Alluring Frontiers

TARUN KUMAR BHATTACHARJEE

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Foreword

Arunachal Pradesh, the mountaineous land spreading over 84000 square kilometres in India's North East, her picture-sque beauty—verdant forests, humming with wild life, tumultous rivers and rivulets, her manifold Tribal population—their culture, custom and way of life allures many a scholars, journalists and travellers.

Tarun Kumar Bhattacharjee has been writing on the Land and People of Arunachal Pradesh for the last three decades. His present book on his Memoirs is about the Land inhabited by the fascinating, colourful Adi Tribe and life in that area during the period when this territory was little known to the rest of the country and was called North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The book is a treatise on Adi Tribesmens' Socioeconomic life, their food habits, religious beliefs and practices interpersed by some interesting anecdotes of the officials who served in this difficult land in those days.

Tarun Kumar Bhattacharjee is one of the pioneer Administrative Officers of Arunachal Pradesh. His intimate knowledge about the people helped him to portrait a candid and searching account of the Land and the Colourful Tribes and those Government officials who served in early fifties and sixties. His treatment of the subject and simple expression have made this book an absorbing reading.

I am sure that this publication will be of immense interest for all sections of the readers both inside and outside Arunachal Pradesh.

Gegong Apang
Chief Minister

A.P, Itanagar.

Preface

Jutting out in shape of a kidney in India's North East is the vast mountaneous territory of 84000 Square Kilometres area called Arunachal Pradesh—the land of the dawn lit sun, the erst-while North East Frontier Agency.

I entered this region in early 1952 when it was still a mysterious, foreboding land inhabited by fierce Tribesmen who were believed to be fond of maruding raids on head hunting spree and lived in the world of their own where spirits reigned supreme.

Very little information was in the school geography as the vast territory shown in the map an empty space beyond the realm of settled Administration. This was an excluded area directly under the charge of the Governor of Assam who had political officers who lived in foot hills garrison towns and exercised a loose control over the two dozen tribes by mounting periodic expedition with a platoon of Assam Rifles who dazed the tribesmen by spectecular demonstration of fire power. Except this the Administration had little else to do and development either in road communication or Primary Education were only limited to fringe areas of garrison towns.

The first move to survey this unexplored territory started soon after the massacre in 1911 of two Englishmen and their followers at a place called Komsing 40 miles from Pasighat. The brutal murder jolted the Government from the policy of isolationism and a punitive expedition under the command of Major General Bower with several hundred troops marched to the hills to crush the resistence.

Though the policy of least interference was followed but for Administrative expediency the area was divided in two regions—the Balipara Frontier Tract and Sadiya Frontier Tract each under the charge of a Political Officer. It was in 1948 when six districts were carved out and named as Sela Sub Agency, Subansiri Area, Abor Hills, Mishmi Hills, Tirap Frontier Tract, Tuensang Area with headquarters at Charduar, Kimin, Pasighat, Sadiya, Margherita and Tuensang respectively.

The massacre of troops and officials in October 1953 at Achingmori in Upper Subansiri opened a new chapter. Government realized the imperative need of reorienting its Frontier policy by overhauling the Administrative set up with formation of a new cadre called Indian Frontier Administrative Service. The men of the service were mostly drawn from Defenee who were thought to be more pragmatic and could vigorously pursue the twin objective of consolidation of Administration and development.

Dr. Verrier Elwin, a distinguished Scholar was brought In as Adviser to the Tribal Affairs. It was Elwin who became the architect of the New Policy and his 'Philosophy for NEFA spelt out in details on how to approach and appreciate the tribal problem. The new policy had visible impact as the existing socio-religious institutions of the tribes were least disturbed and there was no social tension in the society on the wake of developmental activities. For the first time in the history of the Frontier the Government reached every corner of the vast territory and exercised remarkable control without resorting to force or coercion.

Yet Dr. Elwin has been criticized for enunciation of a policy of keeping the tribal people as 'Musuem specimen' thereby denying them to come closer to the main stream. It was not surprising therefore that after his death there was gradual shifts in the policy and his 'Philosophy' for NEFA' remained only an academic interest.

The story un-folded in this book describes the situation in those early days of North East Frontier particularly the Siang Frontier Division which at the time was known as Abor Hills District inhabited by the colourful tribe—the Adis.

It was soon after the great Earth-quake of 1950 and I saw the devastation which bared the hills and changed the course of the Siang river—the main stream of Brahmaputra.

The narrative details include the life in Adi villages yet untouched by out side influence, the social system, food habits, religion of the people, belief in supernatural, domination of spirits in every day life and important function of the shamans.

I am grateful to my well wishers especially the officers of the Research Department of Arunachal Pradesh, who always encouraged me to write and taken keen interest in my works.

My thanks are also to Ramesh Kumar of Western Book Depot, Guwahati, for promptly arranging the publication of the Book.

Lastly, I acknowledge the help of Hira Das, M.K. Radhakrishnan, K. Sidhardhan who made painstaking efforts to type out the man uscript.

Tarun Kumar Bhattacharjee.

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Prelude

I was born in a hill station of North East India. As I grew up amidst the surroundings of sylvan beauty my boyhood days were full of romanticism. Near the house was a sprawling pine forest through which a stony path meandered, a stream flowed by the side continuously chanting the sweet melodies. In the distance a long range of blue hills clothed in evergreen forest presented a fascinating sight.

I along with the boys of my age stole time to ride to the forest to get lost in the wilderness for few hours. During rainy season the town was soaked in frequent downpour, the rain dripping through the pine needles, the water gushing in narrow streams in ear splitting roar. In winter heavy frost enveloped the surroundings with a thick white sheet.

Beyond the pine forest was the climb to the hill range to a height of six thousand feet. It was an adventure for a day when we strapped our tiffin box and went to the peak from where ranges of distant Himalayas were unfurled in magnificent splendour. Far across the spur of the hills was the vast vista of flat land about which we had only a faint idea.

My town was beautiful at that time calm and quiet despite the seat of the provincial Government and nascent commercial activities. There were patches of green every where elaborately nursed and nurtured. The brute hands did not dare to uproot them. The officials who were mostly English had their spacious lawns trimmed with flowers among which forget me not was a special favourite.

I remember the day when the big church was gutted in a devastating fire and the gloom and despair fell on the people. There were hush and hush talks among us the children the world is coming to an end so it has been told in the Bible.

An event of far reaching consequence overtook the town. A monoplane driven by a daring pilot flew over the housetops and landed in the polo ground. The entire town went mad on the sight of mysterious machine perched quietly on the grassy land.

A year later the German army marched to Poland and the war clouds gathered in the European sky.

Near our house was the cantonment where one of the Battalion of the Gurkhas had their camps. Small and stocky hill men in their khaki outfit drilled every morning in the parade ground and practiced musketry to the astonishing gaze of us young children. We tried to imitate them; offering salutes to the officers leading the platoon. The bugles sounded every evening:

Tuttu Tuturu Tuturu Tu Tuttu Tuturu Tu Tu -

We imitated the refrain by playing the tune in our improvised flute and nurtured a sincere wish that the day when we grow up we too will enrol in the army.

Many legends surround the gurkhas but one incident which happened in the cantonment had a sad note.

Gurkhas were known to be stickler to rigid discipline and command. One particular night to the sentry post approached an old man. The sentry as a routine shouted a halt. The old man could not understand a word of English and continued his approach. But the sentry did not budge an inch from the regulation. The bullet from his musket went off killing the old man on the spot.

Later to his terrific grief found that he has killed his own father.

We had exciting moments during the days of Dussera in

the cantonment when gorkhas celebrated their festival with great pomp and gaiety.

On the third day of the festival a buffalo is led in before a bare chested strong man clad in a dhoti. Sea of festive people thronged in every side. The tension rose and crowd sunk in deep silence. Suddenly the man raised his khukri and in a single blow severed the head of the buffalo amid the roar of the frenzied crowd.

At the time of the war came another band of soldiers all drawn from the Mountains of North East. They were the men of Assam Regiment who appeared to our wide eyes as total strangers. Later the regimental centre was shifted to the outskirt of the city and we had but occasional meeting with them.

One day an astrologer came to our house—a widely known person reputed for forecast of future events. My mother sought his help to predict my future. Most of the time I was supposed to be moody dreaming of events far removed from reality.

The astrologer took my palm, looked at it intently and then said something ominous to the great grief of the family especially to my mother. The boy will not stay in the house—the destiny has bound him out ward to the far east. The astrologer who was also an occultist offered his help to appease the wandering star to forestall the tragedy.

Later event proved his forecast nearer to the truth. Except to far east I actually landed in mountains of North East far removed from the house and the family.

During my school days the town received a jolt from the increasing march of troops from all over the world. There were Americans, Australians, Canadians, Chinese and host of African Negroes. The sprawling pine forest became their regular rendezvous and sound of boots on the pebbled streets broke the quietness of the nights.

We became friendly with Americans who were always jolly and cheerful. Once while returning from winning a game of football we broke into rhythm of popular music which annoyed the British tommics who hurled us filthy abuses. We were then of young blood and more so returning from a victory match could not tolerate the slander and replied with equal invectives. The Tommies then rolled up their sleeves and

doubledup. It would have been a bloody mess as we no where a match to them. An American MP who watched the scene quietly, suddenly sprang up, unfastened the batton and charged the enraged Tommies who retraced their steps to march off to barracks.

We profusely thanked the American in our pidgin English
—OK Jonny, Bye Bye!

To us British and Australians were far too proud and arrogant.

The incident however blown out of proportion when cautioned note was served by the local police and our guardians took us to task for misbehaving in public.

The Headmaster of our school was a serious person—strictly academic. He seldom spared his rod to teach the errant students. The discipline in the school was rigid-never yielded to pressure. Once a boy failed in the test examination. His father came to plead for him but the witty Headmaster replied, 'If I allow your blessed boy then why I should not be generous to the tables and chairs too!

During the war years the town was agog with intense drill on air raid precaution. Trenches sprung up everywhere, window panes glued with papers, street lights hooded. There were underground bunkers with telephones, food and dressing.

We had frequent practice on ditching to bunkers. The sirens hooted with ominous shrill. The real bombing however did not came though a straggler Japanese Zero was spotted in the high sky.

Once a suspected spy was apprehended near our house when he was found observing the movement of troops. The man we were told was a Japanese disguised as pedler.

Before the war the Chinese hawkers used to visit our houses. We had deep compassion for them and offered double the price for ordinary merchandise. We saw in the newspapers the horror picture of Chinese being dragged and slaughtered by Japanese and young children boyonated before their mothers by the savage soldiers.

But the Chinese solders whom we saw later only aroused our derisive laughter. They were no where near any of the troops stationed in the area. Lousy lot-wrapped in baggy trousers they often broke the line only to be brought back by hard task masters.

In later period of war years rumours were afloat on Subash Bose's liberation Army. Bose only once visited our town in 1937 as President of Indian National Congress and we had but only a faint vision of him. I was too young then to know of his political ambition but my elders spoke very high of him. Four years later he escaped from India for the freedom of his country. We used to spend several hours during the night to catch his voice in the radio. Only once did we succeed to hear the announcement, 'This is free India Radio calling from Saigon'.

After the war a few released persons of Azad Hind Fauz returned to their homes. One of them still thought liberation can come only through the barrel of the gun. He began to motivate us with fiery speech. We enthusiastically responded to his call and had thrilling exercises on guerrilla warfare in the sprawling pine forest. Local Police eventually got a wind of our nocturnal activities. Many of us ran from the house to escape arrest.

The year 1946 brought the news of impending Independence. We thought freedom meant discarding anything linked with British. Sizeable English population then slowly started thinning out. One by one we saw familiar faces vanishing. Particularly sad was the departure of an old man whom we met every time on our way to school. He used to drive an old model vintage car and smiled at us while passing by the road.

A year later the country became free. Tri colour fluttered over the Secretariat Building.

Suddenly the peace and slumber of my favourite town was shattered by the roar of the bull-dozers and gnawing sound of the cross cut saws. Thousands of trees fell to the ground. Over night the sprawling pine forest the play ground of my boyhood days vanished and gone for ever. In their place rose the buildings—an ugly manifestation of encroaching civilization. The scene also repeated in other areas and first casualties were the beautiful trees so meticulously preserved by the earlier rulers.

Independence Alas! did not bring cheers to me.

After two years stint in the college I opted for higher study in distant Allahadad. In my old college the laboratory facilities were meagre. We had only spirit lamps not the bunsen burner. Latter at Allahabad I was laughed at when I could not show the demonstration on oxidizing and reducing flame.

I enrolled myself in Agricultural Institute run by American Baptist Mission. The Professors were dedicated and good task Masters. I had particular liking for Professor Warner who taught us Animal Husbandry. He was very much punctual in attendance and seldom missed a class. Once during a wild cat strike in the cattle farm—the Professor along with his wife attended the milking of the cows.

Across Jamuna in the Ewing Christian College, I used to pass my week days with Dr. Edwin Harper—an erudite scholar with charming personality.

My days in Allahabad however not happy. The cruel heat of the summer months was almost unbearable. The temperature often shoot up beyond 116° F. Coming from a cool place the atrocious climate proved too much for me.

Once during visiting friends in Manauri Air base some miles away from the City the heat struck me on the face and I rolled from the Bycycle. A kindly passerby took me to a shade. Next day, I boarded a train to Nazibabad from where I motored to Pauri—perched over a hill of 6000'ft where the temperature under shade was 70° F.

The hills again beckoned me. There was no place beautiful than Garowal Himalayas. I got a mutual friend and hitch hiked to the places hallowed by travellers. Thus I saw the place in Rudra Prayag where Jim Corbett shot the Leopard, Dancing Alakananda, Deba Prayag—the confluence of Ganga and Alakananda and Risikesh where fish swarm the river but never allowed to be trapped. We made the journey to Dehradun and finally ended our trip at Mussouri.

After my career ended at Allahabad, I returned to my home again only to face the grim reality of finding a job.

When I was on look out for employment, a kindly man suggested me to apply to the Agricultural Officer, North East Frontier Agency.

I hurriedly prepared a draft and despatched. Some days later a call card arrived asking me to appear in person before the Agricultural Officer.

I had but faint idea about the North East Frontier Agency. This places were excluded areas and not elaborately mentioned in our school geography. We knew only of Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts inhabited by fierce tribes—Aka, Dafla, Abor, Mishmi. None of them were seen in our town.

A sign board large enough hung on the wall of a double storied building proclaiming the office of Agricultural Officer, North East Frontier Agency.

It was May 1952. The air was laddened with heavy moisture. I approached the building in a queer feeling what to say if I am asked some odd questions. A door swung apart. A man called my name. In rapid stride I entered the room to confront a man who was reclining on a chair before a large oval table. He was passed middle age, baldish with deep piercing eyes. Obviously I found him a shrewed man with cunning disposition. A staff was standing nearby with note book and a pencil. The sharp eyes focussed on me and remained stationary for few moments. Then he began the dialogue as to whether I was ever been to a hill.

To him the place where I am born is not a hill neither high lands of Kumaon and Garowal where I moved. The real hill is the North East Frontier Agency. Did I ever heard the name of the place?

I had to reluctantly admit my profound ignorance of the geography of the land.

To my surprise he suddenly changed the topic and asked would I accept a job if offered rupees one fifty a month.

This sum was big enough at the time. I have asked for a job and here it is. Why should I refuse it.

He dictated a note to the fellow nearby and directed me to the Head Clerk for the appointment letter.

I sighed a relief and immediately left the room lest he call me again to test my nerve by asking odd questions.

Head Clerk called Barababu was deeply engrossed in the files. The big table was littered with papers obviously waiting for his attention. He had a thin feature with protruding nose, bald head and rather a narrow chin.

As soon I introduced myself Barababu pushed his spectacles far on the bridge of the nose and looked at me intently. His owlish face suddenly spread with mischievous smile as he spoke.

'So you are the new aspirant for the job. Do you know what an enormous risk it is?

Frankly I did not know how it is. It must be an adventure to explore the unknown Territory.

Barababu was least statisfied with my answer and persisted with greater vehemence.

'Could I differentiate between the mountain and the hill?

Silly question—I thought but this time Barababu did not wait for an answer instead he proceeded to narrate his own story.

Fifteen years already passed in the service—three fourth under the British. But those were the days of golden era when Stroner, JP Mills, JFD Walker were his boss. They knew their job, never did wrong and not like us. We people no good. 'See how many files I am dealing now. Is there any appreciation? No, never. My boss will not lookup, knew only bragging. But Mill Saheb? Have you heard his name? Well he is no more but read his books on the Nagas. He had all the qualities under the surf. What he did for me do you know? No one believed nor you will believe. I put up a draft to him on something of importance. Next day he called me. I thought my fate is now sealed—a call from the Adviser to Lower Division Clerk must be ominous. In great trepidation I entered the room and saw him fiddling with my note. I was in a dhoti and half sleeve shirt, shabbily dressed one may say. He looked at me and asked why I cannot have better dress. I never lied and so I spoke the truth. Poor pay so could not afford.

A smile writ on his face. He drew up a paper and scribbled something and handed over to me. What more he said you know? The draft which I prepared is excellent and I deserve a promotion.

It was raise indeed. I was promoted to Upper Division Clerk within such a short time.

But then those were the glorious days. Alas, Never to come back again.

Barababu became emotional. His voice rose above the din of the office as he drew comparison of two system.

Suddenly the door swung open, outcame the orderly, 'Saheb Bolata Hai'—Saheb is calling.

Barababu's face fell like sunken plum. The old man must have heard all that has been said. In a huff he made a dash to the room of the boss and never seen for the rest of the day.

I was given a salary of rupees one fifty and was directed to report to District Agricultural Officer Abor Hills District, Pasighat.

A young man was bending over a big sheet of paper apparently busy in drawing a map. The caption read--'NORTH EAST FRONTIER AGENCY—ABOR HILLS DISTRICT'. Near the bottom of the line a large letter written in read ink PASIGHAT.

The slim fellow of medium height introduced himself as Ranjit Mukerjee who has been appointed as an Officer in Agricultural Training Institute, Pasighat. He had just come out from the University with a post graduate degree in soil science.

I developed an instant liking for him for his friendly and affiable nature. He had a persuasive sweet voice and drawn me to the intimate conversation as if we were known to each other. His neat handwriting must have impressed the Agricultural Officer who found him good enough in drawal of maps of the unexplored Territory.

Mukerjee had not been to Pasighat nor to any place beyond the Brahmaputra. Yet he knew much of its geography. He gave me the startling information that no vehicle run beyond the great river and every approach is by air. Air means aeroplane in NEFA.

I reached Dibrugarh—the terminal station of the Railway in Upper Assam. A porter took me to a hotel which had an imposing signboard, 'The National Lodge'.

A man with enormous fat in his belly was sitting on a chair in the portico. Seeing my approach he sprangup, extending the hand in a familiar gesture.

'The National Lodge is a refuge for all those who need it'.

He turned to be the Manager-cum-Proprie or of the Lodging house His clients are mostly the travellers to the Frontier. He himself never been to any place but knew the area as if how often he had been there.

When I mentioned my destination Pasighat the Manager beamed with smile. 'Oh, How lucky you are to go to a place of abundance. No worry for you that I would take care. Tomorrow morning sharp at 80' clock just stand near the Char Ali, the four road crossing. A bus will take you to Mohanbari, where a plane is already positioned to fly you to Pasighat.

Manager's rhetoric had convincing touch. I felt most assured at least the man has given me the comfort.

I went to the river side to gather a view. Across the vast expanse the Sillouette of mountain range presented sensational impression, mysterious and foreboding. A thrill of an adventure suddenly possessed me.

The river front has not been the same which I saw fifteen years earlier as a child. It was far away at least a mile or so. A sprawling park known as company garden was a favourite haunt of town folk. The steamers from far away land lined the jetty.

Berry White medical school with its imposing buildings, planters club and the court, a long drive along the narrow but clean road, tea gardens dotting the fringe of town and above all the river with its steady course left an indelible impression on my young mind.

The Dibru Sadiya Railway—an adjunct of the Assam Bengal Line had its bogies painted blue. The Railway ran upto Makum further up to North East to serve the tea gardens.

