

Tawang Tract

Arunachal Pradesh

October 2003

D E T A I L E D R E P O R T



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(15 Dec 1975 - 11 Nov 2000)

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Expedition dedicated to memory of Lt. Nawang Kapadia

TAWANG TRACT

Arunachal Pradesh Diary- 2003

Brief History of Tawang Tract

A party of three trekkers visited the Arunachal Pradesh, areas near Tawang. The Tawang Tract", in Western Arunachal Pradesh, as it was known during the early days, was a remote unknown area till early part of the last century. It was a thinly populated area with Monpa tribals, and was known as the "Monyul". It had close relations with Tibet and most of its travel, supplies, trade and administration was undertaken by monasteries in Tibet or by the Tibetan Kings. The head Lama of Tawang monastery was always appointed by the Shigatse gumpa in Tibet and the sixth Dalai Lama, who was born in Tawang monastery, travelled from here to Lhasa .

During the British rule in India closer relations were established with this area. Several surveyors and British officers travelled to these areas and taking advantage of this ultimately the British established their administration and rule over the Tawang tract as on the entire North East Frontier Agency, NEFA, (as Arunachal Pradesh was earlier known). In 1913, in a conference at Shimla where Indians, Tibetans and Chinese participated, what is now known as the "McMahon Line" was drawn under Sir Henry McMahon. It demarcated the border between NEFA and Tibet. This line was not recognised by the Chinese though Indians and Tibetans signed it in presence of the Chinese officials. This became the bone of contention and led to conflict later.

NEFA was turned into a full fledged state of India in 1972 with name of Arunachal Pradesh.

1962 Indo-China War

As the Chinese had not recognised the McMahon line, which divided Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet, the seeds of conflict were sown early. The Chinese declared their own claim line which ran almost near the Brahmaputra River in the Assam plains, thus claiming the entire Arunachal Pradesh as their own.

When Chinese occupied Tibet in 1959 the present Dalai Lama fled from Lhasa and entered India from Khinzemane near the Thag La ridge, reaching Shakti and Tawang. He was welcomed by Indian troops and ultimately escorted down to the Indian plains and he settled in India. This created more tension between the two neighbours.

After 1959 the Chinese moved troops right towards the border. Though the Chinese government appealed for settlement of the border dispute in Ladakh and along the McMahon line, their main aim was to retain large parts of Aksai Chin in Ladakh, far in the west, through which they had built a road. The situation became tense by early sixties.

In response to aggressive movements of troops by the Chinese, the Indian Government against the advice of the Indian military, ordered establishment of Forward Posts in what is now known as the "Forward Policy". Many posts in both the sectors were established facing the Chinese in an eyeball confrontation. All the diplomatic efforts to bring a political solution to the border problem failed. Finally on the night of 19 and 20 October 1962, the Chinese attacked the Indian forces both in the eastern and western sectors. In a swift move they overran the Indian posts and with poor political and military leadership, Indian soldiers paid a heavy price and many were killed. The Chinese forces suffering heavy loses came through the Thag la ridge, Bum La and Tulung La passes across the border in large numbers.

One large contingent of the Chinese soldiers came down along the old Bailey trail from Tulung La, Mago, Poshing La to Thembang, thus cutting through to the rear of the Indian garrisons stationed at Dirang Dzong. This resulted in fighting and heavy loses to Indian forces. Later after some time lapse, towards mid November the Chinese forces ran down till

foothills along the Tenga river and almost reached Tejzpur, causing a major panic in the city. Treasuries were evacuated, records and food stocks were burnt and many fled across the

Brahmaputra. The Chinese when they descended from Tulung la to Mago had cajoled, bribed and threatened two local villagers to act as guides to lead them along the Bailey trail. After the war these two villagers were arrested as traitors and tried for treason. Both served life sentences in the Civil Jail in Bomdila.

In the war many Indian soldiers were killed and the loss of morale and prestige was high. Villagers fled from their houses and many poorly clad and equipped Indian soldiers were either killed or taken as prisoners. On 19th November 1962, exactly a month after the invasion began, the Chinese Government declared a unilateral ceasefire and in next few months they withdrew back across the borders. They remain across the McMahon line, which even today they do not recognise. Indian army slowly moved up the valley, at first establishing posts little away from the border and today all the points on the border are guarded by well-equipped and well-trained Indian soldiers. Full details of this war are available in Neville Maxwell's book *India's China War*.

Our visit October 2003

This was area which we had selected to trek and visit. The approach to Tawang starts at Tezpur. Three of us flew to Tezpur on 2nd October 2003, where we met our four Kumauni porters who were waiting for us at the railway station. The day was spent to look around the historic town of Tezpur on the bank of mighty Brahmaputra river.

Next day early morning we started for 343 km long journey to Tawang. The road passes through historic places, army memorials and good mountain views.

