternity and the storm would never end, the chilly winds suddenly vanished and the weather normalized almost instantly. The tyres were losing grip for the slippery roads, and I was scared to brake even once for it felt like the bike would just skid backwards and off the cliff with me on it! Here it was not even a paved road, rather one laid with stones.

By this time I had a solid introduction to the feeling called 'fear of death.' But it took me a while of resistance to get cozy with it. Next was Tangyar, near which I met a group of 3 riders on their way back from the Nubra valley and warned them of the peril that laid in wait for them at the top of Wari La. It was at this point I realized I was off my usual course and was on an alternate route. A few kilometres later I met 4 construction workers who offered me some hot tea.

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