Alas, what I see Dibrugarh now tragic and beyond imagination. An angry river roaring all the time, fuming and fretting. Its innumerable whirlpool coming nearer to the bank. The waves lashing on the unstable soil biting it away inch by inch. A desperate attempt being made to stem the onslaught by erecting spurs, the huge wooden crossed structures jutting to the water to stem the current.

A formidable exercise against the rising tide.

A river so placid' calm and serene beauty only a few years back now so ugly.

It happened due to devastating earth quake of 1950 when river bed rose, land slides and massive erosion blocked the out let. Trees uprooted from own habitat, hills torn apart and water chartered a new course.

The expanse of the river is now several miles, from north to south bank. In winter it is in many channels. A ferry would take several hours to cross, negotiating number of sand bars.

Entry into Frontier—in the Land of the Adis

I stood on the Char Ali as told by the Manager. A rickety bus jerked to a halt. I jumped in and squeezed a seat in between dozens of passengers many of whom are the tea garden labourers going to work.

The bus took a full hour ride to Mohanbari to cover only seven miles. The road bared its skeleton now and then. The wheels skidded to innumerable pot holes giving violent jerk which rattled my bones.

The driver was understandably irritated and showered filthy abuses on the public works department for the sorry plight.

I was off loaded near a big tin roofed building in Mohanbari Air Field. A dwarfish sturdy fellow sat near a table surrounded by a small crowd. All are purchasing ticket for a seat in the aeroplane. I was charged only rupees twenty.

The ride in a plane was not new to me. Earlier I had flown by dakotas on scheduled route to Calcutta. But this time it is different.

I looked for fellow passengers to Pasighat but spotted only a Marwari businessman who was dosing on a stool.

It was mid-day. The sky was clear and blue. A fierce sun blazed in all fury heating the concrete run way.

Yet there is no sign of the aeroplane. We were asked to look at the sky for a small peck and strain the ears to hear the drone. The waiting continued for an hour. Ticket seller fadup with our impatience quietly retreated behind the building.

Suddenly a drone was heard in the far distance. Out of the blue sky appeared the bird spanning its wings to full length.

The wheels touched the ground and with thunderous roar ran a full length to screech to a halt near the terminal.

Its nose was painted red and on the belly a large letter spelled the name INDOMAR.

The plane was a twin engine dakota of a private company.

Out of the cockpit descended the pilot, a hefty Australian named Anderson and his Indian co-pilot Mitra.

Pilot was obviously in bad temper and barked at the stocky man who sold us tickets to get the cargoes ready within five minutes.

To my surprise I found we are the cargoes as the man shoved us hurriedly to the plane. Two dozen of us sat on the two parallel steel benches hooked to the wall.

The engine coughed and roared, the propeller blades furiously churned the air. Lights shownup in the transparent screen, 'Fasten your seat belt'.

With a violent forward thrust the wheels raced over the run way and soon we were air borne.

The plane now cutting across the cloud. A rustic fellow could nol perceive shouted, 'see it puffing smoke'!

'Shutup' —said some one', cloud not smoke, you idiot'!

A maze of channel now and then visible we were crossing the Brahmaputra. From above it appeared so tiny, unimpressive.

A small clearing, motley crowd and a few houses came to sight. In an wide sweep the air craft lowered the height. The small clearing was the improvised air field of Murkong Selek, midway to Pasighat. The saw mill, the establishment, chunk of forest already swallowed by the angry river. Earlier it was

a sprawling market, the mill provided employment to hundreds of people and finished products transported to distant land.

The wheels touched the water logged ground with an ominous jerk. Eighteen passengers got out leaving myself and the Marwari shopkeeper.

The plane again lifted to the air and entered the solid cloud, dark and foreboding. Below us nothing was visible but the hefty Australian knew it better. It must have been a hundred run for him.

The Marwari shopkeeper lost his nerve in the awful bump muttering continuously Hare Krishna Hare Ram.

The air craft swung in wide curve alternately gaining height and loosing. Suddenly I saw a mass of water hardly a few feet down. So wide was its expanse that fear gripped me but the pilot got the bearing and soon flew over the tin roofs, red and white and a long run way came to view.

The wheels touched the perforated metal sheets. The marwari shopkeeper reminded we have reached our destination Pasighat.

A dozen of bare bodied hustler raced to the plane in pouring rain. Jostling, bustling and shouting in an unintelligible lingo they dragged the loads off the plane.

One was running with my bed roll. A person in khaki suddenly appeared who assured me of its safety. He introduced him as Oyiram Bori the Agency Service Corps Supervisor. He was from Mishing tribe who live in riverine district of Upper Assam. His own village Oyan is few miles from Pasighat. Oyiram Bori escorted me to the office situated near the airfield. The office, a long tin roofed building directly faced the Siang river the main channel of the Brahmaputra. The river was in high spate, its tremendous roar was sure enough unnerving. The waves pounded ceaselessly on the gigantic wooden spurs which lined the river front.

Pasighat and its Neighbourhood

I was introduced to Shantimoy Roy Choudhury—the District Boss. A tall hefty fellow passed middle age was chewing pan. His moustache twitched every time whenever he emphasised a point.

He asked me what made me an errant boy, did I have a row in the family? Adventure? OK. But this place is merciless, can devour a youth like you. So beat a retreat while there is time. The wider world field much more charm.

He sounded pessimistic. So I preserred silence. I have turned nineteen and many years to go then why should I go back to the old world right now.

He put forward his hand. A sardonic smile lit up his face as he continued.

'I appreciate your determination to stay on but you have to go to Along, 60 miles up the hills. There you will relieve the officer who wants to come down. Well, the place is not that bad once you reach there. Come to me again for final briefing'.

He took me out of the room to introduce to the staff. By now everyone knew of my arrival. The eager eyes met all at once. There were handshaking and exchange of nicesities as if we were long known to each other. I found a place in Bachelor's lodge, a dormitory facing the river in 21st mile. I shared the rooms with Baikuntha Borpujari, who has joined as Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Office Assistant Haripada Debroy, Durga Chakravarty, Sushil Bhatta and Bimal Chakraborty.

Sushil Bhatta and Bimal Chakraberty were veterans of many years. Both of them started their career in political officer's Office at Sadiya in Mishmi Hills. They worked under such stalwarts JHF Williams, JED Walker, FP Mainprice, Peter James and narrated to me interesting stories of the pre-Independence era.

Soon I found the Bachelor's lodge an unique place of relaxation. Every evening so many staff gather there for gossip and frivolities. There were discourse in dance, poetry, songs, music or play of bridge. In Sundays stream of visitors, staff as well officers swarm to the place. The life in Bachelor's lodge was never dull.

Facing the Bachelor's lodge was the sprawling Siang. Its huge mass of water, muddy with monsoon rain dancing with frightening intensity bellowing a continuous roar. A line of wooden spurs jutted to the current in a desperate attempt to stem the tide. Huge chunks of solid earth dropped to the swirling water as under current cut at the bank.

I was too naive at the time to understand the tremendous threat river possessed and wistfully believed that gigantic spurs would held the breach.

It was exactly two years later when rows of buildings on 21st mile along with the drive all swallowed by the angry river in matter of hours.

Earlier a road ran to Kobo ghat on the bank of Brahmaputra to ferry the passengers to rail head at Saikhowa ghat brought by the Bus from 21st. mile of Pasighat.

Sylvan forest lined the bank of Siang where herds of elephants roamed. The river was placed and calm, despite monsoon rain it ran on its course.

The tranquility was broken with sudden shudder on that fateful evening of 15th August, 1950. Startled people heard the rumblings sound of triumphating elephants coming nearer.

and nearer. The earth trembled, the sky loosened, rain and mist heightened the tension.

Then came the ominous spell for three days. Water level drastically fell in Siang as if the entire river would dryup. Scores of fish big and small lay prostrate on the bank.

The spell followed by wild clap of thunder. Huge mass of water several feet high rushed in an incomprehensible speed and swept away whatever lay on its way, the road and the buildings on the river front. The Pasighat—Kobo Rongdoi road torn apart and river furrowed through it.

Many of the hills borne the scars baring the ugly skeleton. Hundreds of trees were uprooted, the massive land slides choked the outlet of streams, rivulets which burst the bank to cut a new course.

Once a beautiful Sadiya with tree lined streets, sprawing garrison town lying at the back drop of beautiful hill lay burried now in the mid stream of Dibang river.

Government mobilised every resources at its command. Tea garden proprietors offered their single engined small Bonanza planes which achieved miracle, landing on water logged field to rescue the marooned villagers. Air force dakotas dropped food parcels to stranded population.

Pasighat came into air map when a long strip of flat land cleared and developed into an air strip. Perforated steel sheets joined together end to end to bear the weight of the plane.

Dakotas brought the much needed supplies, building and relief materials.

The chaos in the interior was complete. All link to Pasighat snapped, dozens of villages tumbled down in massive land slides, scores of people dicd. Hunger and misery pervaded the country side. Never before in the history was there any parallel.

The small town Pasighat had been the head quarters of Abor Hills District which was carved out from the erstwhile Sadiya Frontier Tract in 1948. The town is now continuously threatened by Siang river.

Facing the river was the Political Officer's Office, a long tin roofed building which also housed the district offices. By

the side of the office was the Inspection Bungalow with a spacious lawn.

A small garrison of troops was manned by the Assam Rifles, the indomitable force of the Frontier. A graval road ran up to 21st mile—the remains of the high way to Kobo ghat. On a higher region the bungalows of Political Officer and other District Officers were located.

Two rows of buildings lined the either side of 21st mile. These were the residential quarters of minor officials.

South of the air field was the middle school under an energetic Headmaster Dhan Bahadur Sonar. The school had classes upto sixth standard but enrolment remained 100.

Across the road not far from the office were the market and hospital, residence of Range Forest Officer, Post Office.

Market had only few shops, all owned by enterprising businessmen from outside. Mongol Chand Ramkumar, Chirkutram, Sewnarayan, Jainarayan Hardeo and Basu Singh. There was also a canteen run by Assam Rifles. Most of the businessmen came before forties when Pasighat was an outpost.

A meandering stream Panikorong flowed by the side of airfield. Beside the river was the village Bashkata, a Nepali settlement with Ex-Assam Rifle personnel. Its Headman was Bhimlal Bashkata whose surname was Jaishi, an energetic and enterprising person. Bashkata village grew enough of rice, vegetables from its fertile soil.

A sixteen acre Sericultural farm was situated near the 21st mile. Little far from the airfield was the leper colony whose Superintendent, a medical practitioner of yester year, an eloquent speaker reminded every time that leprosy is not a divine curse but a disease.

Below the Bungalow of Political Officer was the Kotoki line, the Interpreters residential area. These were mostly bamboo and thatch roof buildings giving the impression of a village.

There was no electricity, water taps installed on focal points served the need of town people.

An orphanage 'Kirtighar' housed a number of orphans who lost their parents in earthquake. A community hall 'Ranghar' was near the hospital where meetings or cultural

programme were held.

There were half a dozen Interpreters called Kotoki who were the backbone of the Administration. The Interpreters wore a sleeveless red coat, a sign of authority.

Foremost of them was Kutik Moyong an intelligent and influential personality. He worked with the British Political Officers taking tour to far flung areas of northern frontier, bought peace among recalcitrant tribes often at enormous risk. Given education Kutik Moyong would have certainly made a successful Administrator.

The British realised the potentiality and listened to his counsel.

Kutik Moyong had two charming daughters who were in the school. The eldest has been married to a boy Matin Dai who was studying in higher class in Mission school at Sadiya. Youngest Omen was beautiful with rosy cheek and slim figure.

Other P.Is were Okang Tabin, Subuk Tasung, Tolo Sobo Iring, Bhandari Moyong, Kinu Darin who were all later entrant to the service. Okang Tabin is a versatile cheer leader in tradional ballad and girls would not let him rest till he sung his last line.

There were two more personalities who though not in Government service yet yielded influence. Tagoli Jamo and Orin Moyong both developed interest in trade and business. Tagoli's niece Omik was the only local girl who worked in the office as Lower Division Clerk.

Further to the west two miles from the town was the Agricultural Training Institute where Junior Level functionaries of Agricultural Department were trained in multiple cropping practice. The farm was situated across an unpredictable stream Sibo Korong which swelled in every rain and changed the course. The sprawling farm had nice orchard but also den of Cobras. The vicious snake sneak to residential buildings in search of rats which were found in abundance.

Nearest to the town on the south east were a cluster of villages Kelek, Rasam, Balek, Roying, Mongku, Tigra all inhabitated by Adi Tribe.

Some distance away from this group was a small settlement Mirmir which had influential persons.

All the villagers had citrus grooves and in season produced plenty of oranges.

Shantimoy Roy Choudhury introduced me to Bhaskar Bhuiya the Political Officer. Fair complexioned, tall and robust he was undoubtedly fitted well as an Administrator. I heard later that though a lawver by profession he successfully acted in a number of Assamese films. His wife a beautiful lady was a scion of an aristocrat family of Upper Assam.

Colonel Verma, the Chief Medical Office had also his office at Pasighat. An officer of Army Medical Corp; he served in theatres of war prior to his service in the Frontier.

The order of my posting at Along created some doubts. There were conflicting views, many sympathised with my lot as if I am destined for an exile.

But Colonel Verma and Superintendent of Leper Colony recouped my dampen spirit by giving the most encouraging news that sixty miles road is a bridle path over the easy gradient. They cautioned me however not to take raw water or drink rice beer nor talk to any girl.

My boss arranged provisions from the shop of Basu Singh. A paltry sum of rupees seventeen was given, as monthly allowance for the ration. Every necessities were taken by head load to Along over the hilly track.

Basu Singh was a bullock cart driver during the earthquake. His business acuman was praiseworthy. Leaving the cart far behind he opened a grocery shop to serve the need of interior outposts. Basu Singh owes much for his rise on my boss Shantimoy Roy Choudhury who patronized him for supply of Agricultural tools and seeds.

I was reluctant to leave the gay abundance of Bachelors, lodge. By now more persons joined to swell the rank. There come Sudhanshu, the son of the Superintendent leper colony. He was a student in Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh.

Sudhanshu was fond of poetry. He recited many poems of Shelly, Tennison and Byron. But one that he recited struck in my mind.

'I am the monarch all I survey from land round the sea. My rights no one to dispute I am the lord of the Fowl and the beast.

Oh, solitude, where are thy charms That sages have seen in thy face

Better to roam in the midst of alarm then to reign this horrible place.'

But my days at Bachelors' lodge was cut short with the arrival of porters. The rain was beating mercilessly on the ground when the porters lifted my loads and dashed off.

Bidding good bye to my friends I ran after them.

Across Sibo Korong a Sheepish porter laid down half of the load and made a gesture of over weight. I could not make him understand as he vanished quickly behind the forest.

In profound dismay I strapped the load on the back and followed the winding path.

But it was a nightmarish journey. Soon the jungles swallowed me, the enormous forest, dark and foreboding came nearer and nearer. The roar of the river mingled with gnawing sound of the beetles. The rain spattered and beat mercilessly on the face, horrible leeches climbed up the body for the blood meal. Nasty nettles pricked the bare limbs.

The road barely a foot track badly torn, climbed up and down the hill to negotiate innumerable diversions.

I felt like cry a loud, But jungle was too cruel. No one stood near to hear my yell.

At last a village came to sight. Ringing the last energy of the body I climbed over the saddle. The porters already dumped the loads on the portico of a vacant house which appeared like staging hut.

The village was Renging. Hardly three dozen house stood in haphazard formation. Raised on stilts of wood the rectangular thatched houses were three feet above the ground. Pigs, dogs, fowls moved about freely. Bare bodied children clung to their elders who also gathered in curiosity to see the stranger.

A bamboo trap barred the entrance. Removing this I entered the room. Tired by long march on unfamiliar terrain I quickly unrolled the bed and prepared for a rest.

Suddenly I heard the murmu-. Half a dozen girls already

tiptoed on the verandah. They were wearing bright and black bodice.

I remembered at once what my boss gave the parting advice, never to look at the girls, they will swallow you up.

I was too simple at the time and took his words rather seriously. Later I heard he himself was in trouble hence the brotherly advice!

I fastened the doors and windows with the strings. The girls broke into rupturous laughter giving me enough of worry.

The rest of the night was an ordeal with hunger and misery. The day dawned with streak of Sun light. The village already woken up. Squeal of pigs, barking dogs, crowing of cocks, pounding of rice gave a feeling of totality unaccustomed to my ears.

I got up hurriedly only to find porters reluctant to cover a distance of 14 miles to next camp Rotung. Instead they pointedout to a place some distance from the village. I did not know a word except 'Hina' means hellow, 'Mang—' No. There was another word 'DU' which I presumed must be distance.

They thought I have agreed to their suggestion and so ran as fast to dump me to a beautiful bunglow, an wooden building with tin roofing sat in a sylvan srrroundings. There were tall trees with extended branches broad leaves, shrubs, creeper like swing ropes climbing to the height of the trees. Far away, was the blurred view of Siang, its roar only filtered through the screen of forest.

I'sat on the verandah in an arm chair relishing the beauty of the placid nature. The Chowkidar who knew Assamese sympathised with my lot and rebuked the porters for misbehaviour.

I ate a hearty meal prepared by the Chowkidar. He left for the village in the evening assuring me not to worry as no predators come this side.

The Inspection Bunglow called Lalu camp which was constructed by the British. It was amazing how the materials were brought without support of vehicle.

The night though passed off but I had a distrurbed sleep at the sound on the bare wooden floor suggesting movement of subtle feet. These must have been rats or crawls of the raptiles.

Next morning Chowkidar came with a mischiveous look. Did I hear any unusual foot steps? The people say the place is haunted but he never believed it.

Chowkidar narrated an interesting story how a Sahib killed himself. A post was located here. Something happened to him, he was depressed and drank heavily. During the night a sound of gun shot woken the startled sepoys who ran only to find the lifeless body of the Sahib in pool of blood.

It is now several years since the incidence but Sahib's hungry soul continue to wander. Many people supposed to have heard the foot steps, yell and cry. Very few travellers stay alone in the Bungalow, he is also no exception.

I thanked my luck for not having seen the ghost or heard the chilling cry piercing the silence of the night.

Chowkidar Tasin Tamut volunteered to accompany me to Rotung. His Village Babuk is two miles further up on way to Pangin.

Porters lifted the loads without hitch. We took a leisurely step. The path is now spacious 7' to 8' wide in most places. It winded up the ridge but on a more acceptable gradient.

Tasin was a jolly fellow. He talked all the time and I forgot the fatigue of the streneous march.

40 years back in 1911, two British Officers lost their lives in tribal ambush in Sissen and Komsing on the other bank of Siang river. They came on a visit unsuspecting the deep conspiracy. While one of them who was a doctor was pierced to death in Sissen village the other the Political Officer fell to the sword at Komsing.

The result was a punitive action, severe and cruel. Hundreds of soldiers combed the hills like ants, ravaged the villages and driven the people to jungle.

It was long after when peace again restored but with a heavy price. Peaple had to construct the 40 miles muleable road from Pasighat to Pangin, carry the building materials for construction of Inspection Bungalows and troops barrack all by free labour.

A station was permanently opened at Rotung with garrisoning of troops. Subsequently there were two more camps at Pangin and Riga further up the river.

Later I pieced the story rummaging through the pages of history. Noel Williamson was the Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya toured the Siang Valley in 1909 upto Kebang. He had friendly approach and gained the confidence of the people. Greatly encouraged by this gesture of good will he decided to visit Komsing where an invitation was extended to him.

A plan was made but the Government at first was reluctant but subsequently approved the limited tour upto Komsing on the left bank of Siang river.

Accompanied by Dr. Griegerson Medical Officer of European and native staff of Tea gardens in Upper Assam, a company of 47 porters and armed escort Williamson left Pasighat on 20th March, 1911.

At ferry point of Komlighat a friendly courier of one of the headman of Kebang village Takut tried to dissuade him as there was a conspiracy to stall the move.

But Williamson brushed him aside and crossed the river and arrived at Sissen village.

At Sissen a number of porters fell sick forcing Dr. Griegerson to stay back while Williamson marched ahead to Komsing.

On 29th March accompanied by an Interpreter three sick porters left for Rotung enroute to Pasighat. The Interpreter was carrying three official envelops for delivery to post at Pasighat. He flourished this envelopes to the curious villagers in a show of great importance.