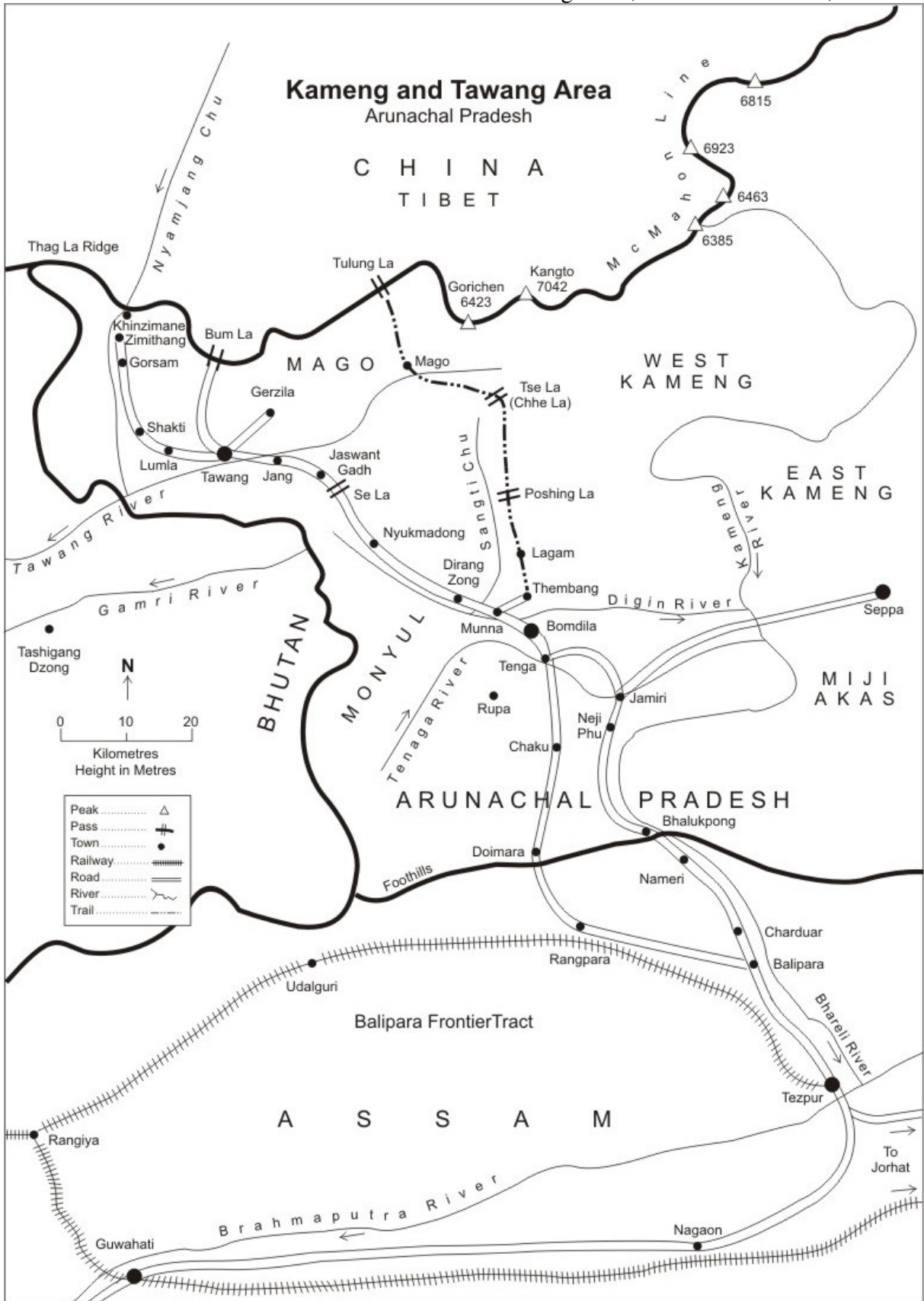
Travel to Tawang

The road initially passed through the plains of Assam going through the famous Balipara Tract and Charduar. We reached the gate or the entrance to Nameri sanctuary and we took a break there to meet a friend. Later we came back to the main road and travelled to Bhalukpong, entrance to Arunachal Pradesh. Our 'Inner Line Permits' permits were checked here and after making entries at a check post amidst this crowded little town, the journey continued via Tipi and Sessa. Incidentally, Tipi nowadays spelled, as 'Tipi' was originally known as T.P. short for 'Transit Point' as the road ended near a bridge on the Kameng River. In the early days luggage was transferred on the other bank, mules were arranged and everyone had to walk from T.P. Now the place has resulted in another settlement.

The road climbed up to Neji Phu and descended to Jamiri. From here a road leads across the Kameng River to Seppa (100 km) the headquarters of the East Kameng division. Both the Kameng divisions are divided by the Kameng River flowing down from north to south, between them. By Late evening we reached the army camp at Tenga, named after Tenga River, which is flowing west to east into the Kameng. We spent a comfortable night at the army camp.

Next day in 25 km we reached Bomdila, the district headquarters of the West Kameng division and nowadays a popular settlement with some tourists visiting it during the season. Crossing the high ridge after the town, we should have obtained the views of Thembang and the Gorichen range, but the fog and clouds prevented it. The road descended to Munna and led to Dirang. From here, a steep climb led to the famous Sela Pass. At Nyukmadong we stopped at the first major army memorial on the route. All along this road there appeared to be a tradition of putting up many memorial stones to the soldiers who had lost life in the 1962 war with China. The tradition continued in the later years with memorials to various army casualties in the construction of the road or even by local villagers. Nyukmadong had witnessed a furious battle between Indian and Chinese forces. "The Battle of Nyukmadong"

in 1962 and a memorial has been put up right next to the road as a tribute to those brave soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice.



Climbing up steeply, the road led us to the Sela Pass (4270 m), a historic and important landmark on this route. Sela Pass is a place where much fight with the invading Chinese soldiers took place. Indian army's losses were heavy and several memorial standing around here tell a grim story. Immediately after Sela there is a small tarn while a narrow unmetalled motorable road leads towards west, to a small but holy gumpa, Banga Jang, near the Bhutan border via Chebrila lake (17 km).

The road descended towards the north to Jaswantgadh, so named after the valiant fighter Subedar Jaswant Singh of 4 Garhwal Rifles. The monument erected near the Nuranang River is a tribute to fight that took place here in 1962, called the "Battle of Nuranang" between the invading Chinese army and the Garhwal Rifles. Holding up the invading enemy for a long time, ultimately Subedar Jaswant Singh paid the supreme sacrifice and was killed by the enemy bullets. A large memorial stands here in his memory.

A few kilometres ahead, you get the first view of Tawang town, far in distance in the northwest and particularly the Tawang monastery, which is highly worshiped in this area. And towards north and northeast, if weather is clear, beautiful peaks including Yangtze, Gorichen and others appear. The road steeply descends to Jang and crossed Tawang River, which was flowing from the areas south of the Gorichen massif and flowing towards west and into Bhutan. A huge waterfall near Jang is worth a visit and like many points in this area, you will be told stories of how a film actor's dummy was thrown down this waterfall during shooting of a Bollywood film. By evening we reached Tawang and stayed at the guesthouse of monastery.

Around Tawang

Tawang is a small place with not many facilities or good hotels. Recently it has become tourist attraction during the only good period to visit Arunachal Pradesh. It gets rather crowded and there are not many things to do except your interest in the 1962 war history, nature and the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh.

We stayed 5 days in Tawang and had a thorough look at all the places nearby. The first of those was paying our respects to the army memorial in the centre of Tawang town. It is beautifully constructed in the style of a Buddhist Chorten and with names of every soldier who laid down his life in the fight in 1962 written down there. It recalls the tragic event when in a short but brutal war, Chinese ran through from the borders on the 20th October to capture Tawang, almost within 24 hours. In this battle many soldiers were killed and Chinese occupied Tawang. They stayed here for almost six months, but luckily caused no harm to the local villagers or did not desecrate the Tawang monastery.