The envolops were bordered with black stripes as a mark of mourning for the death of King Edward, the VII of British Empire. But foolish Interpreter boastfully explained that white indicate two Sahibs, the black border line countless sepoys and red seal was of great anger.

He further told the frightened villagers that his move to Pasighat was to deliver the letters to call the army to level the the hills by bombardment.

Greatly alarmed the leaders decided to stop the delivery

of the letters. Fast runners moved to Kebang, the leading village and relayed the ominous message.

Next morning when the Interpreter and his companions moved out in great self assurance they were way laid and brutally murdered.

The people then mobilised for an offensive attack. Stockades were builtup, needle sharp panjies laid on the route of march, stone chutes with immense piles of boulders concealed on the path, strung arrows held in tension of string to fly at all direction, patrols moved out to watch towers, an elaborate signal system operated, food packets cached for emergency.

On 31st March, a patrol of sturdy youth secretly crossed the river to the other bank and descended on Sissen to surprise the small party. Dr. Griegerson along with the escort and porters fell to the attack. Only three could escape death by jumping into the river.

At Komsing village Williamson was received with traditional hospitality. Assured of friendship and peace all were in relaxed mood. The second patrol from Kebang already took up position.

It was mid day when Williamson went for a bath in the enclosure when all of a sudden a heavy sword blow fell on him and he died soon after. Simulaneously followers and others including the sentries were taken completely unaware and fell to the attack.

It was a tragedy of worst magnitude. The escaped sepoys managed to reach Pasighat to convey the news of disaster.

An immediate alarm was raised. Soon after a massive operation was planned under the command of Major General H. Bower, the Officer Commanding of Assam Brigade.

The Brigade comprised the crack units of Gurkhas, sappers and miners, medical team, cartographers, naturalists and scores of army officers.

The extensive preparation for the punitive expedition continued till mid October. Troops were brought from far away Calcutta by river steamers and ferried across to Kobo ghat by dozens of country crafts.

Column moved out on 25th October. Except minor skirmishes on the fringe of Pasighat nothing substantial happened

till they reached Rotung. A formidable barrier Kekar Monying a sheer on the bank of Siang stood on the way and troops were showered with spray of arrows, huge boulders rolled on them from loosened chutes raising dust which temporarily shut off visibility. Foot soldiers with muskets failed to break through. Even the commander was hit by a falling stone and an arrow struck at JCO. Coupled with vicious attack was the chilling war cry to unnerve the troops.

The barriers however fell when mountain guns were brought from the rear which opened up with ferocious counter attack. Huge mortar shells landed far behind the defence line resulting in a number of casuality. Thoroughly unnerved the sturdy warriors of Kebang village retreated to the jungle.

The job was then easily done. Stragglers were rounded up, the village was burnt. The punitive action continued for some time till the completion of 40 miles road upto Pangip.

Ultimately all the leaders of the conspiracy were apprehenced and given various term of punishment but death penalty was waived on consideration by the Government.

The follow up of this expedition resulted in the consolidation of the Administration and detailed survey of the land upto the frontier. In December, 1941, Governor of Assam went upto Pangin and met 370 representatives of 75 villages of Padam, Minyongs, Gallongs and Pangis and impressed upon them the necessity of restraining from slavery, from Mithun raiding, and from trade block.

Tasin was naturally | all praise for the gallant fighters of Kebang village who could challenge the might of the British. He showed me the spot 'Kekar Monying' the scene of the heaviest battle, with apparent pride.

We marched through the captivating rain forest of tall trees interspersed with thickets of canes, wild banana, ferns and creepers. Now and then green vista splashed with colours red, yellow, crimson, white flowers blooming in profusion. Between the trees grow tree ferns with long thin stems several yards high bearing at the top finely divided leaves.

Creepers climbed upward over the trees and hung down like stout ropes across the narrow paths of the jungle.

Many kinds of plants—ferns and orchids, grew on the

tree branches, while on the rotten branch of fallen trees there were clumps of red toad stool. The ground was peaty and marshy covered with moss, lichens, ferns alternating with varieties of orchids. Orchids lover could collect here to their heart's content, there are numerous fine species growing on the trees. Orchids with white bloom, species with yellow, brown, purple blooms.

Wild banana 40 to 50 ft tall stood on the slopes in dark spots. The fruits of this banana are small, full of large seeds and not edible.

The silence of the verdant forest was broken by humming of bees, insects, gnawing of beetles and shrill whistles of birds. Perched on the branches were the plumed tropical birds flashing feathers of white, green and royal blue. Over head we heard the Sash-Sash noise of the flying horn bills. Long tailed langurs and brown monkeys jockeying from tree to tree.

Crystalline water falls cascading down the rocks throwing mighty spray creating anillusion of rain bow. Hundreds of butterflies in riot of colours dancing around in eternal glee.

Animal life teem in this jungle. Except the elephants and wild buffalo every beast has a den here, Sport is fun, a hunter seldom return home empty.

From the height of the hill Rotung came in view on the lower ridge. Houses on raised platform and thatch roof stood haphazardly. A little far was the row of granaries.

On the approach there were tin roofed buildings which once housed the garrison.

Three huts neatly lined above the village—the school campus.

The village appeared so near but it began to dodge us. There were more curves, more descent yet it remained where it was. In the hills it always happen, the eye estimate invariably fail to gauze the distance.

An hour of frustrating journey at last brought us to the village.

On the approach two officials extended a cordial welcome. Pait, the teacher of Primary School and Durga Singh Chetri. Agricultural Demonstrator.

I was taken to a nice cosy hut. Little children crowded the porch, they were all students of Pait.

In the evening we strolled outside. Carrying the heavy loads of fire wood a long line of men and women came down from the cultivation fields.

A small stream marked the boundary of the village. It also served as water hole. A stone wall of 2 ft. height ran for some distance.

Three tin roofed buildings were painted red. The buildings now empty but serve as resting place for the wary travellers. I took a look to the village. Small rectangular houses raised on crossed wooden posts and supported on platform of split bamboo. All houses were close, lined with narrow streets. Pigs were free so also good number of dogs. Dung fell every where and there was no drainage.

Women wore loose skirts, which ran down the knee. Their upper bodies were covered with a blouse and profuse beads. Men and women alike cropped the hair around the crown half an inch over the ear tip. They chew bark of tree which reddened the teeth.

I was amazed to see no sign of fatigue in people who came down the hills with heavy loads. They exchanged a few word with Pait who was a Mishing akin to the tribe. The women stole a look at me, giggled and ran fast to their houses.

Pait told me a system of organization—Kebang which manage all affairs of the village including arbitration in the judicial matters. The Kebang is headed by headman called Gam who wore red coats as a sign of authority, from Government.

Next morning I started for Pangin with Durga Singh Chetri to cover a distance of 18 miles skipping Yambung camp on the midway.

A tall lanky fellow Durga Singh already seen many world before coming here. Proficient in nine languages including Burmese he certainly would found a better place but lure of the frontier brought him here. His life story ran like real adventure. Hearing him talk I forgot the fatigue of the long march.

Below us roared Siang. Its span considerably reduced between the fold of the hills. Huge swell of water splashing on the stony bank throwing up spray upwards.

Soon we approached a suspension bridge over a turbulent river 'Yambung' which fell to Siang some distance away. Fed by monsoon rain it burst through bank in an uncontrolled fury.

The bridge approximately one hundred meters constructed with strands of canes stretched between trees on either bank. Foot way also made of cane. The support is reinforced by steel wires placed on the foot way as well as on hand ropes. Canes are interwoven and fastened to steel ropes. Whole canes rolled in eliptical size and placed at interval linking the foot and hand rest. While approaching the bridge one has the feeling of entering a spider nest. The bridge sagged in the centre and kept the height of only a few feet above the water. The weight of the person walking on the bridge looses the tension of the strings and the bridge begins to swing. Worse fear comes when looking down it suddenly appear that river is standing still and that it was the bridge that was moving very fast.

The entrance to the bridge was ten feet above the ground level, a notched ladder was fixed to get on to the bridge.

Chetri in cat like motion crossed over easily. But as soon I entered the bridge it began to swung like a pendulam. Looking to the water it appeared that the bridge was moving.

I was seized with intense panic. It was Chetri's shout which restored the strength and I moved forward at once and managed to cross over.

My feet was still unstable but Chetri assured me that this is experienced by all new comers and soon I would gain the confidence. Red roofed Yambung Inspection Bungalow stood as if held precariously over a rock on the bank of Siang. Setting of the camp was awesome. The mighty Siang flowing just below, its constant howling gave an eerie feeling. The waves thrashing on the hard rock on which the building stood.

The same stories repeated here, distraught spirits made nocturnal visit. A most ideal place for the ghost to wander, howling wind, angry river and deep black forest.

We opend our lunch packet and had a hearty meal and rest.

We went to the road again to cover the last lag of the journey to Pangin now hardly eight miles. The path torn and sunk in many place had a number of diversions.

A motley crowd seen at the distance waiving at us. Chetri said, we are nearing Pangin, the officials gathering to receive us.

A chorus rant the sky 'welcome to the city of Pangin'.

Many hands simultaneously grabbed me bursting in repeated cheers.

A baldish man with a bulky figure was in the centre. Chetri introduced him Cyril Lyndoh, Transport Superintendent.

Soon I found Lyndoh a jovial person full of humour and wits. He was called Tuglok Migom because of his bald head.

A tall fellow spinning like a top cracked jokes which threw every one laughing. He was Changkakati the teacher of Komsing Lower Primary School but addressed as Komsing Migom.

Migom a honorific term of distinguished officials.

A few thatched huts stood on the slope over looking the narrow street. These were the quarters for the officials. A little distance near the bend of the road were three red roofed barracks which once served the troops but now accommodates the men of Agency Service Corps.

Over the road stood the Inspection Bungalow, a wooden structure with tin roof. Beside the bungalow was the bamboo hut residence of Transport Superintendent. The village Pangin lay quarter of a mile up the hills. A mile furtherup was the other village Koreng.

Pangin is near the confluence of two rivers—Siang and Siyom which comes from Along. Siang here takes a turn to the North. The water of the two rivers are clearly marked, the blue water of Siyom and Saffron grey of Siang. The current of Siang has pushed back Siyom several feet inside forming a very deep pool near the confluence. Resting on the spur of the hill across Siyom was the village Yaksi. A porter track Zigzagging over the slope to reach the village.

Officials at Pangin lived a life of gay abandon. No

bitterness, no complaint for the rigours of living in remote interior.

Every one was anxious to hear me as I have brought the news of the outside world.

Down the slope a long caravan descended. A cheer again rant the sky. A party galloped (down to the river to receive them.

An hour later arrived Dharmaswar Barua, Base Superintendent, Karko forty miles up stream of Siang.

Dharmaswar Barua was bubbling with enthusiasm. He betrayed no fatigue. Gulping a mug of Apong he poked at every one cracking jokes.

In the evening when darkness descended a huge fire was lit up in the small playground. Scores of girls in bright red skirts, a conical cape on the head, black bodice, necklace covered with beads dangled on the bossom, formed a ring around the blaze. The glow of fire cast a crimson glare on their oval face. It was simply superb.

The girls started dancing swaying their bodies forward and backward or moved along the circular motion on the rhythm of the cheer leader who hold a long sword upright which made jingled sound at every twist of the hand. An impressive dance cast a deep impression on me. When the two lines forming the circle alternately came forward and fell back in quick rhythm singing the highly intoned song 'Ashi raiye gale gale'.

It was long passed midnight when we ended up. Mugs of beer called Apong poured down the throats. Yet I was amazed to see never ending thirst.

Suddenly Cyril Lyndoh steadied himself and started the chorus:

We are all jolly good fellows vivila company vivila vivila vivila more vivila vivila vivila more vivila company.

Next morning I took leave from the hospitable people and struck to the road to Along all alone. Chetri stayed behind at

Pangin. The distance is now 18 miles and must be covered before evening.

I followed the bank of Siyom, the main tributory of Siang. Its width only one-third of mighty river and water appeared never so deep.

The path narrowed considerably, jungle of reed and thatch came up to the edge. There were less cumbesome climbing as it followed the bank of the river.

I halted for some time at Tarak in a ramshackle building all thatch and bamboo structure bearing the grandiose name of Inspection Bungalow. A village lay behind across the terraced rice fields. Bare bodied women in short skirts planting rice seedlings. My approach temporarily halted their work. Swaying and gigling the women asked for tobacco smoke the most sought after commodity.

There were villages opposite the river where forest are cleared for jhum cultivation. This is a slash and burn method done in rotation from field to field.

Consecutive two years cultivation is made in one field and than abandoned for a number of years. At the end of the phase again the jungle is cleared, trash is burnt and crop sawn. Very little tillage is done on the soil.

Journey to Along—First Encounter with Gallong Adis

The valley widened at the approach of Along. A different set of people appeared before me. They were Gallong—the tribe who inhabit the western part of the district.

Here women keep their hair long, but men cropped the hair in a fashion different from Minyongs. It tappers behind, not cropped around the crown. A number of thin cane belts are tied in the waist. A white strip of cloth covered only the privacy. They put sleeveless shirt, wear conical cane hat and carry a dao more lighter and thin covered in sheath, one side of which tied intermittantly with cane strips.

Women wear black or white skirt which go well beyond the knee, profuse small bead necklace which carry a string of coins, cylindrical metal discs hung in the waist which give a continuous metalic sound while on move. Jungle of reeds now replaced the scrub forest. The narrow path lost in the maze of expossed roots and thick under growth. Tracing the foot prints ahead of me I followed the trail and ultimately found an opening.

A few huts appeared on a low ridge. A big thatch bungalow stood on a side over looking the river and the field. It was passed noon when I reached Along. I hurried to the house which to became my residence for two years.

Built with bamboo and palm leaves roof it had mud floor on large plinth area. Two wide varandha were on the front and the back. Doors and windows were of bamboo which are opened and closed by pulley system. The kitchen was separated from main building. There was no flush—a pit latrine served the purpose. Water brought by big bamboo tubes and tin buckets from the river a few hundred metres away.

Along—the western most out post had been the seat of Assistant Political Officer. Kwatim Khuma—the first post graduate from Mizo hills was the APO when I arrived.

All the dozen huts accommodating officials were on ridge running from east to west. The construction materials were the same—bamboo and palm leaves. No tin roof anywhere.

Over looking the beautiful Siyom, Kwatim Khuma's residence had higher plinth pitched with boulders brought from the river. Roughly dressed wood provided the beam land rafters, doors and windows. Ceilings were of woven bamboo mats. In the front and back yards there were orange trees.

Most of the constructions were done by Khuma and his energetic wife.

Facing the bangalow was a volleyball court. Near the field was the office of APO which had three rooms.

Behind the office, on the gentle slope was the dispensary complex with residence of Medical Officer and Compounder. Below the dispensary was a ramshackle building—the Inspection Bungalow where Section Officer and Mohorer of Public Works Department made their residence.

Down the ridge was a weaving training centre where girls from nearby villages learned to weave the cloths under an Instructress.

West of the Office along the spur was the Primary school, teachers quarter, boys hostel. Adjacent to the hostel was my residence.

Further west was the Assam Rifles Line. A platoon of Second Assam Rifles had two sprawling barracks, OC's residence, Quarter-Guard. Nearby the place was the football field.

An improvised air strip was constructed by Kwatim

Khuma over flat land on the approach to his residence. A big channel was plugged. All the labour for the construction was provided by the people. The field however not stable due to raw soil spread over it.

But daring pilot Anderson landed his twin engined Dakota and drove the wheels in the soft earth. The wheels then dragged off the ruts with considerable difficulty but plane managed to flew back to the base.

The dare devil pilot again bogged down on a mission to Mechuka—on a slushy ground at 6000 ft. With great professional competency he extricted the heavy machine and took off.

A stream 'Sipung' a tributory of Siyom marked the limit of the camp. A wire rope suspension bridge hung over it.

Near the stream were the huts of Political Interpreters and other Junior officials, barracks for Agency Service Corps.

Two shops owned by Zuala and Kamlova ran a brisk business with Biri, Tobacco and tea leaves.

Across Sipung was Dego—the nearest village to Along. It had twenty five houses. Close to the air strip was the village Panya.

A cluster of villages surrounded Along. The biggest was Kombong followed by Bagra, Jini, Darka, Doje, Pakam, Kabu, Kugi, Wak, Paya, Pobdi. Across Siyom river nestling on high spur was the Minyong village of Jomlo and Pankang.

News of my arrival created understandable flutter. Within minutes the house was crowded with inquisitive visitors. All were anxious to hear the news of Pasighat and outside world.

Officers were very few in small town Along. It was still an outpost with no radio, no post office and living on perpetual scarcity. All supplies came by head load from Pasighat covering the great distance.

With hearty welcome and exchange of pleasantries, I knew at once that I have become a part of the family. I was introduced to the staff one by one—Dr. Roy, the Medical Officer, T.Ao the Compounder, Yabin Lollen, the Weaving Instructress, Kalom Massar and Kariyom Riba, the Agricultural Demonstrators, Gogon Tamuli, Amiya Bezbaruah, Tileswar, Bora the school teachers, Jatin Borkakoti, Rabin Dutta, the Office Assistants, Boken Ete, Kitem Jamo, Longiya

Pakam, Minde Ete, the Political Interpreters, Das, Sectional Officer, Rameswar Roy, Hazarika the Mohorers of PWD.

Srikanta Das whom I was to relieve appeared a man apart from this happy gathering. He danced in sheer joy as now he would be leaving the place for good. Das dislocated his knee during a football match and being unable to tour he sought his voluntary retirement from the Frontier service.

Night descend on Along with eerie silence. Very few lamps flickered as oil was scarce. Most dinners were over by evening. Tea served without sugar and milk as these also costly commodity.

Salary never come in time nor the letters from home. Yet I found all were happy leading a carefree life. No commotion, no complaint nor even rivalry or bitterness. Every one's sorrow was shared by others. Joy or happiness also not the preserve of the individual.

Then there was the gossip. Staying in close circuit what else one can do to break the monotony or boredom? Life experience told in Juicy details. Even some one delve in religion and philosophy.

Das, the Sectional Officer of PWD believed in occult science, ghost and goblins. Sometimes his talk ran a chill over the spine.

Tamuli practised palmistry forecasting one's event in life. Bezbarua and Tileswar Bora talked about past, Kalom Messar, Kitem Jamo were interested in fishing and hunting, Dr. Roy on every day life in far away Calcutta.

But Ao the compounder was the joker who stole the lime light. His practical humour in Nagamese threw us in spontaneous laughter.

The School hostel had twenty students drawn from nearby villages. In evening when darkness descended some of them tiptoed to my house to hear the great stories of the war.

Takar Rime, Dangmo Jini, Marge, Puniya, Tumpak Ete, Mimar Lollen, Boku Ete, Jonpe Ete, Taken Riba sat around the low benches heard me talk on the exploits of war, marvels of science and of the land beyond India. They became so attached to me that whenever I wanted any service they readily obliged.

One day Mimar Lollen took me to his village Kombong six miles from Along over the undulating land of cultivation fields and forests.

Soon after crossing the Assam Rifles perimeter we stepped into the jungle of shrubs and bamboos. Now and then cleared patches appeared—the jhum fields where women in black apparel dibbled seeds with a stick. Small huts raised on wooden stilts stood in every field.

Occasionally we came across solitary hunters with bows and arrows, traps in hand going for a kill in the forest. Our approach raised the eye brows, the women stopped their works. Anxious queries made whether I would stop in their village. A visitor bring lot of diversion—song, dance and merriment.

We passed through Pakam, the headman Hosi Loyi offered us Poka, the invigorating rice beer brought in bamboo tube.

The narrow path descended to a stream meandering lazily along the contours. Small plots of wet rice fields appeared in the bank. There were permanent cultivation slowly making in roads to the traditional system.

We climbed to Kombo which was on saddle of a hill. The narrow path contorted by heavy shower and turned slushy and muddy. We passed through innumerable granaries called Nasu raised high over bamboo and wooden stilts. The doors were just closed with bamboo contraption, no where a lock used. Wooden discs were fixed on the pole to prevent the entry of rats. Below the floor a rough platform attached to keep the fire wood, pumpkin, gourds brought from the cultivation fields.

Kombo was the biggest village next to Bagra. 400 houses crowded in two separate parts of the village. There were citrus grooves, lemon and oranges. In season the village produce surplus but never find a market.

A dense forest covered the hill slopes. The forest extend to Kebang 25 miles over the hills.

Mimar arranged my stay in his house. His father Limi Lollen was the Political Jamadar—a respectable status given by the Government on consideration of his service. Political

Jamadar draw a salary but allowed to stay in the village. They were born leaders, yield considerable influence in the area.

I climbed to the house which was ten feet above the ground by a notched ladder and entered a spacious split bamboo platform. A fire place was in the centre where chips of wood were burning. A bed was unrolled on a bamboo cot raised 2 ft. further up in a corner. The floor and walls of the house were made of split bamboos fastened with cane strips. The roof was of palm leaves which eaves down a little to drain off water.

A big hall which was the only one served as living room where family stay for sleeping, cooking and drinking. There was no privacy, parents sleep in one side of the fire place while the children find the place on other side. There were no windows except three doors in the front, back and side. The room was dark, covered with smoke as there was no outlet. The fire place was in the middle of the room which was cut across the floor in a square shape, then covered with earth. The walls of the fire place were secured with battering of wood. The oven was made with three legged iron stand. Additional fire places also provided for large family.

Three trays were sus pended over the fire place—all glistening with soot of the escaping smoke. The lowest tray is used for smoked fish, meat which hang on a number of sticks. Next higher tray is used for paddy and millets. The top one is for keeping utensils.

Two notched ladders situated in two sides provide entrance to the house. The ladders inverted during the night to prevent entry of animals.

Women use the side ladder only while front one is meant for men. This taboo is strictly followed by women as violation will bring misfortune. Men however can use women ladder except on certain occasion like going to a hunt.

The platform in the front is used by guests and visitors as well for pounding grains, weaving of clothes. A pig sty is allowed on the broad side of the house which as well serve as latrine. The floor of the sty is of planks. In the sty only one or two pigs are kept and never allowed to go out. Other pigs

roam about freely in the village and serve the purpose of scavenger.

There are trays on the portico where various other domestic articles are hung.

The house provide accommodation for all, parents, sons, wives, unmarried daughters. Slaves also stay under the same roof.

In the open platform hung the skulls of mithun—(Bibos frontalis) a semi domesticated animal which roam in the nearby forest and the village. Skulls of other animals are also arranged in a row.

The valuable possession of the family is brass metal vessel 'Dangki'.

I took a look at the village. The square shaped houses are bigger in size but did not overlap each other—there are enough space in between. Drainage in the village however poor, pigs wallowing in muddy pool. A subterranean spring served as water hole. The women carried the water in long bamboo tubes in conical buskets.

We entered the 'Dere'—the community hall. Raised on stilts of wood the platform is of split bamboo, the roof is that-ched with palm leaves. The wall less Dere is the centre of the village. It serve as a meeting place as well, around a fire place.

The people of Along area are known as Gallong—an amiable and hospitable tribe of Adis. Apparently though appear friendly Mimar told the interesting tale of bloody war with a neighbouring people which threatened the peace hardly fifteen years back. The stream on the approach to Kombo was poisoned with the juice of a creeper enemy was surprised in a number of raid. Visit of Political Officer with a rush of troops brought the situation under control.

With a smile writ wide in his juvenile face Mimar told, this is now part of history.

A conical helmet made out of cane is worn by every man which protects them from sun and rain. The men wear include an open sleeveless shirt, a loin cloth of few inches wide enough to cover the privacy. The war helmets are decorated with tusks of wild bores and beaks of horn bill.

The old women wore heavy brass metal ornaments and small bead necklaces. Brass metal ringlet in the hand. The ear lobes are perforated and metal rings are hung. The weight of the heavy rings sometime torn the flesh of the lobes but the rings are supported by string round the ears. The girls wear the bead necklaces but silver coins perforated in the centre through which thread is passed. This also worn as necklace which has become popular fashion.

Weaving which died down now being slowly revived. The skirts are white coloured with three parallel black design in the centre and horizontal black stripes.

The girls are betrothed at very early age. Bride price is very heavy depending on the status of the person. It may run to fifty mithuns, a dozen of brass metal vessels to get the daughter of rich and influential person. Type of marriage—polyandry is commonly practised. The woman is accessible to all the brothers of the husband. The system might have come due to economic factor—the prohibitive bride price discourage many of the young men who are not so rich.

Betrothal of a girl at an early age led to piquant situation. The husband must have been younger than her or subsequently might not have been to her liking. There are enough of tension involving families and clan of either side which result in physical clash.

The council of elders known as Keba always busy in arbitrating in the case. The girl betrothed early in age grew up in her own village may develop friendship with a young boy. Such case if caught result in heavy punishment but clandestine affairs seldem leakout. It appears Gallong girls are never free to choose their own partners and they are forced to marry against their own will but subsequently accept the relation with mutual understanding.

It was amazing to hear the social custom of the tribe yet I never saw a girl morose or depressed. A Keba was in full swing in the village to decide the fate of a girl who stubbornly refused to go to her inlaw's village at Bagra. Yet the same girl appeared in all smiles in the evening dressed in beautiful white skirt and green blouse, bead coin necklaces to take part in ponung—the community dance.

A copious drink called poka brewed with fermented rice and millet. The daily life of the people is inconceivable without sufficient drink which give them lot of energy. In fact the fermented rice beer has food value as percentage of alcohol is not high to be injurious to health.

The preparation of poka involve frying the paddy or millet and dried over the fire place. These are then boiled and mixed with wood ash and a yeast 'Siye' added to it and packed tightly with canna leaves for three to four days for fermentation. A funnel shaped bamboo lined with leaves hung on a side. The contents is unpacked and put in the funnel. Hot water is poured over it. A receiver is placed at the bottom to collect the oozing liquid. This brew is supposed to be invigorating but seldom intoxicating.

Food of the Gallongs include everything except snake. There is no dirth of protein as jungle teem with animal life. They take boiled leaves or vegetables, no spices or oil added.

I was introduced to a Nyibu—the priest. He was Tamar Loyi the magico-religious functionary who was always busy in performing various rites mostly of sickness and never been free for a day.

One does not become Nyibu by choice. It is not also hereditory. A person from his very childhood narrate some incidents, fall in trance, communicate with spirits in an unintelligible language. When such characteristics become evident then he become a probationer under an elderly Nyibu and learn various ritualistic practices. Nyibu can be female also but male always dominate.

Belief in supernatural is deeply ingrained in the people. Many phenomenon appear to them mysterious as thunder, falling trees, whirlpool in the rivers. It is understandable that innumerable malevolent spirits frequent the land and it is Nyibu's duty to appearse them by appropriate chant and sacrifices.

The lengthy incantations are in a form of prayer but to unaccustomed ears these may appear as monotonous dialogue. The Niybu with associates goes on repeating the name of spirits, his abode, wandering and finally imploring him to cast off the shadow especially when a sacrifice has been made. The

blood of the sacrificed animal collected in bamboo tubes, smeared in bamboo netting and scraps—these are for the spirit. Effigies made from the bamboo shavings depicting the spirits are stuck to wooden poles near the houses. The place for sacrificial animal are determined by divination. The divination is done by reading into heart and liver of a fowl. The folds, holes, size of the heart and liver signify different causes. Divination is done by a prayer and incantation requesting the spirit to be with him. After the incantation the spirit obliges Nyibu to fall into a trance who then continuously recite the dialogue in sing song voice and dancing. Through him spirit tell the cause of the disease which is identified by reading in the liver: Particular sacrifices required also told in the liver of a fowl.

For all these task a Nyibu gets appropriate payment.

The people believe in concept of Doni Polo, the Sun Moon God who are the creation of Jini the supreme being. Jini is the creator of the universe and rules over it. He keeps an ever vigilant eyes on all living beings. He is all pervasive, omnipotent, neither the beginning nor the end. There is no sacrifice for him nor he is invoked. He is too great for the grasp of ordinary people.

It is to Doni Polo to whom people turn for blessing, swear oath.

Several taboos play important part in the life of the people. Killing of a tiger involves stoppage of eating meat for long time, recovery from the grasp of a Malevolent spirit would restrict movement in particular areas, bitten by a snake imposes heavy restriction in food and movement.

The victim's cooking utensils are not used by others. Women in period should sleep in separate fire place and not touch any household articles. Sacrificial objects are taboo for women.

Dream is also significant, it forewarns the events that may follow.

To evert the calamity foretold in a dream the Nyibu's help is sought.

The death is always associated with gloom. The spirit is responsible for claiming the body.

The grave is dug on the outskirt of the village. Usually the grave is 3 ft. to 4 ft. deep. The body is placed; face pointing the west. Clothes are put below the head. Bamboo and wooden battens are placed over and covered with leaves, earth dragged and pressed over. Articles of everyday use of the deceased are hung on the grave. Bamboo scrapping in different shapes and size are erected on poles—dedicated to the spirits.

The soul of the deceased goes either to heaven 'Gite' or hell 'Giche'. Good and benevolent person always would find a place in 'Gite' and person with cunning nature must go to 'Giche'. Gite and Giche are situated inside the earth. Three different paths lead to these places. For old and infirm 'Dirje', youngmen and women 'Dirde', young children 'Yapchi tabi'. Life there resemble the life on earth. Same position will be maintained, family wealth, possessions. They do cultivation, erect houses. But dead call the living all the time to join them. Their intermediaries are the invisible spirits.

Slavary was once dominent due to internecine war when in a raid persons were forcibly taken. There was regular trade on slave. The slaves when captured were kept confined and then gradually merge with the people. They were treated like other family members with food and shelter and almost behave equal except children of slave remain a slave.

They cannot marry in a master's family. Such an act will be a serious offence. They had to marry in their own groups. Any one marrying a slave also turn a slave.

The cultivation known as Jhum is slash and burn method. The country is hilly and covered with forest. Each year the cultivation area is decided by village leaders.

The trees are cut and debris cleared. The huge trunk of trees are allowed to remain in the clearing. After certain period when debris dry up the field is set on fire. Fire burns up everything leaving the huge trunk and branches of trees which only get charred. The ashes and humous serve as manure. The unburnt wood are used for contour logging, fire wood and fencing materials.

The task of clearing the jungle, putting fire, fencing are collectively done by people.

Paddy, maize seeds are dibbled by means of a stick. Millet are sown broad cast. Various other crops like chilli, brinjal, pumkin, yam are also sown mixed. All agricultural activities are to be done after proper propitiation to spirtis. Animals are sacrificed. Blood of these sacrificial animals are kept in the field in a bamboo tube.

Interculture is done for two three times depending on growth of weed.

Yield of crops from Jhum field is substantial as varieties of crops are grown together. The failure of one crop is compensated by the yield of other crops.

After consecutive two years cultivation, the field is reverted back to jungle growth varying for 7 to 8 years but this may extend to much longer period if the field lie far away from the village.

The amber of the fire place slowly died down when I took leave. Mimar, his father Limi and other village elders gave me an insight view of the fascinating tribe about whom I knew nothing till the other day.

Hipshon Roy, Assistant Political Officer arrived at Along on his way to Mechuka. He was bursting with enthusiasm, perhaps spirit of adventure to unknown territory must have motivated him. He left Along the next day of his arrival. Before his departure he and Kwatim Khuma came to my place for morning tea.

Soon after, the trail was followed by another band. Dr. Bhadra, the Medical Officer, Diengdoh, the compounder, Sangma, the office Assistant. They stayed a couple of days at Along feasting and gossiping. But a day came when they too left for Mechuka.

Where is Mechuka? No one had clear idea. It was beyond the horizon.

We were filled with profound sympathies for them, going as if for exile. Lucky are those who follow the east bound path which go down to Pasighat.

Dr. Bhadra carried packets of cigarette mixture enough for few months.

A frantic message came after just two months: 'Send mixture, if no mixture Biri if no Biri tobacco leaves'.

We searched the shops and found only two bundles of Biri which was sent through runner to Mechuka.

Das, our Sectional Officer of PWD, was an interesting person. He had humour too. To show off he used to smoke cigarettes—a rather costly commodity at Along but never offered any stick to any one.

But one day we found out the secret. His packet was always capstan, the best of all cigarettes.

We were wondering how he could get capstan cigarettes. One day to his bad luck cigarette packet fell from the hand and all the sticks spilled over the ground. Hurriedly we picked up and found to our amusing surprise the sticks were marked 'Lamp'—a very ordinary brand made of raw tobacco. Amidst peel of laughter poor Das made a rapid exit.

Boken Ete one day brought a man to my house—a hefty fellow in ruddy colour exuberating confidence. Boken Ete introduced him as Gidam Yomcha, the Political Jamadar and most influencial man in Karka Bango.

In subsequent days Gidam became a regular visitor to my house. I heard him talking of events of yester years when entire Karka Bango was seething with unrest. There was no law and order. A single event sparked off major clash.

It was at the instance of Peter James, the Assistant Political Officer of Pasighat that he undertook the mission to bring peace to the area.

Boken Ete also had similar tale to tell. He was from Bene village six miles from Along when Peter James spotted him and offered a job in APO's office.

Soon after he became Political Interpreter and undertook extensive tour in the area with Kwatim Khuma.

Bangoes—the group of villages were reorganised Kebang made effective by appointment of men of importance and leadership. Many disputes settled which had lingered for two to three generations.

But it was at Tada Dage in the frontier where he faced the greatest challenge. The area was inhabited by tough tribesmen known as Bokers who wanted to stay aloof. Kwatim Khuma with a pause of Riflemen went there but Bokers refused to see him. With great personal risk Boken ventured out all alone and made a truce with the leaders on one condition—a target shooting on a tree. If the arrows could hit the target Boken with the party would withdraw from the area.

It was a tempting suggestion. Bokers were born archers. Hefty young men lined up and shoot arrows with a show of confidence. But also, not a single arrow could hit the target.

Platoon was standing at little distance. With a signal of command all rifles opened up in ear splitting roar. Light machine guns brought up further fire. When it all ceased then TNT slabs were put on the base of the tree. The fire went through long line of fuse coil to detonator. With a terrific bang throwing orange yellow light and black smoke the huge tree collapsed to the ground which shook the earth as if struck by an earthquake.

It was then easy. Stubborn Bokers made a quick submission. A post with a pause of riflemen stayed back at Tada Dage.

Political Interpreters rendered useful service. This unique institution dates back to the years of early British penetration to the Frontier when communication with the tribes was difficult. At that time person with the knowledge of local language were called Dobashi. Later the term changed to Political Interpreter who took to more important task of interpreting Government policies. They became the spokesmen of the Government and in many cases settled disputes and led column parties to unadministered areas.

The policy of the Government at the time was least interference in traditional custom except war and blockades. A thin administrative control was exercised by periodical column tours by the Political Officers with a pause of riflemen who demonstrated the fire power at every place of halt. This atleast instilled fear in the tribesemen who rarely came in confrontation with the Government.

Boken though a later entrant to the Government service but made a quick rise by intelligence and dedication to works. He was sober and amiable and possessed a great deal of stamina. He was a frequent visitor to my house and we became mutual friends. l was introduced to many personalities of the area:—
Pakge Lomi, Hitum Loya, Tomo Loyi, Margin Loya, Kardo
Diyum, Kibe Ado, Tage Loller, Hosi Loyi, Kine Kamduk,
Nimmar Ete, Minkar Ete, Kore Bagra, Duksor Ete, Kidak Jini,
Pujom Pakam, Dui Jini, Boya Karbak, Takar Ngomdir.
Loniya Kamsi, Markar Angu, Dagi Angu, Gojum Lollen.

These people were born leaders, extempore speakers, intelligent and shrewd judge.

Some incidents at Along had tragic note. Dr. Roy who had developed some genuine interest in his work was suddenly posted out to Pasighat.

Dr. Roy had pleasant manners, knew his job well. But he fell in love with a girl whom he at first brought to hospital to train as Nurse. The girl was from Kombo village already betrothed to a boy much younger than her.

Involvement with a tribal girl is a serious matter in the eyes of the Government. Warnings were issued to Dr. Roy which was followed by a threat to remove him from the service. But better sense prevailed with the Chief Medical Officer who instead of removing from service transferred him to Pasighat.

Ugly scenes followed when band of people from Kombo came with ropes to drag the girl to the village. She was forcibly lifted and carried to the village amidst loud protest and cry.

We all felt sorry for Dr. Roy. He was so affable, gentle and soft spoken but all on a sudden became much depressed. Ultimately he had to leave Along with disgrace.

Gogon Chandra Tamuli, the teacher also married a girl from Kugi village seven miles from Along. He was however allowed to marry on certain considerations. The girl was beautiful, mild mannered and remarkably adjusted herself to Tamuli who changed her name as Malati. She educated herself to some extent and ultimately found a job as teacher after Tamuli's death.

But Dr. Ghose from Daring dispensary became melancholy and depressed which turned him into a mental case. He came to Along soon after my arrival and had been whispering in the ears of everyone about conspiracy of the people to trap him. We were hearing rumours of his affair with a woman but did not know the details. Some months later he was escorted out of Daring and shifted to a mental asylum.

The dispensary remained without a doctor after departure of Dr. Roy. T. As the compounder remained behind to treat the patients.

At times I had feverish tendency especially after tedious day work. Ao's diagnosis invariably pronounced it malaria. Every time when I had a complaint he brought a syringe and needle and pushed quinine.

The exhaustion which must have been due to low blood pressure but my belief in quinine remained firm. A year later when a new MBBS doctor arrived I went to him with a complaint of fever and requested him to push quinine injection. Doctor in sarcastic humour offered me his chair since I could diagnose the disease myself. I felt miserable and left the room in a huff. Later of course we became close associates and he developed a liking for me.

Once Tileswar Bora developed fever. All knowing Ao diagnosed it quickly as symptom of malaria. Ampule after ampule of quinine were thrust to his body yet the fever persisted. The temperature shoot up to 104° F.

There were no doctor within easy reach. Frantic messages flashed by WT to Pasighat but no one came. It was a desperate moment. Bora lay in bed writhing with agony. Mrs. Khuma the wife of Kwatim Khuma had been a Nurse in Calcutta hospital. She took a look at the patient and diagnosed it as enteric fever.

Luckily ampule of chloremycetine were in the stock. A course was immediately administered.

To our great relief Bora recovered on the sixteenth day. A few days delay would have been fatal.

Mrs. Khuma was nice pleasant lady. She was a moving spirit in the camp. She visited my house frequently inquiring everytime my welfare and need. It was difficult for a lady to stay in a place like Along where bare necessities considered a luxury. Yet she stood by her husband sharing the joy and sorrows equally without a complaint. Some years later when she died I heard the news with profound shock and dismay. Khuma had two little children, a son and a daughter. Both are now well placed in life.

Deep Inside the Frontier— Journey through Minyong Land

The department of Agriculture wanted to popularise short staple cotton in the hills and launched an ambitious programme. A bag full of seeds arrived in late July and I went out on a long tour to Minyong and Bori area. APO provided me with an Interpreter, Tajom Panor, a Minyong from Pangin village. A short statured, stout and hefty fellow Tajom was ex-Assam Regiment man and looked every inch a boxer. Soon I found in him humour. He cracked jokes, narrating in gusto his numerous exploits in the army. Familyobligation forced him to quit the army and seek job in his own district.

We crossed Siyom by bamboo raft. The river though in spate was flowing placidly below the cultivation field of Kabu. The bamboo raft was crudely designed—it tilted every time on shifting of our position. I laid down on the platform clutching the floor in both hands.

Across the river was a dense forest in an area called Peying Reying. So deep and vast was its expanse that we almost lost our bearing. The porters went on a different route by a suspension bridge near Jini village.

Peying Reying area is a den of animals. Deers and wild boers were plenty. Jomlo, Pangkeng villagers who own the area regularly make kiruk, the hunting expedition.

We arrived at Patum and stayed as a guest of Basanta Barua the teacher of the school. So lonely was the life in midst of forest that every passing cloud reminded him of home far away.

Sitting on the rampart of the suspension bridge he used to sing with a melancholy note: 'Daorer Are Are jam moi Lahori oi—in the cover of the clouds I will float to thee!