Tawang Monastery is dominating the entire Landscape and two other monasteries, which are reserved for nuns (*ani*), called the Ani Gumpa, surround it. Tawang monastery has a huge statue of Buddha and a small museum. It was administered by Tibetans even till early last century and the head lama of the Tawang Gumpa was generally appointed by the Shigatse monastery.

We visited Bum La (4501 m) by road. It is on the McMahan line overlooking the Tibetan areas. En route we passed a tall rocky point, called "Joginder Hill". From top of this hill, Subedar Joginder Singh held back the Chinese forces for several hours before he was killed. He was the only person to have been awarded Param Vir Chakra, the highest honour of the 1962 war for his fight here.

Little south of Bum La towards the east stands the lovely grounds of Gerzila, where we camped for one night. The entire McMahan line ridge, forming the northern border of Arunachal Pradesh, was seen from a small point named as "Mahipat Top". It offered some

wonderful views of the Tawang River valley leading from Jang to Mago (called Nyuri and Dyuri in old days) and to Gorichen base camp, the road leading from Jang to Sela Pass and

several peaks rising on the McMahon line till Tulung La and leading beyond towards Gorichen. The forests and the lakes around Gerzila were exquisite and any visitor to Tawang interested in mountains and nature must visit the place.

We drove to Zimithang going towards the area on extreme west of the Tawang district passing Lumla and Gorsam Chorten, a historic Chorten that is constructed in similar style as the Bodhnath Chorten near Kathmandu. Several pilgrims make it a point to visit this Chorten and in early days, many Tibetans used to come across the border to pay respects here.

Little ahead of Zimithang lies Hathung La (Pass) and the Thag la ridge which was the scene of conflict between the Chinese and Indian forces. The dispute about this ridge and the exact alignment of the McMahon line created the conflict between the Chinese and the Indian forces. Nyamjang Chu (river) flows from Tibet at foot of this ridge into the Tawang River to flow towards Bhutan. A small grazing ground named Khinzemane on this river at foot of the Thag la ridge became a historic location. Dalai Lama, on his flight from the Chinese forces in 1959, crossed over into India from here and later because of establishment of army posts near this river that the Chinese attacked Indian forces on the night of 19th October 1962. Following from Khinzemane, Zimithang and to Shakti village the Chinese ran over the Indian army Brigade at Tawang and then proceeded south.

Some of the large monasteries of historical importance are located around Tawang apart from the main monastery. The Taktsang Gompa (locally known as "T Gompa") is one such place where Guru Padmasambhava had lived here during the 8th Century. Another nickname "P.T. Tso" for Pangang Tang Tso, is locally called as the "Madhuri Lake" as one of the Indian Bollywood actress danced here during a Bollywood film shooting – must be a cold affair!

Trek along the Bailey Trail

On 13th October with all preparations for our trek completed we drove back to Dirang across the Sela Pass. Dirang is a pretty town situated on the Digin River near the border with Bhutan. 2 km south of the town lies the old settlement of Dirang Dzong ("Dirang Fort"). Still some remains of the old fort and its dilapidated wall still stand (unfortunately covered by tinned sheets). The Chinese forces while occupying Dirang had stayed here and had made this 'dzong' as their headquarters. The villagers talk of several gatherings at this dzong and literally all villagers from surrounding areas were called to be present here.

From Dirang, Munna camp (an old army road builder's camp) is 10 km to the south on the main highway and from here a road turns eastwards to climb up to the old village of Thembang (2250 m). We drove to Thembang and stayed at the Inspection Bungalow. We contacted "Gram Bara", - "GB" for short, a "villager elder". As it is a tradition in Arunachal Pradesh every village has a GB who not necessarily be old or elderly person but certainly who is someone influential and rich. Generally GB would arrange porters, mules, food, stay and look after all your facilities and requirements on payment. Near our inspection bungalow stood very poor village of Thembang overlooked by a small gompa. Gompas are much worshipped here as this a traditionally a Buddhist society of Monpas, more like Tibetans in language and ceremonies. Two kilometres before Thembang was the holy Sangjiling Gompa standing about 100 m above the road. There is a deep cave approached through a long tunnel and which leads to a mediation room for a lama.

Thembang

Thembang is an ancient village encompassing a large territory. As the legend has it, the people of Thembang approached the then Tibetan king at Lhasa, named Kibu Kali Ongbu and requested him to establish his rule till here. The king sent his minister and established the rights to protect the village and collect revenues in return. The fort surrounding the

Thembang village was of that Tibetan period. Today, people of Thembang have traditional rights over large areas right till Mago near the Tibetan frontier. The next village of importance would be Mago in the north, apart from the Tawang Monastery.

Now Thembang is a dilapidated and a poor village. All the rich here has moved out to Dirang. There are two gates surrounding the village, north and south each and the north gate is still very much intact. During the time of Tibetan Kings, this was a prosperous village and headquarters for the entire area. A huge wall surrounded the village and when these giant gates were closed the village turned into a fortress. A loud shout was given as a warning every evening before the gates were closed Thembang had some very old houses and we were shown some of them. No one of course remembered the visits of Englishmen Lt. Col. F. M. Bailey and Capt. H. T. Morshead here way back in 1913. But they pointed out that all the visitors during the British Raj always stayed in these houses. Hence possibly during its visits all British Officers including H. W. Tilman in 1938 had stayed in Thembang. People did not have or at least did not want to talk of the 1962 war and its memories. We could talk to a 90-year-old deaf and a 70 year old blind person through a young boy acting as a interpreter ! When the Chinese approached the village most of the population had ran away towards Nofraq in the eastern side of Arunachal,. Entire village was evacuated and just at the outskirts, as the war records show, a major fight took place between the Chinese who had came down from Tibet and a company of the Indian army (4 Guards). Most of the Indian soldiers were killed and the Chinese loses were also heavy. Thembang like all other places remained under Chinese control for sometime.