Barua gave me an introduction to Nandeswar Kalita, the teacher of Sirit School eight miles furtherup.

Next morning we moved out leaving Barua who looked at us with vacant eyes. I felt an overwhelming sympathy for him. Life was no comic to him—it was certainly a harsh reality.

We moved via Pankeng and Jomlo village which were on the top of the hill. The climb was tedious by a tortuous foot path. The path was so narrow that every now and then feet slipped on the slippery ground. Rain water cut deep gullies, tree roots interwined passed across the track, the earth soddened with water. In torrential rain this turn like a rivulet when rushing water come down the slope. Jungles closed on both sides almost camoufledge the path.

Small rectangular houses on stilts stood on both sides. These were the granaries—the kumsum. The bamboo platform was four feet above the ground. Single room granary is a store house for harvested grains. There was no lock and key. The door was secured with single cane strips.

A few pigs strayed away from the village. The snout dug out earth which made the track more muddy.

We entered through a long dark corridor lined with hideous figure of spirits. One standing upright over the gate with bamboo hat. Wild fern leaves, bamboo shaving, imitation spears, arrows struck on the effigy of a long raptile.

After crossing the gate we passed through village grave yard till houses were reached. Over each grave is a simple superstructure with palm leaves two feet above the ground. Gourd vessels, some beads and brass ornaments hung on the pole

The dwelling houses are low rectangular structure constructed with bamboo and fronds of cane. The houses were on

stilts. The rough dressed wooden platform rise only two feet above the ground. The roof of the building eaves down considerably almost touching the grounc. The walls of the buildings were with rough dressed wood lined norizontally one above the other tied with cane strips. A wall less open porch juts in the front in two parts—one is under the roof and the other a feet lower but with no superstructure.

We entered a long house-Mosup or community hall. It had wooden platform not fixed by nail. The half wall covering partially afforded some privacy.

Soon a crowd gathered, men, women and children. Naked children clung to their mothers.

Women wore short brown skirts. Their upper bodies were bare. Hairs cropped around the crown and faces tatooed with vertical and horizontal cross marks. Beads blue and pink hung profusely which partially covered the bossom. Funnel shapped metal discs plugged to the ears, in the wrists bracelets added to decoration.

Men wore a loin cloth only few inches wide which partially covered the genital but on the back buttock was bare. Some had put up a long leaf instead of cloth. One or two old men were found completely naked. The hair was cropped around the crown. A small metal disc with flower design stuck on the ear lobes. Some had small funnel shaped metal object put in the ear lobes. The neck is covered with two or three lines of blue and white beads of necklace.

Both sex chewed heavily a particular bark of a tree which made their teeth red. Many were smoking tobacco in bamboo pipes.

Copious drink 'Apong' was brought in big gourd vessel. A single gourd laddle brought out precious rice beer. The laddle went round mouth to mouth. I was however offered a cup. The beer was sweet having made from rice.

Tajom explained the purpose of our visit which aroused lot of curiosity. There were murmur. A mono syllabic word 'aido' uttered frequently. 'Aido' means good.

A man with red coat got up and delivered a long speech without a pause. Tajom explained to me that he expressed his great appreciation for the efforts of the Government to bring

peace in the area. They now can freely move any where without fear. But their village is seldom visited by any officials. Now 'Khasiang Migom' has come and all feet very happy.

The term 'Khasiang' intrigued me. Tajom told, a few years back a khasi Agricultural Demonstrator who was the only departmental official in Siang Valley visited the village and distributed some seeds and tools. His distributed seeds germinated well and produced a thorny plant which borne small edible fruits. As they did not know the name of the plant nor the tools which he distributed, the term Khasiang came and departmental officials all were also known as Khasiang. In subsequent years I heard variety of funny terms for the Agricultural and Veterinary staff. Asi Arig or wet rice, Bijon or seed, Ettum or castrator!

They piled us with so much of present—eggs, dried fish and pleaded us to stay for the night. Girls were more determined, they won't let us go. A party soon formed which started ponung, the song and dance. It was beautiful under a morning sky.

I have entered an area vastly different from Along. Here none knew any other language except their own. The tribe is Minyong. Life moved exactly the same as in the past. Pattern never changed. People are so simple and honest. Tajom told me theft is unknown and no one wilfully commit any wrong.

We danced a few steps along with the girls. A man with a skirt wrapped around the waist moved on toes in rapid stride with tinkling sound of the sword which he held upright in one hand. He was singing a line which is repeated in chorus by other girls.

I brought some simple present of salt and Biri. A wide smile of satisfaction enlarged in everybody's face, I felt myself so peevish to give them so little.

our next visit was to Mori—nestling on the spur of a hill. The narrow track zigzagged over the rough terrain with alternate climb and descent. Here people prefer short cut no matter how exhausting the climb.

We passed through jhum fields. Large areas are retrieved from forest and turned in to temporary cultivation fields. The

perimeter was strongly fenced with burnt logs and branches of trees. So strong was the fence that hefty mithuns cannot break through.

Women in mini skirt and bare bodies bent double busy in dibbling paddy seeds in the shallow hole made by a stick. In their back hung a small cane basket where seeds are kept. Long bamboo smoking pipe dangling from their mouths. Here and there half charred logs are placed to make a rough contour line. This I presumed to prevent the run off soil. Yams and tapiocas are cultivated in the contours. So many varieties of crops grown simultaneously, mustard leaves, brinjal, chilli, tobacco, linseed, soyabean, ginger, millets, paddy, maize. Stiff slopes inside the jhum are covered with sweet potato vine. Three types of millets are grown—jobs tear which attain a height of 5 fit to 6 fit, fox tail millet and finger millet. The later type is used for preparation of beer.

The field run from top of the hill to the valley below covering an area of several hundred hectares of land. Patches of forest interspersed, these are kept to preserve the water holes. On the top of the hill tree lines are maintained, an ingenious innovation for soil conservation.

There are several cultivation huts big and small called poyup where a shelter is available from sun and rain. Poyup serve the purpose of temporary granary. These are on raised platform a few feet above the ground. The bigger poyup are used for night shelter, this contingency only arise during heavy works.

From Mori a path went to Molom and Pessing cutting through virgin forest.

The scenery unfold from Mori is truely magnificent. Being situated on the top of a hill range it had the advantage to command the view of wide Siyom valley. Many villages are seen from here—Lorging, Damda, Jomo, Jomlo. Pangkeng, Pessing, Molom, Rumgong Mopung, Jini, Pakam, Kombo, Bagra, Kabu, Dego, Pakam, Ngomdir, Panya, Tadin, Angu.

Clothed in ever green forest the range after range of hills run haphazardly beyond the horizon. Here and there white patches of jhum appeared before the naked eyes. Ribbon like water course run through deep valleys. We moved to Jomo an hour's journey from Mori. A stiff descent led to the bank of river Sirit from where we climbed to the village.

Sirit is a tributory of Siyom. Though a small river the monsoon rain made it flappy, the turbid water rushing down in swift current and we had to cross by a suspension bridge.

The path everywhere were the same—narrow, tortuous and on stiff gradient.

I was yet to accustom in marching. The panting and heaving, drinking of water frequently made me more thirsty and tired. Tajom patiently followed, inspiring me everytime with the good news of the village within reach.

But distance in the hills always deceptive. By now I understood eye estimate cannot measure the miles.

A small hut lay by the grandiose name as Inspection Bungalow was near the entrance of the village. An old man was the care taker. He was addressed as 'Hoki'— a mutilated short form of chowkidar. Hoki received us well and gave a place where I could rest at least for an hour.

Huge trees stood near the village. The narrow path ran through a depression, dark and foreboding which was guarded by stone wall. An ingenious gate provided an opening. It was covered with hideous effigies, spears, arrows struck on the black banana stem, a dog—its belly slit open hung on a pole, bamboo tubes dangling from the horizontal bar of the gate. The smell of the rooting carcas was nauseating to my unaccustomed nose.

We hurried past the gate. The bamboo tubes rattled and made a clattering sound.

Later I learnt that this was to forestall an epidemic. The spirit accompanying the traveller will make a hasty retreat seeing the magnificent array of armour and rattling sound of bamboo tubes. Curious though appeared at the time but subsequently I came to realise that the simple tribe knew better by experience than the civilized world the effective way of quarantine.

Descending again by the stiff incline we reached the river Sirit. Across it on an elevated ground stood the School where we stayed for the night.

It was long passed midday. Students made a beeline—looking at me with curious eyes. All of them were grown up boys to be students any more of the Primary school.

There was yet no sign of teacher. Suddenly a man appeared from no where. A mug in one hand and wearing a shabby pent and an open sleeveless black shirt, beads tied on the tuft of the hair on the back, hair cropped in the fashion of the locals, he was muttering in low voice something unintelligible. He thrust the mug of red tea which was without sugar, telling in Assamese at last that how long he was waiting for me in the bridge point.

I was jolted from my seat. Surprise writ large over the face. This is Nandeswar Kalita, the teacher to whom Barua has sent an introductory letter.

Kalita did not wait for the nicessities. He barked a command to hefty boys in local lingo who scattered like beaten dogs. A plateful of cold rice smeared with lintel was laid before me. Kalita directed me unpretentiously to eat the meal at once.

Sun was already setting in western horizon. Tajom found a better place in the village. Boys one by one left for the home.

Kalita began to narrate the horried details. A dangerous spirit hobbering in the surrounding trying to descend on him. So he has done propitiation on the advice of the Miri—the shaman of the village. Miri has given the tust of beads which now hung on the back of his head. A pig has been slaughtered yet the obdurate spirit never like to leave him. He moved from his seat, pointing ominously to a tall tree on the perimeter of the school., he shrieked and uttered a cry 'look, look intently here he has come—No', he must go, I won't leave him'!

At first I assured myself of hearing a fantasy. But as the night advanced an eerie silence descended on the campus. The murmuring sound of the river only filtered through the air and the mystery deepened.

I dozed off to sleep on one of the bamboo cot in the room. On the other cot Kalita laid wide awake; continuously repeating. 'Poka veti tinor ghar—Hari hor hari hor'—solid plinth and tin building, oh god, oh god.

Suddenly a violent shriek jolted me out of the bed. Kalita was dancing on the bamboo cot which creaked in every step. Two knives held in his hand.

In high pitch he cried out 'I deserted from Army—my name is Kalita, I swamped across the turbulent river, I am Kalita, I faced the desperate mob I am Kalita—never come, never come near me I will pierce the body slashing through the air, go, go away at once'!

Fear gripped me instantly. What a terrible predicament to have landed in the hand of a lunatic.

The high pitched shriek continued for some time then it died down slowly. Gnashing the teeth and angry snorting Kalita then lay still.

For the rest of the night the sleep never came. It was impossible in the circumstances. I desperately looked for the dawn to make a swift break.

With the day break Kalita was altogether different. Wide smile greeted me. There was no sign of last night's happening.

A student laid the breakfast of popcorn and sugarless tea. Kalita told me to hurry up as he wanted to show me his garden.

The garden Iay a few hundred metres away where maize and millet growing profusely. Surcharged with emotion Kalita narrated the cruel apathy of the department who never looked after his welfare. How could be survive without bare necessities. No one cares not even reply to his innumerable letters. So this garden built up by his hard labour now provided the only sustainance. Without this his life would have been doomed.

Surprisingly not for a moment he mentioned about the hobbering spirit, it was totally off from his mind.

I was naive to believe his story. On return to the school, Kalita dutifully advanced the inspection book where I wrote line after line pouring out the feelings against the department which has been so harsh and cruel to a poor teacher languishing in an inhospitable place.

Kalita meticulously copied it out and despatched post haste to his office at Pasighat.

It was some months later when I heard the terrible

commotion it raised. There was consternation, a near hysteria in the Directorate. How such a Junior official show audacity to censor the Department.

A letter soon went to the Government suggesting my immediate dismissal. A narrow minded bufoon was behind the move.

Fortunately at that time departmental rivalries dominated the scene. My boss took the matter rather casually and explained it away by saying that being new in the service I did not know the limitation. A warning could be issued to be discreet in future.

The entire episode died down. The warning letter also did not come.

Interestingly the garden which Kalita showed me idid not belong to him. It was owned by a villager.

Kalita implored upon me to stay a day more with him but I had enough of his company. Bidding a hurried good bye I started for a mile long journey to Rumgong.

It was climb again by the narrow path to the village. A festival was on, a crowd gathered immediately to offer me a rousing reception.

My bed was unrolled in a corner of the Mosup, the long community hall. Huge logs of wood scooped out in the middle like a dugout, lay to the entrance. The platform and walls are made of roughly dressed wood. No nails used anywhere. The joints are secured by tying cane strips.

There were half dozen fire place running along the centre of the hall. Crowd of people, man, women and children sitting around the fire places indulging in idle gossip. Some raw meat dangled from the lower rafters. The fire was burning in each place.

The Mosup was on an incline of the slope. The building was 100 ft long and 20 ft wide. One of the broad side which provided the entrance was almost on ground level. A narrow varandah outside the room provided a corridor.

There were five entry points. Huge logs—the centre of which scooped out laid on each entrance to provide the passage.

The back side of the building also had narrow passage, the ground level here was 7 to 8 ft. A small enclosure slightly below the passage provided as pig sty. This also served as latrine. The enclosure had wooden platform and walls are properly secured.

The entire Mosup was in low height and did not run in straight line. It was curved a little. The palm leaves roof drooped down on either side to drain off water.

The dwelling houses were much smaller. These are rectangular shape and stand hardly 2 to 3 ft above the ground. The roof eaves down on either side almost to the ground. The houses are same pattern as in Jomlo village, there is no variation.

In the extended platform women had their looms. The inside portico is used for keeping various articles of outdoor use.

The house is a single room tenement where the family stay. The room is dark from smoke and absence of ventilation. In the centre there is a fire place which is square shaped and raised by struts of wooden posts from the ground upto the platform level. The bamboo platform is cut out and wooden logs are placed on which earth is spread in thickness. The walls are guarded by wooden planks. Three legged iron or stones serve as oven.

There were four tiers over the fire place upto the roof. The first one is for meat, smoked fish, chilli for drying. The second one is for millet, paddy or small chips of wood. The third one is also used for keeping meat, smoked fish. The fourth one which is below the roof had spacious place where fire wood, buskets are kept.

The pig sty is attached to the house on the side which is slightly below the platform level. Passage is kept between the pig sty and the house. The pig sty also serve as latrine. Castrated pigs are kept in the pig sty and never let off. Other pigs roam freely in the village and serve as scavengers. Dogs have free access to the house.

The room is collectively used by the family but distinct places are marked for members. Owner of the house and his wife sleeps on the rear side of the room near the fire place.

Grownup children sleep by the side of the wall where bamboo tubes for collection of water are kept. Near the other wall facing pig sty is the sleeping place for the children. Guests are allowed near fire place facing the door.

A low notched ladder is placed at the entrance. The pounding of paddy by pistle and mortar is done in a corner of the room near the exit.

There are few clothings, one or two sheets of hand woven clothes used as covering. In winter a hand woven blanket of cotton may be put over the body. For head rest hard wooden logs used. They mostly sleep on the bare platform on a woven bamboo mattress. The fire seldom die in the hearth. In winter the chips are thrust occasionally to kindle it vigorously for the warmth. Mosquitoes are less but bugs are plenty especially minute pig bug which causes lot of irritation.

The lay out of the village is haphazard—the houses are too close almost roof to roof. Narrow streets pass in between. There is no drainage only the incline of the land help drain out the water. In heavy rain slush and mud make muddy pools where pigs gleefully wallow. Mithuns frequent the village for salt lick. The droppings of animals make the surroundings more dirty and unhygienic. Water is drawn from a subterranean spring in tall bamboo tubes.

There are small plots fenced around where leafy vegetables, chilli, yam and a few plants of sugarcane, ginger are grown. Orange plants though not numerous are also seen in the village but a few jack fruit trees and pomello are found near the river valley.

Tajom developed a cramp and we were forced to stay for two days. The enforced stay however been a boon to me as I roamed about freely to gather more intimate knowledge.

I struck friendship with Tapiyang Tatak who is the gam and Mitkin Komut, a most amiable person. Mitkin also known as gopu gam because of his huge enlarged goitre on the throat.

Goitre is endemic in this region. A number of people suffer from this ailment caused by iodine deficiency.

Tapiam Tatak had a large family. He had a number of mithuns, jhum fields, brass metal vessels 'Arem', beads 'Tadoks' and above all band of workers, who could attend to the job.

His son Digong is a Political Interpreter who came to the village on leave. I soon found in Digong an affable and a person of gentle nature.

Digong took me up the hill known as libar. The winding path went several hundred feet to cross a saddle to reach Siang valley. We however roamed in the jungle. Digong wanted to hunt deer.

Massive trees of enormous girth covered the area. This is the virgin forest, never allowed to be cut because it maintains the game so valuable for the people.

The trees belong to so many different species. There are some which oozes resin, bear fruits small and large, the creepers which climb up to the massive height of trees, tall tree ferns, wild sago, lichens, mosses, canna and varieties of flowering plants, cane, tall banana, bamboos.

Inside the forest it is dark and foreboding. Sun light rarely penetrate here, ground remain moist, mosses cover the fallen woods. Insects and beetle raise continuous chorus, leeches crawl on the leaves or fall from the tree on the unwary traveller. Snakes—cobras, vipers are all plentiful. There are so many different species of lizard including one which completely comoufledge the body.

I could not penetrate the forest deep inside. It must be several miles in its expanse. Digong told me it extend to mountains where familiar trees are replaced by conifers.

Digong came out at last from the forest without a game. All he wanted to do was to present me with a stag which unfortunately he could not bag.

We sat on stone slabs facing the valley below. The place is called 'ESARNOTI'I' or windy place. We unpacked our lunch packet and ate a meal.

Digong told me the custom of the Minyongs which differ so much from the Gallongs. Here girls are seldom betrothed in early age. The bridal price consist of some compulsory service and offer of meat and drink. Divorce is permitted and women can remarry at her will. Free mixing of boys and girls is not a taboo. An institution known as Rasheng where young girls sleep and find a partner in a boy. In Rasheng she learns the technique of weaving, dance and song from the elderly

companions. The boys sleep in mosup and may visit the Rasheng, mount guard in the village and perform all social duties strictly enjoined by the community. Here Kebang is democratic where every one can participate, talk freely without fear and favour.

The most interesting part in the life of the Minyong is however ponung. Except during heavy works the girls gather in any one's house or in the ground outside to dance which continue well passed midnight. During solung festival a narrator tells the history of the people. This sing song tale continues for 2 or 3 days.

Here currency or coin has little value. Bartar is the common practice. No one understand the value of money with which they cannot trade. Many of the crisp notes remain inside the bamboo tube ultimately get rotten.

In the village there is no thief nor there is any case of wilful pilferage or stealing. No lock and key used anywhere as it is not necessary. Doors are closed with cane strips to prevent the stray animals getting inside. There is no cheat, thugs not even liars. People are always afraid of supernatural wrath for falsifying the truth. Customary law is very strict as 'Kebang'—the village council is strong.

We came down from the height of the hill to the village. In the evening a big fire lit up outside the mosup. I was dragged from house to house for feast of meal and to drink—'Apong'. Hospitality was spontaneous and must be reciprocated. To decline an invitation is impolite. Despite the strain I could not refuse to go.

Inside the room of a house the light only came from burning wood. Smoke hanged heavily almost choking the eyes and throat. Dogs ran freely. Men with round cane helmet sat lazily around the fire place with drawn up knees and smoking tobacco in bamboo pipes, women hustling back and forth preparing the precious brew and cooking meal.

I squeezed myself in between. A small log was brought forward which served as a seat. A packet of canna leaves unrolled—out poured the rice cooked from the coarse red grain from jhum field, boiled leaves, pieces of meat, a chilli which was too hot and pinch of brown salt. For others a

common plate of leaves laid before them and huge ball of rice, meat clumps, boiled leaves are poured. All of them shared the plate together gulping the rice and meat. In half darkness I mistook the chilli and swallowed it. Awful tears ran from the eyes, mouth burnt but is too unchivalrous to cry for help. Fortunately no one took notice.

There was very little water to wash. All of them packed the leaves and threw down the platform and wiped their hands. Strange but true there is no case of tooth decay or awful smell from the mouth. Though bath is not taken regularly nor any care of personal hygiene the wasting diseases are very few. There are only few persons who had bald head.

Digong told me only two cases of leprosy, and one case of TB has been found in the village. There is no veneral disease despite sexual freedom. But when the civilization come the picture may be different.

Outside the house the girls already started the rhythm. Entire village has turned up. A beautiful moon illuminated the hill side.

I could never forget the thrilling experience of participation in the dance. One time the girls held each other full length over the shoulder, swaying, repeating the line of a song sung by the leader who balancing on toes, rhythmically stepped forward with long sword held upright in hand which made tinkling sound on every twist of the hand. Another time the group went forward and backward then swung about turn clapping their hand.

One interesting line of a song however amused me: 'Ghoiko Regimen Second Assam Rifle'. At least it shows the popularity of the Assam Rifle as a vanguard of the frontier.

The dance continued for how long I did not know. Before mid night my eyes were drooping by tiredness and I beat a retreat to retire to cosy bed.

Next morning Digong told me the ponung continued till cock crow. Yet girls never felt fatigue like me. They strapped the busket in their back and ran off to the jhum to attend the busy schedules of the day.

I was filled with secret admiration for the zest of life of

this simple people yet untouched by civilization. It defied my comprehension as to where from they derived the immense vitality and strength. There is no weaklings in the society nor physically handicapped person. No one depend on any one as if from the very birth the nature has taught them how to be self reliant.

The sky was overcast. Soon it broke loose with torrential shower. In summer it is not unusual.

Yet we moved out. Umbrella is useless in a jungle path which is too narrow and tortuous. Obnoxious leech found a hay day clinging its dirty body on foliage, it stood erect to stick to an unwary traveller.

It was a hour's march from Rumgong to Mopung. I wore a sun hat with wide brim which protected the face from lashing rain. Following the example of Tajohn I also carried a large palm leaf in one hand yet the clothes soaked and body drained with water. The socks and the boot were all wet.

Suddenly I found to my horror blood trickling down from the groin. At first I was seized with panic. Tajom quickly took a look. Opening my under cloth 'I found two leech fattened with blood clung to delicate portion. In the feet also these penetrated through the holes of the socks.

Removing the leech by tobacco fluid Tajom applied some powdery substance from the bark of a tree. The oozing of blood then seized.

Arriving at Mopung village I took a stick and tied a cloth with tobacco and salt at the end. In every step I looked for leech climbing up and touched the cloth bundle which immediately paralysed it and fall off.

Mopung much smaller than Rumgong lie on the slope of a hill. We stayed for sometime in the mosup to dry our clothes and boots near the fire.

Muibang, Gam of the village brought a tube of Apong. By now I became accustomed to brew forgetting the advice of learned doctors at Pasighat.

We left Mopung for Molom not far from village. The path goes along a ridge. Both sides extensive jhum fields sloping down to river far below.

Molom is a big village with more than one hundred

houses. People are the same tribe—simple and unassuming. On my approach their faces litup with curiosity. I was astonished to find an Assam Rifle recruit from the village, Talong Taggu who came on leave from his unit, spoke in a flair of Nepali—the language of the Assam Rifles. He is a smart boy but appeared docile and obedient.

My arrival at Rumgong is known to everyone. Here news travel very fast. Nothing remain hidden for long.

We however could not oblige the people to stay in their village. Our destination was to Pessing where we would halt for the night.

The rain now ceased. Except some patches of forest the entire hill side is covered by jhum fields. Going by the jhum field one does not feel tired as the climb is provided with rough steps made with parallel wooden sticks. Slopes are cleared where charred logs scattered on the ground. Seeds are sprouting, tender shoots throwing a splash of green here and there. Everywhere the people are busy mostly the women. Their otherwise beautiful face marred by tatoo marks and constant chewing of the bark of the tree which reddened the teeth. String of canes tied over the ankles. Their legs also tatooed. Strong calf muscles is a source of additional strength for both men and women who move in ease over the hills with heavy loads on their back.

Pessing is also called Sipeng. From here a view of Along is seen. So near yet so far. A track sloped down towards Mori and Jomlo.

Next day we had same problem with the porters. At night some girls already tied knots on the loads which established their right to carry the loads. Here people readily come as porter rather there is regular clamour as to who should first carry the load. Much jostling, dragging and elbowing result amidst shouting and abuse on each other.

Rumgong girls wanted to go as far as Yogong but Pessing girls won't allow them to carry further. It was with great difficulty Tajom sorted out the problem. This phenomenon repeated in all villages whether in Minyong or Gallong area.

We marched to Yogong ten miles from Pessing village. The path followed deep precipice, boulders strewned on either side. So narrow and precipitous that at times it appeared dangerous. On little disturbance the stones rolled from above. Ahead is the fathomless depth and single misstep would surely spun the body. I walked with greatest caution but the porters and Tajom did not feel anything, for them it is as easy like every day walk. Deep scar of earthquake visible everywhere. It must have wrought a havoc.

At Yogong village I stayed in the mosup, precariously hung on the slope. It escaped my imagination how the people could stay here so stiff is the face of the hill. There is not a few feet of level ground. The houses rise one above the other supported on array of crossed stilts of timber. Boulders strewn everywhere, a jerk may cause these to roll heavily on the houses to bury under heavy pile.

A river Yobung seen far below. Its angry roar travelled up the hill. Yet gam Taggu told me in confidence that no one is scared and so why should I fear.

I asked him about earthquake which occurred only two years before. Gam narrated grim happenings on that fateful day of 15 August, 1950.

The village was so calm and quiet. The Jhum field had luxuriant crops. Harvest was so near. They just completed the festival of solung.

It was raining but not so heavy. Night was dark and everyone was asleep. Suddenly a big roar ripped the hill, hoofs of countless mithuns galloping in speed towards the village. A jerk so violent and massive which threw them out as the house tilted. There were cries of men, women and children mixed with squeal of pigs, barking of dogs and crowing of cocks.

In the pitch darkness nothing was visible. For how long it continued no one exactly remembered. It must have been an hour. Big stones rolled from above. A dozen houses perished. At least fifteen people died. Next morning they saw in horror the large devastation, the precious crops in the jhum field all gone.

It was 'Taro moton' the earthquake. The malevolent wiyu the spirit has been responsible for the devastation. Every village has been affected.

They did not know much about the Government. No

one visited them except Peter James who was affectionately called Jembo but that too a few years earlier of the earthquake.

Help came much later. They wanted salt, some utensils and valuable dao. One day they were called to Along where they went by long detour as bridge over Siyom near Jini torn away. There at Along Kwatim Khuma gave them some clothes, salt and utensils.

But in spite of the havoc of earthquake none would like to go elsewhere. Here all their forefathers were burried. The land is plentiful though some of it damaged by the earthquake. The air is pure and healthy. Diseases were so few.

This attitude of the people was really a paradox. They lived all along with all danger yet remain so fearless. They know by experience that survival is for the fittest and only cowards make retreat.

In the stony land however growth of crops appeared quite healthy. Along with paddy they cultivate a variety of millet, the jobstear they call 'Angngiat' which give a heavy yield. There are plenty of sweet potato vines 'ENGIN TARI'. The gam Taggu is naturally not worried about food shortage.

Apart from the yield of jhum fields the surrounding jungles provided enough of edible vegetables so much that in the evening I saw women returning back from the field carrying busketful of leafy vegetables.

Their cooking being so simple that food value always remain. The rice is not washed, the measured quantity just put into a brass pot with some water and then boiled over a fire. When fully boiled the lid is covered with a leaf and pressed by a stone weight. The vegetables and meat also boiled, washing is seldom done. No spices or oil ever used. Only salt and grinded chilli is added while taking meal. Living in salubrious climate away from pollution the people have maintained their heath so well that it must be an envy to others in civilized world.

Mv eyes opened after seeing the reality of life at Yogong. From Yogong a track led to Siang Valley via Sine village. Two other remote villages Lishing and Meshing situated farther north in the molin hills where no one went.

Since these villages are in the dead end I decided to go to Yosing through which an exit route led to Siyom valley.

I have now entered an area almost untouched by outside world. The journey has become more and more difficult. Yosing is also in 'Molin Hills'. This is actually a mountain range, upper part remained enveloped in snow during winter. It is massive, soaring so high in the sky.

We went down to Yobung river a sheer drop of 2000 ft from Yogong. To walk along almost a vertical track is exasperating as balance is often lost by momentum. Descent by stiff slope cannot be slow, the body is dragged to the front by sheer pull. The path narrow as usual, slippery and muddy and it never afforded a good grip. The hunting boot had grooves on the sole and this atleast given some protection otherwise with canvas shoe it is dangerous to walk as slide i inevitable. I was carrying a stick, the pointed end stuck to the ground before I made the next move even then I spinned myself two three times and surged forward inuncontrollable speed. It was a hair raising experience.

The river a bare 100 ft wide is passing through a narrow gorge. It is fuming with monsoon rain and rushing over the boulders. A suspension bridge of canes spanned the banks. It swung like a pendulam the moment I entered and tilted at 45 degree angle. The bridge was small and I crossed over it anyhow.

We rest on the boulders. A swarm of tiny dragon flies immediately closed on me flying non-challantly near the eyes and ears. Giant mosquitoes landed on the bare limbs, its bite is so annoying.

We began to climb. Tajom already warned me of a difficult climb and I should not drink water frequently and not to hurry. These are the golden rules while walking in the hills. There is another rule also not to look up while climbing but to look at the feet and climb gradually in slow pace.

I followed his advice but soon succumbed to fatigue. 7000 ft. climb is not easy along a path which is so narrow even for foot hold. It went straight over the nose through a thick jungle. The tree branches hung so low that I had to bend my body every now and then. In the forest the sky is not seen,

the light only filtered through the leaves. It has always a twilight appearance even in midday.

The vegetation changed. The broad leaf trees vanished and in its place appeared small diameter bamboo and some trees whose leaves resemble pine. The air became cool. The rear of the river long since died down.

Tajom perhaps got fadup with my speed of walk and frequent rest. We have been climbing now more than three hours.

Suddenly he vanished leaving me alone. Fear gripped me at once seeing no one near. The porters who came from Yogong mostly girls had gone ahead. A tough breed of mountain, not a delicate specimen like me.

The forest now appeared sinister. Hundreds of beetles started a chorus. Birds whistling in long drawn tune, monkey, langurs swaying in the branch grinding the teeth, bellow of an animal heard, deer barked some where.

It was desperate moments. I forgot the fatigue and ran double, slipping often, then going up in all four.

Some distance away Tajom was quietly sitting on a log, smoking a biri. Seeing my condition he burst out in laughter.

I lay on the ground for scmetime panting heavily. Deliverence at last indeed.

Soon we climbed the last hurdle and there appeared Yosing standing on the slope of the hill a few hundred metres below. Low clouds partially covered the village. We heard the crowing of the ccck, barking of dogs.

The path now went down straight, slushy and slippery. It was more difficult then the climb. In every step I faltered—a slide taking me a few feet down.

A strong fence barred the path. A notched ladder was put on a side. Two dozen mithuns quietly sat on a muddy pool which is the salt lick. Mithuns are brown coated but has white patches in the legs upto the knee. Its huge semicircular horn, deep blue eyes give a fearsome look but in reality it is most timid. The animal is precious not only for ceremonial function. A person's wealth is judged by number of mithun head he possessed.

We descended in the wide jhum field. Men, women,

bent double and working feverishly weeding the field. Heaps of uprooted weeds are gathered in a corner of the field. These are crapped by a circular bamboo tool with a handle. It was amazing to see the speed with which they are clearing a large field.

Curious eyes greeted us. All of them stopped the works.

Women wore skirt far above the knee. The upper body
was bare. Swet and dirt gave a deep brown tinge to their
skin. Long bamboo smoking pipe is dangled in every one's
mouth—men and women alike.

The tribe is Minyong. Their houses stood haphazardly as like in other villages with a little space in between. A mosup is in the centre, a tall pole carried a carcass of monkey. In the corner of the village is a small house, the 'Rasheng' the unique institution of the girls.

Near the village the same hideous gate 'Motor' through which we passed. The petrid smell of a dog still pervaded the air.

We made our stay in the mosup which was full of dirt and soot.

A long caravan of women came down the hills carrying half charred wood in the conical busket strapped on the back. The buskets are carried by plaited cane strips which is pushed around the fore head in a large loop. Babies clung to the breast of their mother, men carrying heavy logs on their shoulders. They came down the stiff slope moving with sure step.

The scenerio in the setting sun was marvellous.

Soon after the mosup was crowded. There was no fear nor any inhibition to come so near. The girls with short skirt of dull maroon and bare bossom made no attempt to cover their breasts. They are giggling and chatting all the time.

No one washed their bodies though covered with soot and dust. Small puppies were carried by children. The non-descript dogs sniffing everywhere. Here in the villages I found dogs are numerous, move everywhere and sleep with the inmates. Only occasionally they get mild beating if they sneak too near to pinch the food. Dogs like pigs also serve as

scavengers. In certain occasion dogs are sacrificed to spirits. Eating of dog flesh is not a taboo.

While women wore short skirt the men also did not bother much for the privacy. Only genital is covered either with a leaf or narrow cloth. Buttock remained bare. Small girls are naked, only a few small cylindrical brass metal hung on the front from the waist.

Tatoo marks are visible in everyone's face. Men and women alike chewed the bark of a tree which reddened their faces. Some of the men wore profuse bead necklaces which hung in two three chains. Near the throat the necklaces had square sized, white bead. In the ear lobes they plugged the round discs and some had small funnel shaped metal thrust through the lobe. Some young boys had flower inserted in the lobe of the ear. Hair is cropped in the same fashion cropping around the crown. In the legs plaited cane strips or yarn rope are tied above the calf and the ankle. Nails are not cut even though these are thick with dirt. Hygiene is unknown for personal or the surroundings. They spit everywhere, urinate outside but ease themselves only in regum—the pig enclosures. Drinking water may be drawn from a spring or open channel which are frequented by pigs or mithuns. A long half open bamboo pipe draw the water up to the village where muddy pool is created by the continuous flow of water and pigs wallow gleefully.

Yet there is no wasting disease neither scabies or the rush in the body.

They have very few utensils. An iron vessel for cooking food. Laddle is of bamboo or the gourd. A three legged iron stand serve as oven or simply stones do the purpose. Containers are of bamboo, plates are of broad canna leaves 'Ekkam' which are plentiful. There are some important possessions, the big or small brass metal vessels 'Arem', 'Danki' which indicate the status of the person.

Most important however is Dao 'EYOK', an one and half feet long sharp edged tool which is held in scabbord carried on the body slung on the back across the shoulder. The dao is virtually multipurpose without it a man is helpless. Long sword 'Yoksha' is more a ceremonial necessity then for

domestic use. Small knife 'Yokshik' are also carried in sheath, are constantly used for cutting strips of cane or bamboo. People are expert in extracting bamboo or cane strips, very, fine and long strips and weave busket, mat from these for domestic use. Various contraptions for catching fish in the river or trapping small animals are also made from bamboo. 'Edku' is a small bow like contraption where string is held by tension. A small opening is kept where some bait are laid. A rat or squirrel or even bird when come to nip the string is disturbed which releases the tension and tightly fastened the intruder.

In the spare time men are always busy in preparing the 'edku' and arrows 'Epuk'. The arrows are also made from bamboo finely sliced to a length of two feet. Near the base of the arrow a shaft is made by inserting strips of dry palm leaf to keep the balance of the arrow while shooting. The edge is sharpened and warmed over the fire for seasoning. For poisoned arrow though technique is same but bamboo is carefully selected. The arrow head is made with a triangular iron blade made razor sharp. Below the blade an inch lower down, the poison is smeared in thick paste. Poison arrows used for hunting big games. No gun has come yet nor people know the gun powder.

In the jungle the common trap is 'Eda' a stone slab kept partially raised by a slender stick which on slightest disturbance displace the heavy stone and crush down the victim. Some baits are also kept to lure. In eda rats, birds which walk on the ground even snakes are trapped.

The village had a blacksmith whose forge we went to see. Tajom wanted a dao expertly made by this smith.

A small shed with walls of stone and thatched roof stood in a corner. The hearth was in the centre in a shallow depresson filled with charcoal.

The bellows are hollow bamboo tubes. The lower ends are burried in the ground. A low mud wall is situated near the hearth.

From the bottom of a cylinder a bamboo tube joins the other cylinder a few feet above the hearth and joined tubes entered the hearth. The handle of piston is of bamboo, at the

lower end some clothes are tied in such a way that when piston is pulled the air from open end makes way into the cylinder and when piston pressed downwards the cloth blocks air to escape and thrust back into the furnace. A young boy stood near the cylinder to operate the bellows in both hands simultaneously pushing and lifting the pistons for constant thrust of air to the burning charcoal.

The man took a tong and lifted red hot iron from the hearth and beat it with an improvised hammer over an anvil till it reached the desired shape.

Tajom paid rupees two for the beautiful dao. The man was dejected, he wanted salt more valuable than the useless money with which he cannot do anything.

The scrap iron must have been brought by barter from far north possibly Tibet.

All the local wear are woven in small portable loom. The cotton is a large coarse variety grow in the jhum field and in the village in small holdings. They also make cotton blanket which is quite warm in bitter winter.

Far far away from the civilization I felt suddenly as if I landed in stone age.

Tired by a long march we decided to stay for a day at Yosing. In a sudden impulse I asked the gam Tapak to show me a war dance.

Dozen of young men ran to their house and within minutes came out with fantastic array of war gears and started a vigorous dance by flexing muscles, shaking heads, leaping forward, backward and uttering cries Hi Hi Hi Hi...

All of them carried shields which are made of bamboo with interlaced cane strips. These are rectangular in shape concave inside the convex outside. A horizontal handle fixed to the inner side. So strong is the shield that it recochet swords or arrows.

In their head is a decorated helmet which are made of coiled whole cane round in shape without any projection. Full of half cane strips are fitted on the upper side of the helmet from one end to the other to strengthen it. Two boars tusks placed cross wise in the front and the top is with bear skin dyed in red. Beaks of horn bill is fixed on the top of the helmet.

The helmet is kept in position by a cane strap below the chin.

They carried long spears which had sharp blade or iron in butt head. The butt end also pointed and fixed with a piece of iron. The spear is meant for thrusting and not for throwing.

Some of them have long steel swords carried in wooden scabbords held by a cane strip and slung from a belt made of animal hide. They wore brass wristlets with strong spikes projecting outside.

The upper body is covered with a garment made of coarse wool with open breast. Over it they put an overall made out of coarse fibre of sago plant.

Beside the sword and spears they carried bows and arrows. The arrows are in a long bamboo tube closed at one end and open end is provided with a cover. A pocket is made of cane strips where additional bow strings are kept. The carrying case is suspended by means of a string attached to it and carried on the side of the body.

The young warriors danced almost full hour. Some of the leaps covered at least 10 feet. The swords cut through the air, spears thrust forward and backward, the heads swung vigorously in left right or up and down, from the mouth continuous sound came out Hi Hi Hi Hi

It was though a show put up for me but Tajom told they dance exactly the same during the war which was still a recent phenomenon. Only after the visit of Peter James peace has been restored in the area.

After the last cry of the dance died down, a sudden shout heard from the distant hill. There were five shouts Hoi 000000 which indicated that the hunter has succeeded in begging an wild boar.

Immediately men, women and children made a mad rush towards the outer boundary of the village.

In quick stride a party came down the slope carrying the chopped meat. The huge head of the slain boar with its two projecting task is carried by a single man.

I was told the hunter has been lucky because of my visit. In the evening girls in their scanty dress gathered for ponung. Untouched by outside influence I thought this must be the original rhyme when an old woman began to sing:

ANEKE ANE GHE
ANEKE ANE GHE
SIRUME MAYULO
SIRUME MAYULO—

Next morning we parted. So sad was their feeling on our departure that I could not control my emotion. I requested the gams to come to Along to stay with me.

We moved towards Kerang in the Siyom valley going down continuously for good three hours. From the height of the hill river appeared so small.

In the village we met Bipu Riyang, a Political Interpreter who did not know any language other than his own. He had three wives which established his position as rich and influencial man in the area. As a mark of recognition of good service Government appointed him as a Political Interpreter.