History of the Trail

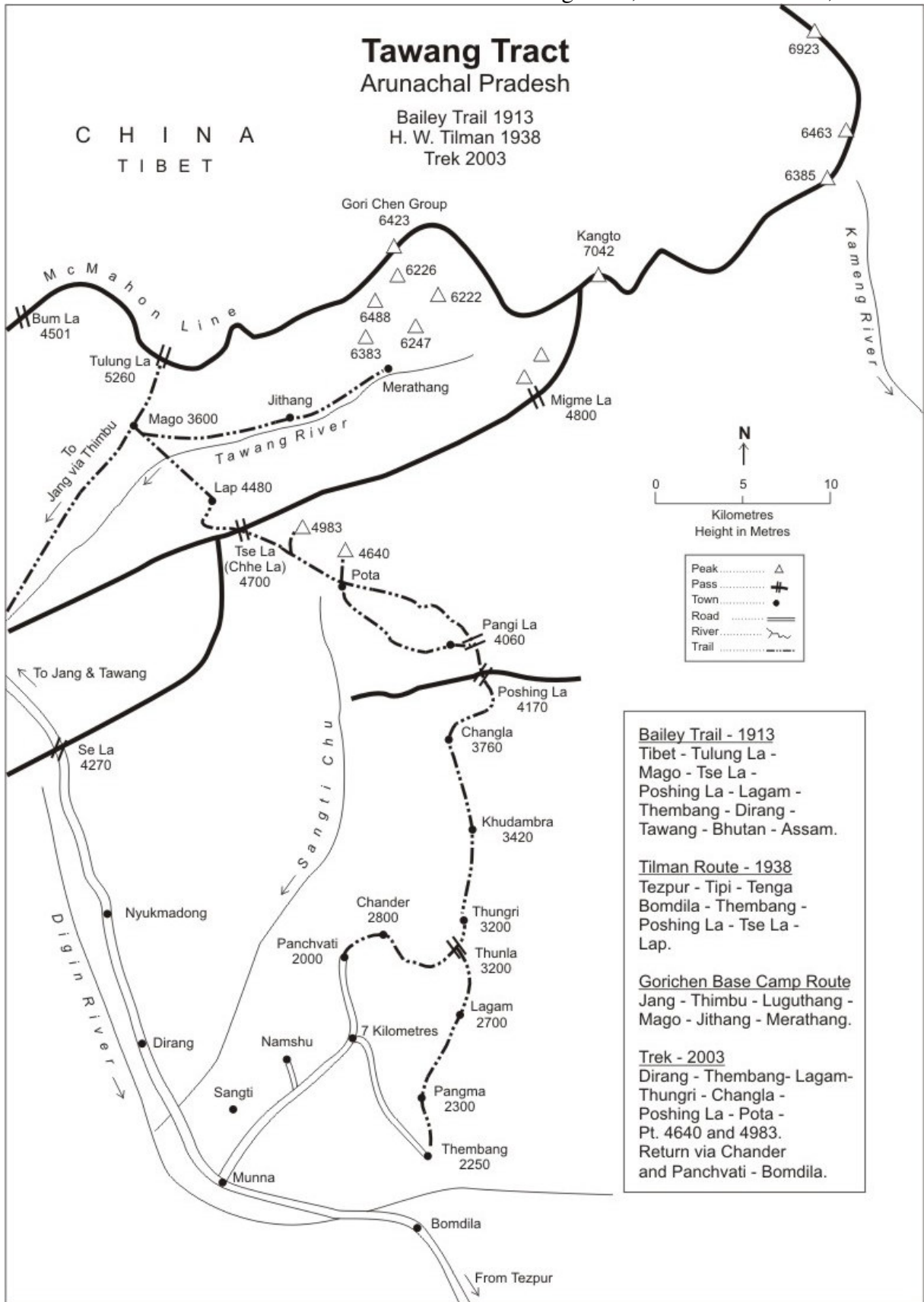
The trail we were about to trek from south to north was the famous 'Bailey Trail'. Lt. Col. F. M. Bailey and Capt. H. T. Morshead were British Officers who had entered Tibet from the easternmost Arunachal Pradesh, then known as NEFA (North East Frontier Agency) and traversed along the Brahmaputra to Chayul and Tsona Dzong. They entered back into the Indian territories from Tulung La. They were surveying the entire area which was used by Sir Henry McMahon, one of the defence secretaries in Government of India, to draw his famous "McMahon Line". From Tulung La, Bailey and Morshead descended to Mago village and crossing Tse la (spelled as such on maps but pronounced as Chhe La and not to be confused with Sela which is now motorable) came to Pota, crossed Poshing La down to Thembang. From here they had gone back via Dirang to Tawang and reached the plains through Bhutan. Their route is known as the "Bailey Trail".

Mountaineer H. W. Tilman in 1938 had trekked from Tipi via Bomdila to Thembang and followed the Bailey trail towards the north, looking for views of Gorichen and particularly of Kangto peak. . We were now poised to trek along this Bailey Trail trying to gather views of Gorichen and Kangto (locally known as Sher Kangri, "Eastern, *Sher Mountain kangri*) which as per the map was only little away towards east (11 degrees) from the well known Gorichen massif.

Our trek began on the 15th October. On the first day we walked to Pangma village as the arrangements for mules had to be made there. That night the GB of Pangma, who was to accompany us brought a muleteer Lopsang (a man with great sense of humour). The evening falls here early, we being in the eastern part of India and following the Indian standard time. By 5 o'clock it was dark and around 7.30 p.m. everyone goes to bed. But that evening in Pangma suddenly a group of young ladies appeared in their lovely dresses and the GB informed us that they will dance for us. As we sat along with fire and torchlight they performed lovely dances sang songs joined by GB and our muleteer Lopsang. We also gave a fitting reply by asking our Kumauni porters to sing a song ! It was a lovely evening to begin a trek.

The climb to Lagam, a holy monastery, began by passing through village of Semnak and then traversing through some very thick forest. After some descent, the trail climbed up steeply for almost 6 hours till a small clearing on the ridge was reached. Just about 2 houses and a small school building apart from the holy gumpa constituted the village.

The forest now on, was some of the finest rain forests one could trek through. In fact the forest was so thick that all routes on the trek were always on the ridge never descending to the valley. As the ridge went up and down the trails also followed its contours. This was quite different than in the other parts of the Himalaya like Garhwal or Ladakh where villages



are at sheltered places in the valleys and the trails generally followed the valleys. The exquisite forests and its varieties would require almost a separate chapter in any visitor's logbook to Arunachal.