From Kebang we followed the upstream of Siyom river. We bypassed the two Minyong villages Paksing, Rigong and teached Bori village of Mege.

The track passed through number of land slides along the slope of the hill. It went up and down in a most disgusting monotonous climb and descent. Now and then stones were roughly pitched over the shallow depression, temporary foot bridges spanned the rushing streams.

The ingenious way of construction is really commendable. The poles at first stuck to the secured stone on the bed of the stream. This crossed in between and tied by a cane or bamboo strips. Long bamboo or log placed over it along with hand rest, more crossed poles placed at intermediate points and foot and hand rest extended. Every point is tied with strips. Additional supporting poles are also thrown to stream bed and stuck to a boulder in a slanting position.

The path is so uneven and narrow for foot hold that every now and then feet slipped. Vicious nettles which bristles with stinging leaves encroached on the path giving a painful itch.

Small streams overflowed the path in some continuous stretch. Leeches found a most congenial habitat.

The diversion on the cliff is more agonizing. Huge rocks

over hung from the slope. Going over the slippery rock one has the eerie feeling of sliding down to the river below. Sometimes ingenious ladders are laid—two, three bamboo poles over a rock. Steps are made by placing bamboo across the poles. A tender hand rest is provided to the side. Some of this ladder went upto 50 feet almost perpendicular from the ground. Notched wood also placed at several points for the short climb.

Almost the entire stretch of the path from Kerang to Rigong passed through a damp forest. Long branch of trees dropped down upto few feet above the ground. Roots of the huge trees interwined and ran over the path, bamboos crowding on the side or tall banana covered the ground.

At Mege I had a shock of my life. Boris keep their hair long on the back but front and side cropped. They smoke crude tobacco rather heavily in long bamboo pipes—the front portion of which is made of brass. The pungent smell of tobacco was repulsive. Women wore short skirts with upper body bare.

Their appearance was hideous when they closed at me-Women touched my face and limbs feeling the body delicately.

I was seized with intense fear—must have landed in midst of cannibels.

Tajom was left behind. It was some minutes which appeared ages that he came up and told me not to fear as the women never saw an outsider hence feeling the smooth skin.

Afterwards it was all laugh. I soon discovered, the Boris are most friendly and hospitable people.

During the evening in the house of the headman—Tasong I heard a beautiful song full of melody:

Oge Ghe Mane Semune

Oge Ghe Mase Semune ...

Bori custom is like Minyong only they do not tatoo their faces or limbs. Boy and girls mix freely. The Rasheng for the girl is an important institution.

Their houses are small supported on a platform raised over stilts of wood 2'—3' ft above the ground. The roof is thatched with fronds of cane. The walls are with rough dressed wood. The granaries are much small and lie outside the village.

Bori land is stony and offer less scope for cultivation. They practice jhum where mostly millet is grown. They travel extensively in upper region for barter trade where they exchange animal skin, rice for salt, iron and wool. Bori diet include almost everything leaving nothing including snake. People are fair complexioned and quite healthy.

Leaving the Bori land we crossed Siyom by an all cane suspension bridge which linked the Minyong village of Tumbin. The river here though narrow rushes through a gorge in swift current. The bridge swung ominuously with my weight. Tajom caught my hand and slowly we crossed over.

In one side of Tumbin there is a deep precipice. The wild mountain however presented an awesome beauty. Towering majestically several thousand feet high its upper reaches are covered with coniferous forest.

We arrived at Kaying six miles from Tumbin. The path passed through rocky incline rising straight from the river. An unwary step would surely threw the body spinning several hundred feet down to the river. At one point the path came down to the bank where the river hit the rock and made a deep pool. The foot hold was very narrow. Balancing cautiously and holding the trunk of fallen trees which half submerged in water I crossed over at last profusely sweating. It appeared to me that every step there is danger in this hilly country.

We stayed at Kaying for a day. The village everyway resembled Yosing except the land is undulating and sloped gradually to pidgong river.

We visited a small settlement four miles furtherup, Kaying Moli which was the parent village. Tate Tashi, Situm Paron, Tage Palong the three stalwarts of the village accompanied me to this once flourishing village now reduced to only four houses who will also migrate. An epidemic brokeout which caused some death. The Miri the shaman has advised shifting of the village and most of the people already gone but cultivation field not yet abandoned. Kaying Moli lies at the foot of the big hill 'Bayor'. The valley narrowed in both sides.

From Kaying we came down to Keak by crossing Pidgong and followed the bank of Siyom through a wide valley

covered with deep forest.

There is no settlement at Keak except a venture school run by Yobu Bango. Government only provided teaching aids. A young teacher Baruah came from Assam to volunteer as a teacher. The life of teacher in interior schools is full of challenge. Far away from home and linked only by a slender communication his difficulties are too many. Here in Keak Baruah stays alone, during night no one is there to come for help. The nearest village is a mile across the river. The silence of the night sometimes give an eerie feeling. Yet he stays on to build up the foundation. A true pioneer of the frontier.

Baruah came running seeing our approach. For him event was exciting. He won't let us go.

We sat near the fire for long hours talking endlessly about our life and of the past and future ambition.

Next morning when we took leave he stood on the rampart of the bridge with profound sadness in his face. For long he remained there waiving at us till we are lost in the jungle.

We followed the bank of Siyom. The river is in spate and inundated the low lying areas. While crossing a sandy patch suddenly I found myself sinking in the slush. It had deceptive appearance but water already accumulated underneath. Hearing my pathetic yell Tajom doubled up and offered a long pole by which I dragged myself from the knee deep morass.

Another time I fell from the bamboo bridge fifteen feet down to a depression bruising my limb. Logs or bamboo are laid over small channels which became sloppy with the moisture and in rain.

To prevent a slide over the surface the bark is peeled off by dao at intervals to make it rough. Even then unaccustomed traveller like me could not avoid a fall.

I got up from the bed wiping off the dirt. Seeing my condition Tajom and porters could not help laughing. To them fall from a bridge rarely happen unless one is dead drunk.

Bogne the last Minyong village was on the spur of a hill

overlooking the Siyom river. Here I found the surprising diversion with irrigated rice fields and citrus grooves.

Sober and mild mannered Linkit Tali the Political Jamadar has brought about this change. He had been to Pasighat several time where he saw the wet rice cultivation. With active support from Kwatim Khuma he started developing land and planted large number of orange seedlings. I saw a long irrigation channel bringing water from far away stream.

Linkit Tali had a hunch back daugther but she had indomitable will and source of strength to her father. She has learned improved technique of weaving cloth in the training centre at Along and now supplementing the income of the family. I was surprised to see her house keeping. Apparently she has learned many things during her stay at Along.

Later I heard that a kindly youth of Kambung village who is a gallong boy has married her and they lived a happy life.

From Bogne we went to Kambung which is a gallong village and stayed in the house of Takar Minu. After so many days I again returned to the environ so different from the villages I just visited. Here people have already perceived the wind of change. Iron tools are gradually replacing the traditional crafts in the cultivation.

Tajom left for Molom where he had some works. Takar Minu the smiling and obliging youth volunteered to accompany me for the rest of the journey.

We crossed the river Siyom by a bamboo raft. Two dozen large sized bamboo tied with cane strips floated on the river. The span of the river being wide here the current is not so strong. I did not feel the awful tilt when the raft crossed the water.

A large valley 'Kambang' appeared over the bank. So big its expanse that an airfield can easily be constructed. Four villages fringe the valley—Kato, Nomuk, Perryi and Kanki. Two rivers both tributaries of Siyom, Hirit and Siyu have cut across the land. The water held plenty of fish which are caught by bamboo traps.

We stayed in the house of Sonowal the teacher of Kambang school.

Sonowal is from Sibsagar district of Upper Assam and joined the service in the early 1950. An agile and active person he has given a beautiful shape to the school with sprawling flower and vegetable garden, neat and clean surroundings. The school boys thirty in all appeared smart and intelligent.

A few months later to our profound sorrow we learnt the death of Sonowal in a tragic drowning accident. He was an avid swimmer. Several times he crossed the turbulent Dikhow in his native district. Yet on that fateful day when he jumped from the pedestal to the deep pool of Hirit he never came out.

For several days the entire stretch of Hirit and down stream of Siyom was vainly searched for the body.

His kindly colleagues later placed a plaque on the rampart of the bridge bearing his name and the tragic event.

I met some of the important personalities of the area the men who are born leaders. Jumiya Nomuk the Political Jamadar, a robust person with pinkish glow, Jumiya Kanki, the most forceful speaker of Kanki, Baya Karbak of Karbak who has the uncanny knack for business.

Girls of Kambang are bewitching—fair and slim, with oval shaped face they are beautiful for which many youth naturally succumb to them. Gallong girls keep their hair long, do not have tatoo mark nor chew the bark of the tree to redden their teeth.

Only distraction is the rattling sound which came from the bell metal disc which they hung around the waist. This supposed to pronounce virginity.

I witnessed a most exhilarating dance under an open sky. Guided by a cheer leader the girls in their white skirts and green blouse formed a ring and danced in slow steps clasping their hands repeating the line of the song:

> Koyume ogo din jajin ja Umsiye ogo din jajin ja Dedilo ogo din jajin ja Koumena Roksigo jajin ja......

Sisige jeniyu jajin ja...... Ato u paktu u jajin ja......

We visited Nomuk, Kato, Kanki, Perry, Karbak. The path though not much wide but passes through gentle terrain.

I heard for the first time about not so friendly people in interior villages—Bogo, Boje, Potom, Poyom, Rakshap who though gallong are somewhat different. It was risky so I was told to go there without proper escort.

At the journeys end I visited Wak, Kugi, Bene, Paya and Pobdi village which are nearer to Along.

Twenty days of eventful tour opened my eyes. I gradually developed the feeling of entering an era of understanding with the people with whom my destiny has been linked.

With the Gallongs again in Bassar and Daring

15 August, the Indian Independence Day drawn near. The festive occasion provided an opportunity for the people to gather at Along. Every conceivable places were soon crowded. The Gams with their fluttering red coats came from near and distant villages. Men, women arrived from nearby villages. Their curiosity was mostly with Assam Rifles, W.T. Station where operator tuned the radio and talk with distant stations.

The highlight of the programme was a sports event conceived by Mrs. Khuma. She was a lady of wits and humour. Thinking to provide some colour to the bachelor staff who must have been bored by monotonous life.

She included an item of pairing off with a girl who would be the partner in number of events. Lots were then drawn and girls went to their respective partner.

To me came Yabin from Degong village, a slim girl with a charming face.

To our luck we begged a few prize. The event closed with great fanfare. But Yabin did not leave the scene.

I never knew she developed a liking for me. In increasing regularity she began to visit my house with offer of eggs, vegetables. In small town Along nothing remain hidden for long.

Gossip soon went round. There was genuine anxiety in the mind of my well-wishers. Tamuli one day called me and gave a lengthy sermon. The affairs of Dr. Roy was still fresh in mind.

Next day when Yabin arrived I told her politely not co come anymore. Loose talks already circulating and it is not good to allow her to come to my place.

I saw her dazed for some time. Suddenly she burst in tears and then without looking at me she hurriedly left the place.

I thought I have breathed peace. A few days later Yabin again came conveying the awful news of a Kebang in her village to discuss my affairs with her. In a tone marked with sarcasm she said, although there was nothing more except the friendship 'Ajen' yet people have heard the gossip and now wanted a probe in it.

Conveying the news with a crooked smile, she left the place immediately.

The news stunned me. It would be awful if a Kebang discuss the matter.

I ran to R.K. the insect collector who was my well-wisher. When R.K. arrived at Along, at first I thought his duty must be trapping butterfly. But his job turned to be collection of larvae of mosquitoes to find the malarial parasites.

R.K. was of my same age but more pragmatic. He counted every pie of his earning and remain busy with his own works.

R.K. had a band of workers drawn from nearby villages. They assist him in mosquito trapping and spray operations.

One of the workers was from Degong. R.K. knew all about me and so assured to get the correct information.

People were not adept in blackmail and so if nothing actually happened there is least cause of worry. Yet the night passed without sleep with great mental tension.

At first streak of dawn the R.K.'s man from Degong came with encouraging news that he heard nothing of a Kebang nor there is any talk on me.

Yet to be in safe side and out of the shadow of Yabin R.K. suggested that I should leave Along for few days.

Secretly he arranged the porters and next morning I stepped out of Along.

I passed Darka after a brief halt in the house of Nimmar Ete the aflable gam of the village. The path up to Darka was good but soon after it began a tortuous climb up the hills Mengi to reach Bagra. We were following Sipu the tributory of Siyom.

In the jhum fields women already started the work. Their slow but steady movement in single profile under a morning sun offered a grandeur view.

We passed Doje, Bagra and arrived at Angu village after covering 15 miles of gruelling march under hot sun. The path is maintained by the villagers so narrow and cramped. There were no drains to flush out the water. Finding no out let the small streams ran over the track and I had to move through it. The nettle plants gave lot of irritation in the bare limbs. The most detested creature of the jungle the leech penetrated through the boots and socks.

I stayed in the house of Dagi Angu the gam of the village. Dagi's son Tojo is an Agricultural Demonstrator and posted in Siang Valley. His house was 12 feet high from the ground. To climb by a notched ladder I had to keep my grip very firm on the bamboo rail.

Dagi Angu was a very rich man with 50 mithuns, a retinue of slaves and large number of brass metal vessels. His face was covered with pock marks which he said was due to a dreaded disease from which he once suffered. I presumed this must have been small pox. He recovered only by propitiation and no medicine.

Dagi took me round his cultivation fields near the bank of Sipung where a few terraces he had already built for wet rice cultivation. The village has plenty of oranges and peach.

Across Sipu there was a ramshackle building of thatch and bamboo going by the name as Inspection Bungalow. Doniya Kamsi who is also the gam was the chowkidar. Doniya's son Nyadar a smart young boy is a student in Along school.

Next day I left the village. The path winds over the high hill of Doke from where it descended down to the valley of Bassar.

From the top of the hill the valley looked so wide and beautiful with meandering streams, checkered rice fields, patches of jhum, wandering mithuns, cluster of villages. I moved quickly and passed Bame. Gori, Soi village and crossed the Kidi river by a suspension bridge to arrive at Nigam Bassar.

Down the village was the banana and pineapple garden where Kariyom Riba had his hut. I went to stay with him.

In the evening we went to the house of Mito the gam of Nigam Bassar. The house was more than 60 feet long and 30 feet wide raised on the high platform 10 feet above the ground. There might have been 40 to 50 people most of them were former slaves. Six hearths lined the centre of the big hall. The first one was occupied by Mito and his family.

Outside the room in the front, the large platform had no walls. Guests come and sit here for gossip.

Kariyom introduced me to Mito a widely known personality in lower Gallong area. A man of fifty, medium height and built, with a thin moustache, complexion light brown Mito at first gave no evidence of enormous influence.

I was cordially received and offered a cane stool to sit. He was wearing the red coat the symbol of authority, the bead necklaces which profusely covered the upper portion of the body. Known as one of the richest man of the area for possessing large heads of mithuns, cultivation fields, slaves, he had two wives, six sons and four daughters.

I was surprised at his command in Assamese as we entered into long conversation with mug of poka—the rice beer. Mito told that several times he went to the plains of Assam as far as Sibsagar, worked in cane cutting operation. It was Peter James the APO of Pasighat who made him the gam and gave a red coat. The school at Bassar has been opened by him. At first Government help did not come and so he had to raise fund for payment of salary to teacher who came from outside. Later the school was taken over by the Government which is now one of the best in the district.

I was interested to know about his past as many tales were circulating about his exploits in war with Karka Gallongs.

Mito was at first reluctant to talk any more on raid and capture.

But I prevailed upon him. Slowly he unfurled the history of the past.

Those days it was a question of survival, the bitter struggle for existence to maintain the prestige of the tribe.

He was born in a village near Bame now no longer in existence. The hill bordered the recalcitrous Karkas a most unpredictable people—traitorous and ruthless. Often the mithuns and cows used to vanish from the jungle. The loss of valuable possessions could not be compensated.

Their patience stretched to maximum. Soon a secret plan was hatched to teach the Karkas a lesson.

It was raid during the night in pitch darkness. The houses were put on fire by burning torch thrown by the speeding arrows. The escape routes were cut off and all hell let loose. There were pathetic yells but no one sympathised. The successful operation rescued Gidam Yocha who though a Karka was a friend of Mito and he was earlier captured and kept in stockade. Gidam leaped through the roof taking advantage of the commotion.

Mito was at the time young and dashing. In a twinkle smile he said he was most handsome too.

He was chosen a leader as wealth began to accumulate. The Doni Polo was most kind to him ever since. He held many slaves some of them already stayed in the house for generations But he never ill treated them, they are like other members of the family. All of them call him by affectionate term 'Abo'—the father.

The news of the raid was known to the Government at Pasighat. A few months later troops led by William Saneb arrived. He did not punish them but toured the entire area and ordered not to fight any more.

Since then they began a new peaceful era. Occasional dispute build-up tension but fight was no more.

Though peace was restored in his area but a serious fight started between Paktu Gallong and Karka Gallong near present day Along. It was 'Kiruk Ruggo Ajo' on the chase of the wild boer. The fight resulted in many casualties but he assisted Peter James the Assistant Political Officer of Pasighat to stop fighting and bring peace in the area.

After he stopped fighting any more he concentrated in constructional works. He has seen the Agriculture in plains of Assam and prosperity of the villages. He decided to introduce the technique 'Eshi Arik' the wet rice cultivation in his area.

At first tools were not available. He borrowed the iron spade which created great commotion. There were some incidents, disease and death. Every one blamed him for disturbing the presiding spirit of the land with a foreign tool.

But he did not listen to them. Gradually they came to know how an improved tool reduce the labour and what a boon is brought by wet rice cultivation.

I was filled with secret admiration for this man—a man who created history yet he was so unassuming and unpretentious.

Kariyom took me to river Kidi next morning. The knee deep water held plenty of fish. We caught quite a lot in small net. The fishes are all scaleless. Kariyom told me after Flood fish swarm near the bank then it is easy to catch. We went round the field. The beautiful rice terraces—tiers after tiers covered the valley area. A long irrigation channel has been constructed with the help of the Government.

Here banana, pineapple, orange trees were in plenty. The soil is so fertile that any crop can grow.

We visited the Soi village across Kidi river and went to the house of Rekkar Bassar the gam of the village. Though an old man bent with age Rekkar still maintained a good profile. His face lighted up when he talked about agriculture. How he and Mito once faced so much of opposition but succeeded in introducing the wet rice cultivation, the produce from which now filled the granaries.

Rekkar entertained us with food brought from the wet rice field.

Scanning the wide valley from the high platform I had a sudden vision. The dream of the old man will be fulfilled. The entire landscape of Bassar will change in not too distant future.

As we were coming down from Rekkar's place a long procession from Angu went up to Nigam village. Led by

Dagi the gam of Angu they have come to forcibly take away the girl who happened to be daughter of Mito betrothed to Dagi's son.

A long cane rope also brought along with them. Dressed in traditional attire with cane helmets fastened with horn bill beak on the top, swords, bows and arrows the scene was awesome. Mito's daughter who was hardly fourteen years was reading in the school. Her marriage was arranged when she was a child. Enormous dowry had been paid to her father.

I saw Mito sitting cooly in the midst of the gathering in spite of terrific commotion. He had no say but to return the girl according to prevalent custom.

The girl in the meantime vanished. She has stubbornly refused to go to the boy whom she did not like.

The boy appeared sad; repeating the words that he will slit his throat or drown in the river if she does not come to him.

The Kebang continued till next day then slowly the gathering thinned out. After issue of an ultimatum Dagi trouped back to his village.

The story later unfolded. The girl though very young yet she became conscious of her independent way. She had clearly disliked the boy and secretly developed intimacy with the young teacher.

The teacher fell in deep morass sinking gradually in front of bemused staff. At first everyone tried to dissuade him but instead he withdrawn to himself shunning the other's company.

Government took a serious view when the affairs were known. Some months later he was taken out of Bassar only to be served with the notice of dismissal from service.

Mito's daughter, however, did not go to Angu. She married another boy though not of the same tribe.