F. Kingdon Ward, the famous botanist, who was responsible for bringing the forest wealth of the east to the knowledge of everyone, trekked extensively through here and he had made extensive surveys near Tawang and down towards Sela Pass after trekking in Tibet. His books and writings on nature are still a major reference on Tawang Tract in particular. (see Himalayan Journal Volume V and many other articles)

The trail climbed steeply again to a disused and abandoned army road which led us to Thunla, and to Thungri a vast open ground where on our return we obtained some magnificent views. All these places were camping grounds for shepherds, locally called as "Chaurikong" ('chauri' is female yak and 'kong' their places to stay). The weather had settled down to a pattern. Every morning light came at around 4.30 or 5.00 o'clock and we would get some good views up to 6 or 7 a.m., valleys being covered in thick cloud. With the rising sun, the clouds will rise and cover the entire surroundings and it would remain so for rest of the day. The only views you would get, if you are lucky, is in the early mornings. In fact Tilman, who was looking for Kangto and Gorichen, could not get a single view of these mountains during his travels in 1938.

We continued on the trail along the ridge following a broad path. Even though it had not rained heavily for last few days, the roads were slushy and the broad trails were made always through very thick forests not allowing any views of the surrounding. But the forest itself was beautiful and a great reward and due to the autumn and height we were spared the experience of leech clinging on to us. Along with malaria (for which we were taking tablets), dealing with leech is another problem. All villagers wore high ankle rubber boots and most of yaks or goats were bleeding due to leech-bites.

We stayed at Khudumbra (3420 m) and finally climbed to Changla situated again on a broad plain on a ridge. Changla was an open grazing ground. It was surrounded literally by hundreds of army bunkers, a grim reminder from the Indo-China war. We were camping here on 19th October 2003, exactly 41 years to the date when Chinese had attacked the Indian forces in 1962. It was intensely cold and looking at those bunkers where Indian army soldiers had stayed with simple pullovers, small amount of ammunition and long march till Tipi behind them, one could sympathise with these brave defenders. Army had stayed in these bunkers for several years after the war braving the isolation and the cold. GB and Lopsang had come here several times during that period and had many tales to tell us. It was a great effort and sacrifice worth a salute.

From Changla the trail steeply climbed to Poshing La at 4170 m. The pass was surrounded by many army bunkers. Poshing La is a major pass en route and next morning it offered us a most clear view of mountains: from Gorichen, Kangto and unnamed peaks east of Kangto and possibly till Nyegi Kangsang. The forest and mountains with the rising sun made for a very romantic point except it was too cold and of course the view is yours only till 8 o'clock.

We descended via Pang La into the valley of the Sangti River. En route we passed few shepherds who were withdrawing from their base at Pota. Descending through the forest and going up the valley on the right of the Sangti River, we established ourselves at Pota, a

lovely camping ground in late autumn colours. Camp was in between two nalas, one was flowing from Chhe La pass towards our northwest and Dhongchang Tso (lake) towards our northeast. This was going to be our camp for next few days.

On 22nd October two of us (Limdi and Harish) climbed broad slopes and made an easy walk to top of the ridge at 4640 m. Several old survey canes were seen around and as per the book No Passport to Tibet by F. M. Bailey many cairns were erected by H. T. Morshead during his survey. From this point we had some wonderful views and understood the

topography of the entire area. Next day in an energetic push, Huzefa with Puran Singh, reached point 4983 m which was in line with the Chhe La and Migme Passes. He could obtain some closer views of the glaciers and the Gorichen massif. From Chhe La the trail descends to Lap and ahead to Mago.

The traditional trail for Gorichen base camp runs from Jang to Mago and to Chokersham. But we had decided against it, as it followed the valley all along and would have certainly not allowed us the views, which we had already enjoyed. Now it was late October and the first snows arrived at Pota overnight. With Poshing La, which we had to re-cross, behind us, we quickly had to decide to return as we were warned by GB that with too much snow the horses would not be able to go back. Hence in next two days we crossed Poshing La to Changla and reached Thungri.

From Thungri our return route was different. We followed the abandoned but broad and gentle army road in a long march of 18 km to village of Chander at 2800 m. It was a small and primitive village but with the best views that the entire trail had to offer. The morning of 28th October was absolutely clear and the villagers went about their normal work, shepherds were walking towards the forest and goats were spread over the ground. We could photograph all the mountains that we wanted to see. With the distance across the valley, peak of Kangto was towering over every other peak and as per the recent surveys and map, at 7042 m Kangto is the only peak above 7000 m in Arunachal Pradesh and the highest point on the McMahon Line. It looked tempting and now the route of approach was known.

We descended via shortcut to a beautiful Panchvati village where we had arranged for transport, which arrived promptly by late afternoon, driving us to Munna camp and on the main route to Bomdila. We were back to civilisation on our way to Tezpur, Guwahati and Shillong.

Mundama

One of the advantages of trekking in such a wet and rainy area in early winter or late autumn is the phenomena of *Mundama*, which is the name in Monpa language for the famed "Brocken Spectre".¹ The Bailey trail generally followed the route from north to south, along the high ridges with valleys dropping steeply on two sides. Anyone standing, as we were on this ridge, was sharply exposed to the sun as it came over the horizon in the far east. Our shadows falling on the damp mist clouds towards the west many times created a rainbow with our shapes and movements reflected in the centre of it. This was the Brocken Spectre at the best. We saw this from Thungri and Chander villages. Of course because of the fickleness of weather in Arunachal Pradesh, one has to visit the valleys in autumn and also be very lucky

(as villagers told us) to see *Mundama* or the Brocken Spectre. It is a rare sight anywhere in the world and one has to travel long and be well placed at right time to view this. And here Arunachal valleys are blessed with these views during autumn months.

¹ *Brocken, also called Blocksberg, highest point 1142 m (3747 feet) of the Harz Mountains in the Alps, lying 13 km (8 miles) west-southwest of Wernigerode, Germany. A huge, granite-strewn dome, the peak commands magnificent views in all directions, and a mountain railway (12 miles [19 km] long) reaches the summit. When the sun is low, shadows cast from the peak become magnified, and seemingly gigantic silhouettes are cast on the upper surfaces of low-lying clouds or fog below the mountain. This effect is known as the Brocken bow, or the Brocken Spectre, and is given a mystical significance in the mountain's folklore. Long after the introduction of Christianity, traditional rites continued to be enacted there annually on Walpurgis Night, or Witches' Sabbath (April 30). The peak is represented in a famous scene in J.W. von Goethe's drama Faust.*

On one of the last days of the trek, we got up early in the village of Chander. As we walked on the edges, a beautiful sunrise from the east greeted us. And very soon, our images were reflected in centre of a lovely rainbow on the west. Soon several rainbows were created one

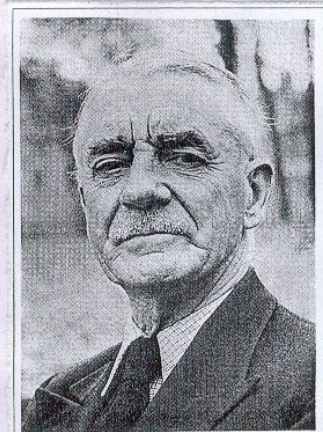
after the other and we waived our hands, which were clearly seen, making different shapes imagining seeing the early explorers, Bailey, Tilman and others. I had seen such a phenomenon of the Spectre of the Brocken, only once before in my life. It was on a hill near Mumbai that this phenomenon is known to occur that also if you are extremely lucky, as just within one week before the approaching monsoon when the position of sun and clouds is right this could happen. I stood at the edge of a fort on the Western Ghats with my son, Lt. Nawang Kapadia and as we saw our imprints on the clouds we waved out to it. Nawang ultimately joined the army as a Gorkha Officer and paid the supreme sacrifice in line of duty. As I looked at myself in the *Mundama*, at Chander I waived my hands and gave a salute to those great soldiers of the 1962 who had defended this area for us to enjoy today and to my son Nawang. It was a fitting ending to a great visit to these unknown valleys.



Capt. H. T. Morshead



Lt.-Col. F. M. Bailey



F. Kingdon Ward
Frank Kingdon Ward. A photograph taken towards the end of his life.



H. W. (Bill) Tilman

NOTES

Explorers

Nain Singh

Though Monpas and Tibetans travelled across passes for earliest years the first known detailed account of travel and its mountains was brought by Pandit Nain Singh. He was working incognito for Survey of India and had traveled from Leh to Lhasa in 1874 –75. He was surveying the area and taking notes for the British. His intention was to proceed to Peking, but fearing detection he had to change plans and he turned south. Crossing Brahmaputra at Chetang in Tibet he crossed over to Tawang Tract via the Karkang Pass and reached Tawang on 24th December 1875. Local traders wanted to monopolise trade with Tibet and generally did not allow people arriving from across the border to Assam plains. Nain Singh was forced to stay here till 17th February 1876. During his stay he continued his survey work around the Tawang Tract. Depositing all his goods in Tawang he was allowed to proceed and reached Udalguri in the British territory of Assam on 1st March 1876, completing an exploration of 1405 miles (2250 km) between Leh-Lhasa-Tawang and Assam.

For his explorations of 1867 and 1874 -1875 Pandit Nain Singh was awarded the 'Patron's Gold (Royal) Medal' by the Royal Geographical Society, London, the first Indian to receive this honour which no other Indian or Asian received it for next 125 years.

Bailey and Morshead

Lt Col. F.M. Bailey and Capt. H. T. Morshead, two British officers were deputed by the Government to survey the Tibet-NEFA border from the north. The route from the south was bounded by thick forest and hostile tribes and hence was difficult to approach. These officers crossed the Yongyapp Pass east of the Tsangpo gorge and traveled from village to village and some very forbidding country north of Brahmaputra to Chayul to Tsona Dzong. From here they turned south to cross the Tulung La (Pass) into what is now the Indian territory. They came down via Mago, Lap, Pota, Poshing La to Thembang. Descending to Dirang Dzong they again turned north across Sela to Tawang. Finally they crossed westwards into Bhutan to reach the Indian plains. During this long great journey (see books *No Passport to Tibet* and *China-Tibet-Assam* by F. M. Bailey), they did detailed survey of the terrain and H. T. Morshead, who was a qualified surveyor, climbed several points, erected cairns and took large number of readings. This became the basis for Sir Henry McMahon to draw his famous "McMahon Line", demarcating the borders between the British India and Tibet.

F. Kingdon-ward

Around same time F. Kingdom Ward, a noted British botanist and naturalist, also traversed areas north of Arunachal Pradesh into Tibet. He finally entered the Indian territories from the Bum La (Pass) completely surveying the forest wealth of the areas near Tawang, Tenga and right down till the foothills. His was a pioneering work in this field.

H. W. Tilman

The first leading mountaineer to arrive in the Arunachal Pradesh was H. W. Tilman in 1938. He wanted to remain, what he called, "nearer to civilisation", for he wanted to be around if called by the British army to serve in the World War II. Accompanied by four Sherpas, Tilman walked from Tipi to Bomdila through thick forest and humid weather of April 1938. Quite possibly it was in these forest that the Sherpas and he himself had the germs of malaria contracted. He crossed Bomdila and reaching Thembang followed the Bailey trail. From Poshing La, he could not get much views. He went ahead via Pota and Tsela to Lap where he made a small base camp. As he went around this place suddenly one of his Sherpa died of the malarial fever. Tilman himself suffered severely from regular bouts of malarial fever. Luckily, he and the remaining Sherpas forced themselves back across Poshing la which was at that time snow-bound. From Thembang they were carried on horses and helped by the British Government to reach civilisation. They barely survived.

Later Years

After the Indo-China war in 1962 the entire area remained out of bounds for mountaineers or any visitors for a long time.. Thus the first known peak and expedition to this area was to Gorichen in 1966 led by the Commandant T. Haralu. This team climbed Gorichen II at 6488 m. Since then Gorichen II and Gorichen East has been attempted and climbed by several teams.

Some intelligence officers and army and security personnel undertook treks on several trails along the border and their articles and notes are useful for future trekkers.

Verrier Elwin

Verrier Elwin was the most well-known and devoted anthropologist who worked in tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. His studies of people, their culture and their village life is legendary. He wrote several books and particularly his book *A Philosophy for NEFA*, brought this unknown areas and tribes into limelight. Verrier Elwin lived in and traveled several times to the areas of Arunachal Pradesh. He lived near Shillong with his family and passed away in 1964.

The Story of Tezpur

About 1km outside Tezpur stands a hill which overlooks the vast expanse of the Brahmaputra River. It is known as Agnigadh or the "Fort of Fire", and is associated with a legend.

Usha, was daughter of Banasur, a demon. The father much protective and she was kept on top of this hill which was surrounded by fire, *agni*. The fire prevented any intrusion on the hill to protect her chastity and education. When Usha matured and came of age she dreamt of love with a handsome prince. She described her dream to her friend Chitrlekha, a great artist, who drew the face of the person she had dreamt about. This was the face of Aniruddha, grandson of Lord Krishna. The artist Chitrlekha, managed to get Aniruddha to this hill and Usha met him married secretly. Her father, Banasur, came to know of this fact soon. Though Banasur was a demon, he was worshipper of Lord Shiva, and with his help he declared war with forces of Lord Krishna. Thus the two great Lords, Krishna and Shiva fought for the respective parties, in this legendary battle of "Hara-Hari". During this battle so many people were killed that the blood flew down to the city and even made Brahmaputra red. Once peace was arrived at both parties decided to establish the city of Tezpur, literally 'Tez' i.e. blood and 'pur' meaning city; "city of blood".

How prophetic this was possibly could be judged by events centuries later. In the India-China war of 1962, the invading Chinese troops reached almost near Tezpur causing a major panic. In a broader sense blood of many Indian soldiers who laid down their life in the war at the Tawang Tract ran down to this city of blood.

Weather in Arunachal Mountains

The mountain range of Arunachal receives cold winds from Tibet and humid warm climate from the Bay of Bengal. It has some of the highest rain in the Himalaya and with thick forest the weather is wet and foggy. It rains heavily from April till mid September, ruling out any trek and climbing. From then to early November is the only period when high altitude trek would be enjoyable, with possibilities of good views in the mornings. From mid-November till March areas are snow bound, cold and foggy.

Appendices**Road Distance****1. Tezpur to Tawang**

Place	Distance in Km
Tezpur	0
Balipara	24
Charduar	5
Nameri Gate	9
Bhalukpong	22
Tipi	5
Sessa	24
Neji Phu	20
Tenga	27
Tenga village ³	
Bomdila	22
Munna	30
Dirang	12
Sapper	10
Nyukmadong	6
Senge	22
Baisakhi	6
Sela Pass	17
Jaswantgadh	21
Jang	18
Lhou	19
Tawang	21
Total	343

2. Tawang to Bumla

Tawang	0
Chuje	4
Y-Junction	23
Klemta	5
Bumla Top	10

Total 42**3. Tawang – Neyla**

Tawang	0
Bomdir	10
Lumla	
(Zero Point)	31
Lumla village (off Road) (4)	
Shakti	26
Gorsam	20
Zimithang	4
Lumpho	12
Neyla	9
Total	11

TREK ROUTE

DATE	PLACE	HT	km	Pt.4640	(6)
2003 Oct.					
14	THEMBANG	2250		POTA	4140
15	PANGMA	2180	6	Pt.4983	
16	LAGAM	2700	10	PANGI LA	4060 10
17	THUNGRI	3200	6	CHHANG LA	3760 7
18	KHUDUMBRA	3420	9	THUNGRI	3200 13
19	CHHANGLA	3760	4	CHANDER	2800 18
20	PANGI LA	4060	7	PANCHVATI	2000 4
21	LOWER POTA	4000	8	Total	104 km
22	POTA	4140	2		

PASSES CROSSED- POINTS REACHED

Thun La	3200m	twice
Poshing La	4170m	twice
Pangi La	4060m	twice
Bomdi La		twice
	(Road)	
Tse La	4250m	twice
	(Road)	
Bum La	4501m	Reached
	(Road)	
Gerzila	3850m	twice
	(Road)	

Points reached:
Pt 4640 (Dr Limdi and Kapadia)
Pt 4983 (Huzefa and Puran Singh)

Permits and Rules for entry

The entire areas of Arunachal Pradesh remain under the “inner line”, the imaginary line drawn on the map, which requires permission for visitors to cross. At present, the rules are as under:

1. Any Indian national, on producing minimum proof, is granted 7-day permission to visit Arunachal Pradesh into open area. This permit can be extended for every 7 days as desired. Naturally for a long trek or an expedition a special permit has to be obtained from Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh. This is easily given and on payment of small fee.
2. For foreigners, a group of minimum four foreigners can visit Arunachal Pradesh for travel or trek. The current fees are \$50 for a period of 10-days, which can be renewed for another 10-days for a trek. Generally, it is expected that the foreigner in a group of four would be going through some travel agent registered in Arunachal Pradesh. There are no restrictions on photography (except army areas) and they are allowed to visit open areas in the state.

Army Memorials

- a. The largest army memorial to the Indian soldiers for the 1962 war is at Tawang and it must be visited by anyone going to the area.
- b. Nyukmadong army memorial at Nyukmadong between Dirang and Sela Pass.
- c. Jaswant Gadh for the battle of Nuranang towards north of Sela pass and little before Jang.
- d. Joginder top, north of Tawang, near Bum la (Pass).

Bibliography

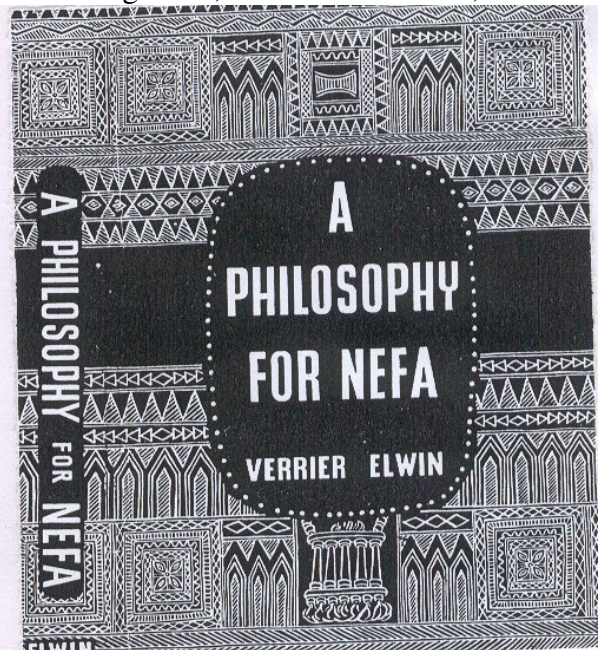
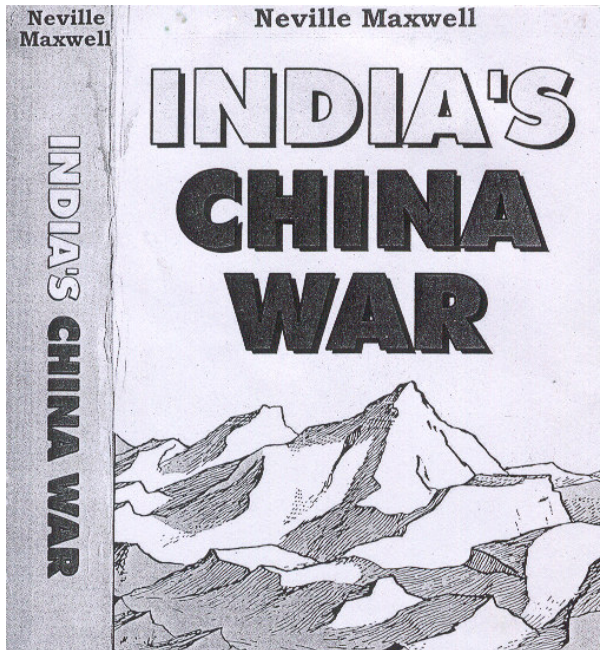
Though there are several books available on tribes, culture, people and villages of Arunachal Pradesh, not much literature is available regarding its mountains, treks, trails and other aspects in which a trekker or a mountaineer would be interested in. The following titles should be useful reference.

General Books

1. Bhattacharji, Romesh, *Land of Early Dawn, North East of India*.
2. Rustomji, Nari, *Impelled Frontiers*.
3. Bhattacharjee, T. K., *The Frontier Trail*.
4. Sarkar, Niranjana, *Tawang Monastery*.
5. Elwin, Verrier, *A Philosophy for NEFA*.
6. Chakravarty, L. N., *Early History of Arunachal*
7. Bareh, H. M., *Encyclopedia of the North East : Arunachal Pradesh*

Books on the 1962 War

1. Maxwell, Neville, *India's China War*, (one of the most recommended books on the area).
2. Dalvi, J. P. (Brig.), *The Himalayan Blunder*.
3. See website for study of the war: <http://www.rediff.com/news/indochin.htm> and <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1984/CJB.htm>



For Trek, Travel and Mountaineering

1. Bailey, F. M. (Lt. Col.), No Passport to Tibet
2. Bailey, F. M. (Lt. Col.), China-Tibet-Assam
3. Coax, Kenneth, Tsangpo Gorges
4. Tilman, H. W., Where Men and Mountains Meet

Other References

1. Gazetteers of various districts of Arunachal Pradesh are available as under :
 - a. Subansiri District.
 - b. Tirap District
 - c. Lohit District
 - d. East and West Kameng and Tawang District
 - e. Dihang District

Members

1. Harish Kapadia (58 years). Mountaineer, explorer and author with 42 years of Himalayan experience. Hon. Editor of Himalayan Journal for 25 years, Hon. Member of the Alpine Club, London. Awarded 'Patron's Gold (Royal) Medal' by the Royal Geographical Society in 2003, first Indian to receive it after Pandit Nain Singh in 1877.
2. Dr Kamal Limdi (42 years) Orthopaedic surgeon. Trekked to several areas in the Himalaya.
3. Huzefa Electricwala (28 years) Business. Extensive climbing and trekking experience with expeditions to the East Karakoram, Siachen Glacier, Garhwal and many other places.

Period:

From 1st to 30th October 2003.

Sponsored by THE MOUNTAINEERS BOMBAY.

Lieutenant Nawang Kapadia

15 December 1975 – 11 November 2000

Lt Nawang Kapadia, who was commissioned in the Fourth Battalion the Third Gorkha Rifles, died while gallantly fighting Pakistan based in Kupwara district of Srinagar on 11th Nov 2000.

The happiest day in twenty four year old Mumbai-born Nawang's life was when he joined the Officers' Training Academy at Chennai. His parents, well-known mountaineers Harish and Geeta, encouraged him to the fullest in spite of the cynical views of others. It was a proud moment indeed at the Passing Out Parade on 2nd of September 2000 when his family and friends saw him receiving his Lieutenant stars on commissioning to the prestigious Fourth Battalion The Third Gorkha Rifles. After a brief visit home, Nawang proceeded to the Regimental Centre at Varanasi from where he joined his Battalion on 29th Oct 2000. The Battalion was, during this period, continuously involved in operations against foreign terrorists who had infiltrated and were in the process of establishing their bases in the Kupwara area of Jammu and Kashmir. Nawang was immediately involved in these operations where his qualities of heart and mind as well as his abundant courage were a beacon to the troops under his command.

On the 11th of Nov the Battalion received information of a large number of terrorists hiding in the notorious jungles of Rajwar near Kupwara. Search and destroy operations were immediately launched with Nawang leading his own platoon. At approximately 11 am, a large hideout was discovered by the Battalion and Nawang's platoon came under fire from a group of eight to ten terrorists in the vicinity. Havaldar Chitra Bahadur got a burst in the stomach and fell mortally wounded. At this stage, Nawang instinctively rushed to rescue Chitra Bahadur, firing his weapon, under the covering fire of his comrades. A terrorist who was hiding in the nearby foliage fired at Nawang. In the crossfire, Nawang got a bullet in the face and died, leading his troops in the highest tradition of valour and sacrifice.

Nawang Harish Kapadia was born on December 15, 1975, in Mumbai three years after his elder brother, Sonam. As his surname indicates, theirs is a family of traditional Gujarati cloth merchants, of a community that has a scarce presence in the Defence Services. From his early childhood, Nawang had imbibed the best adventurous talents of his parents, Geeta and Harish, both of whom have many achievements under their belt. Sonam and Nawang were named after famous Sherpa mountaineers; ironically both are Gorkha names. Nawang means "leader of men", a very apt name for an able soldier.

Nawang did his initial schooling at New Era School and subsequently at the St. Xavier's Boys' Academy. He did his B. Com. from Jai Hind college, Bombay. In college, his interests included trekking, hiking, mountaineering (which of course, was in his genes), sports, martial arts and music. He enjoyed life to the maximum, and it was most evident in his passion for food. When it came to eating, no one could match him. Nawang could out-eat anyone and at anytime.

Lt Nawang Kapadia's sacrifice will remain a shining light to inspire future generations. The city of Mumbai should be proud of its son who lived his life here and leaves behind a sorrowing family and a large circle of friends.

He was cremated with full military honours on Tuesday, 14 November, 2000 in Mumbai in presence of large number of family and friends and army officers. Nawang lies in peace, having chosen a career as he desired and dying for the country, trying to save a life, in best traditions of the army.