In the evening we went to the house of Dr. Nandi—a Doctor in the Ayurvedic Dispensary, who invited us to dinner.

On arrival at his hut I witnessed a scene full of comedy. Both Dr. Nandi and Sushil Bora the second teacher were dancing on the bamboo floor singing in full throat. At first I thought that they were under influence of strong poka. But 10! it was not poka but medicated intoxicant 'modok' which

is used for the treatment of patient. Modok beyond the admissible dose gives a kick which temporarily create an illusion of fantasy.

Sushil was asking whether he was in heaven or hell. Dr. Nandi almost naked was spinning like a top.

We had a full hour of free entertainment before withdrawing to our place foregoing the dinner.

Next morning Doctor apologized profusely but I had the humour to tell him all the hidden talents came out under the influence of modok and it was really wonderful!

Leaving Bassar I went to Daling by passing Kamdak village. The foot track now more tolerable though climb and descent could not be avoided. Two villages Pading and Dishi lie in a corner. Karsen Riba the Political Jamadar and a man of considerable influence belong to Dishi.

Gokar Riba cool and sober was a gam of Paging. He had two sons, Kardak and Karken, both are bright young boys. One of them already in the Government service and the other is in school.

I stayed at Daling village not far from beautiful river Igo. Its silvery water broke in innumerable ripples as it flows down stream. The river is an angler's paradise. So much fish I did not see elsewhere.

The scenerio further changed as we moved forward. The people here are definitely prosperous with spacious rice fields, fruit gardens and well laid paths.

Nearer to Daring I was a mazed to see two ponies trotting on the road heavily laden with bags of paddy. There were chillies, so many plants covering the field. Despite existance of jhum the wet rice cultivation had made inroads. The gentle slopes nicely terraced, irrigation water spread and luxuriant crop of paddy swaying merrily in the breeze.

Hardly a month now I was in another land where primitive tools still used, where money has no value, where men and women dress in scant clothes, where nature dominate the life of a community.

We met Toyi Riba an outstanding personality of Daring village. He was instrumental in bringing so much change in the agricultural practice. Along with food crops people

grow cash crop like chilli which they sell in the market of Majorbari and Akajan in the plains. The journey to plains take three days and not an easy march.

From Daring a track went to Pasighat via Jirdo, Doye, Telam, Koyu villages. The hills are low lying and dense forest cover the area. Here in the forest of foot hills elephants roam at will, tigers, Bison and Sambar deers find a happy habitat. Most dangerous, however, is the wild mithun which pause a threat to the lonely hunter.

In the jungle, cane provide almost impentrable barrier. The canes which run several metres long are extracted and supplied to the market outside.

So many species of valuable timber trees are seen here. One can fondly wish the forest remain undisturbed. Deep inside no one venture and no axe ever been used. Only the ferocious beasts and raptiles move around.

As we came nearer to the village the eyes caught the view of few thatched houses on a gentle slope. These were the buildings, housing the dispensary, school and staff quarters.

A middle aged, dark complexioned person slowly appeared. He was wearing an underwear, vest and an ordinary slipper. Extending the big hand he introduced himself as Doctor Pal, the Medical Officer.

I could hardly suppress a laugh seeing his most unconventional dress. But Doctor did not feel any embarrassment. No one take notice on how one put clothes. He told me live as the people live here, be content with the surroundings.

Doctor was a jovial person full of wits and humour. He dragged me to his house a bamboo made building on raised platform and dumped me in one of the room where bed was unrolled for my stay.

Daring village had 70 to 80 houses resting on a plateu. Doctor introduced me to a grand old man Moji Riba who was imprisoned by the British for participation in freedom movement. Moji Riba who could speak Assamese told me that he met Gopi Nath Bordoloi, the Congress leader of Assam and suffered at the hands of British for this impertinance. He is glad that country has been free. His son Jikom is now in school and he has great hope on him.

Over looking the village is a high hill rising to several hundred feet. From the top of the hill during the night one could see the electric lights or the search lights of moving trains.

In spite of advance in agriculture and other occupation the peoples' faith in supernatural did not diminish. Some big tall trees near the village are never cut down. These are the abode of the spirits.

Doctor told me a spin chilling account of ghost trail in a depression slightly away from the dispensary building. On certain nights the movement of unseen travellers are heard speaking in unintelligible language.

Once a villager saw a woman weeping but on approach for a clearer view the woman vanished mysteriously.

Doctor said in all seriousness that the stories are not fiction. One of his nursing Assistant actually saw the bizarre happening—the dog eating the flesh of a child but could not find any trace of either the dog or remains of the child.

Girls of Daring like their kin in any other Gallong villages are beautiful and charming. Fond of fun and frolick they were always in gay mood. The small camp remain crowded especially with the arrival of a visitor.

Their frequent visit created problem, an emotional disturbances in either side. Some of the staff had bitter experience had to pack up and go. Yet the visit of the girls to the camp never ceased as if they have no where to go.

I was rather taking a closer look during my stay at Daring. There were dance and song. It was amazing to see now they picked up rhymes of Assamese folk song:

Ketiya Ba Moina Jan

Enenu Beya Lage Mor

Dingi Kati Moribaloi Mon'.

Sometimes Oh! dear, I feel so sad that I want to cut my throat and die.

But Doctor was least amused. He had always something under his sleeve. He quiety told me as a matter of fact that a message has come with the information that Political Officer is visiting Along and I should go back immediately.

Next morning I was hurriedly packed off—Doctor escortng me all the way to Igo river.

Arriving at Along after a hurried march of three days I was surprised to find no programme of a visit of Political Officer. No one knew anything about it.

A few days after came a letter from one of the girl written in simple Assamese telling me how sad she has felt after my departure. She could never forget etc. etc.

Then it suddenly dawned on me why the good doctor was all in a hurry to return me to Along.

Within a few months one of the staff was entired by a girl. The Government as usual viewed it seriously. He was charged under immorality and served to undergo imprisonment.

There were occasional ripples in Along which tend to break the tranquility of the place.

An incident which appeared so trifling a matter, however, greatly agitated the mind of my more conservative colleagues—many of them are from the traditional society where century old belief yet to yield to rational thinking.

This happened with the killing of cow by villagers in the camp area. The method of killing is by shooting arrows on the terrified animal which ran madly ail around. Though this may appear abhorring to sophisticated mind yet there must be reason enough otherwise people do not kill just for fun. The killing must be done as per prescribed norm even though the purpose is collection of meat.

They believe in host of spirits. One of the reason might be that spirit presiding over the animal mostly malevolent and must be scared by shooting arrows.

It was however not the cruel way by which the animal has been killed but chopping of meat just before the eyes as beef is a taboo to most of my colleagues.

They all gathered to register a protest. I vainly tried to argue that even Vivekananda, the liberal Hindu said 'It is up to anyone's prerogative to eat the flesh of any kind for the sake of protein. Why I should mind at all. So far I am concerned I do not eat but that is my choice and nothing to do with the religion.'

But my colleagues remained adament. To them the

sanctity of religion is the upper most.

A petition was submitted to Assistant Political Officer who as a Mizo is an avid non-vegetarian. But he must have realized the great resentment in staff. An order was issued to stop killing inside the camp area.

Yet no one raised an eyebrow when a cow was mercilessly beaten by Assam Rifles for swallowing a wad of currency note. Poor animal was lying prostrate on the ground though mercifully did not die.

A similar incident happened at Pasighat when T. Haralu, Assistant Political Officer allowed sale of beef in the market. Shopkeepers downed the shutters of their premises and officials registered a vehement protest.

It was perhaps coincidence that Haralu was transferred to Ziro and not immediately selected in Indian Frontier Administrative Service but rumour circulated that it was the outcome of the incident at Pasighat.

A new OC Tanka Bahadur Rai took over charge of Assam Rifle Unit. He was a stickler to discipline and tried to enforce control on his men who were running errant.

The OC a Junior Commissioned Officer originally belonged to Signal Unit. He was a nice fellow except his eccentricities in driving his men to too much works.

Soon we became close friends—my house being nearest to him. Almost every evening he came to visit my place. I could speak Nepali hence I presumed there was additional attachment.

Jemadar Tanka Bahadur Rai was a veteran of many wars. He has seen operations in Burma, Malaya and served in a British Unit for sometime as a signaller. Independence brought his rapid promotion when Assam Rifles began to expand.

But his too much insistence on discipline was the undoing. It resulted outbreak of mutiny.

It was the time of Durga Puja—the great festival of Nepali Hindus. The men asked for extra rum which is generally given in such festive occasion as a convention. But new puritan O.C. thought it otherwise. For the first time in the history of the Unit extra rum was refused.

One evening when darkness descended there was a terrific

din in Assam Rifles line. Men were running with hurricane lanterns, torch lights to all directions shouting 'Oile Faisla Honei Porcho'—the score must be settled now.

A hurried foot step approached my quarter. Wrapped in a blanket O.C. sneaked inside the room informing that his life is in danger—the men wanted to kill him and I must provide him a shelter.

Immediately I threw him under the cot. He was having temperature and shivering from fever.

A few minutes later half a dozen men smelling liquor came to my house demanding to know whereabout of O.C. This is the only place where he could hide since I am the great friend of the scoundrel. They used such filthy language against the poor O.C.

But luckily for me search was made in all places including the toilet but not underneath the cot. O.C. meantime stopped shivering to my great relief. After a futile search the men left the place murmuring curses and ran towards the office and landing ground.

The entire Unit line was in a mess, no one to pacify the angry men who now burst into tumultuous singing spree.

My foolish orderly wanted to see the fun. Flashing a torch light he went towards the A.R. Line. Immediately the drunken men doubled up shouting that the bastard O.C. is coming. However when it was found otherwise they gave two hard slaps on his face and asked him to go back.

I was also furious. As soon he came back I gave a blow by which he reeled to the ground. The idiot had no common sense.

It was perhaps midnight when the din died down. Putting the O.C. to safety I quietly sneaked off to the house of Bezbaruah, the teacher and roused him from the bed and then both of us proceeded towards the residence of Assistant Political Officer.

We had to detour avoiding the main path. Without flashing torch light the going in pitch darkness was an ordeal. How many times we fell in the ditch and rolled on the uneven ground. At last we came to Assistant Political Officer's residence. Knocking frantically and giving our identity yet

Assistant Political Officer did not respond. We were in dire need of his help—a rebellion has broken out in the AR camp and O.C. is hiding in my place.

At last he got up. Hearing the story he asked us to go to 7 AR platoon along with Boken Ete, Political Interpreter. 7 AR platoon which had arrived at Along on way to Mechuka camped near Sipu river.

We met O.C. of the Unit—a strong built Gurkha. He was furious hearing the news of insult to one of his colleague. He at once came to my residence and took away frightened O.C. to his Unit.

The incidence left a bad taste. Subsequently an inquiry was made. The O.C. was found tactless and removed from the post. However the Unit had to suffer after a year in a tragic incidence in Ashing Mori.

Five months now passed since my arrival at Along. Bitter truths now became all pervading reality. Perpetual scarcity, melancholy and boredom give rise to depression. One must therefore adjust with the situation. Struggle for existance or survival of the fittest whatever may be is no longer a vague connotation.

I soon learnt to live by cultivating hobbies. Apart from occasional bout in writing, I took to gardening.

A slopping land near the house provided an opportunity. A few terraces were built up, levelled and hoed Potato, mustard, radish and other seasonal vegetables grew up well. In the front I put a number of flowering plants, cosmos, marigold; rose and Dahlia. The house also renovated with bamboo collected from the jungle. Dr. Hazarika, the Medical Officer joined the Dispensary. Product of Berry White Medical School, he was earlier in a tea garden. We soon found in him a practical man as he used to attend all the works by himself.

The duty of a Medical Officer is rather arduous. Great deal of perseverance and patience called for and he must be combination of all services—Pharmacist, Nurse, Medical Attendant beside occasionally rushing to far remoted out posts to attend an ailing official. The department could not buildup elaborate organisation— Nursing service was non-existent, trained Pharmacist was as scarce as the Doctor. Often it

happened that the solitary Medical Attendant—a semi literate personnel left behind in the Dispensary as replacement to Doctor or the Pharmacist.

Villagers response to the Medical services was rather interesting. There was great craze for injections—not for mixture or tablets. This must be due to psychological impact of a prick in the skin. Amused Doctors sometimes had to device an ingenious way by pushing distilled water as the patient would not listen to other method of treatment without first receiving a prick.

The Medical Officer's additional charge was the Assam Rifles. However, there was reciprocal treatment—the platoon also looked after him. At times of need it was the Medical Officer who had the most advantage, he seldom has to depend on others so long Assam Rifles were present.

Dr. Hazarika soon became a popular figure at Along. But his wife who joined him later was however of a different mantle. She became extremely suspicious seeing the girl patients crowding the Dispensary.

Soon the bickering turned into constant nagging and poor Doctor has to forego peace. Ultimately he left the service and went home.

The year 1952 was coming to an end. The winter in Along is most pleasant—cold breeze from the mountain blow over the valley. What a contrast with the summer days when torrential rain bring landslides, mud and slush cover the path. In sunny days sweltering heat saturate the air with excessive moisture resulting in perspiration as if one is in steam bath.

We gathered in the house of Tamuli. A grandiose programme was drawn up for the farewell to the year with fun and frolick on the bank of the river.

We invited the villagers to join us. It was a spontaneous response as scores of people descended from their villages with supply of beer, rice and vegetables. Girls in their beautiful dress fluttered like butterflies. For them it was an occasion to show their best 'ponung'.

We selected the place near the confluence of two rivers, Sipu and Siyom. A ground was made by removing the boulders.

Nearby the blue water of the river flowing past raising countless ripples.

A beautiful sky ushered the day. Some went to trap the fish hiding under the stones in cold water. Huge stones were hammered to stupefy the fish which then floated to the stream only to be pickedup. A deer was shot which provided the meat.

Girls dressed up for Ponu soon after the meal. Led by cheer leader whose tinkling sound of the sword stirred the rhythmic note—the girls repeated the rhymes in chorus—

Jajine tone Jajine Ja-

As the day narrowed with the sun already sunk in the horizon, Kitem Jamo the Political Interpreter provided the parting song:

Aku Ditage Gidak Bong Ani Ditage Adakku Ati Manem Mepakla Aiyana dem Bomlaju.

Old year gone

to yield the place for new leaves also the wicked come forth the hope.

New year brought fresh enthusiasm. We went for fishing in the down stream of Syom. In the evening the campus of Assam Rifles was lighted with gas lamps. Colourful lanterns hung on all approaches.

The improvised stage reverberated with the sound of beating of tin cannisters. Dancers dressed in multi coloured festoon s trouped to the stage. The popular song of Relimai instantly caught the mood of the audience as rhythm followed the chant:

Sal Ko pata Relimai Tupoima Herio Janda Janda Relimai Dhawaima Porio Salko pata Relimai Tupoima Lopakka Merimaya Relimai Rakke hoi Thapaka. Relforkio Relimai Monme Dhorkeo Relimai Ghorke Peyari Shomje Relme Relimai Na Rone hola Ghorme Relimai Peyari Shomjero. The men of the Assam Rifles were a jolly good lot. Unmindful of hardship in the prevailing condition they adjusted themselves remarkably well and never thought for tomorrow.

When the Unit of 7 Assam Rifles moved out of Along on way to Mechuka they marched down the street singing:

Age Age Relimai
Sipahi Jauncho
Hatma Rifle Komorma Guli
Kukri Birero
Pochi Pochi Relimai
Sorkari Auncho.

—Onward first soldier goes with rifle in hand, bandoleer in the waist, waiving the khukri, the Government follows behind.

Later in the month I went to Ngomdir village with Tage Lollen of Kombo. Tage known as Lomba because of his tall figure had already developed uncanny business sense and now a budding contractor. Most of the thatched houses in Along were his construction and a substantial amount he earned through the contract.

But he was also a progressive farmer who perceived the wind of change. He started building up terraces and planting of orchard.

Lomba gave me a good company till we parted at Tading where he stayed back.

Tadin is a small village three miles from Kombo. It had access to Kebang village in the Stang Valley fifteen miles away through a wild forest where tigers roam at will. Some of the people of Kebang who are Minyong are settled at Tadin.

I reached Ngomdir crossing a river Silli. The open 'Dere' in Gallong village during winter is too uncomfortable to stay. I was saved from the discomfort when Takar the gam of Ngomdir took me to his place.

In the evening Takar arranged a party where girls staged ponu. I heard again the original gallong songs not yet mutilated:

Amejush Kore Langkoyo gutene gamine langkoyo and

Ajene Ajene Kukkuri -

Next morning we decided to go up the hill to a village Piri Sago which falls on way to Pasighat. The jungle is full of wild animals but Takar assured me that unless attacked they seldom trouble the traveller.

However, our projected visit could not materialise when a hurried messenger came from Tadin asking Takar to attend a Keba: to settle a land dispute.

Keba was in full swing when we arrived. Much heat generated—fretting and fuming in great anger. Flexing muscles and gesticulation made me uneasy as I felt a bloody fight might result.

But Takar soon took control of the situation. His powerful delivery had a sobering effect and parties decided to come to a settlement.

Leaving me behind in a cultivation hut Takar went for fishing in the river. Silli though small yet held plenty of fish. Soon I got bored and decided to explore the country side. A broad path followed the jhum field. As soon I stepped near a thicket, a huge beast with semi-circular horn, fierce eyes stared at me. Its body was hidden behind the foliage.

Fear gripped me at once. I remembered what Takar told me of wild Mithun in forest below Piri Sago which is most dangerous and unpredictable animal. Immediately I made a hasty retreat but only to be swallowed by the thick jungles. To my shock I found I have lost the bearing.

Following a trailing path I arrived at last to a large clearing where some women were collecting fire wood. Neither I nor they could understand each other. I explained as best by few words I knew. Luckily they signalled me to follow them.

It was perhaps an hour's march when we arrived in the village which was near the bank of Sipu.

Curious villagers gathered round anxious to know where from I have come. To my relief I spotted Kore Bagra who knew me well. Hearing my story Kore Bagra burst out laughing. It was then dawned on me that perhaps a mistake has been done. Later he told me it was a bull mithun quite harmless.

Kore Bagra is a personality much respected in the area. He is passed forty, hefty, stout and showed every inch a leader. He along with Moji Riba of Daring suffered imprisonment for hobnobing with Congress leaders during Independence movement. To defy the Government in those days certainly required enormous guts.

I stayed in Doje for the night. A search party sent by Takar soon arrived at the village. Seeing me in the house of gam with Kore Bagra they were greatly relieved as missing of an official is a serious matter.

Next morning Takar came with my belongings. He was pretty nervous seeing me no where. So my foot prints searched and following the mark the party could locate me at Doje.

I developed an admiration for Takar. He was a fine fellow full of life. He was in the forefront in every Kebang in the area and tried to do something good for the village.

A few years later I heard with profound sorrow the death of Takar in a bomb blast while catching fish in the river. It was an irreparable loss to the community.

Kore took me to his village to show his pineapple and wet paddy field. There were some fine orange orchard at Bagra. The gentle slope of the village can be used for fruit garden and wet paddy cultivation.

Near Bagra was the Zeyi village lying in the fold of the hills—a meandering stream passing nearby. Luxuriant forest spilled over to surrounding hills. The scenery was magnificent.

After my return to Along, I again went on a tour to Kambang. At Bene six miles from Along I stayed in the house of Duksor Ete, an amiable person, gentle and soft spoken.

In the village I witnessed a marriage ceremony—a farewell to the girl betrothed to Darkang village.

A party came from Darkang. The girl was dressed in ceremonial attire by one of her relation, the brother's wife. A big bowl was placed on her head where small tinkling bells were hung. She wore brass wristlets on her wrist. A Nyibu—

an elderly priestess began to chant telling her to go to her husband's place. The spirits there should not scare her. The priestess invoked the benevolent spirits to guide her.

She was taken out of the house and on the step below was offered food packets consisting meat and rice. She did not take the meal, only ceremonially put a little in her mouth. She repeated this four times and threw out the remainder over her shoulder.

Her brothers and sisters with groom's party led her to husband's village. Items of dowry were put in a basket which was smeared with rice paste. These were carried by groom's party. No dog was allowed to follow. I saw the girl weeping and tears in the eyes of others.

Duksor told me that when the party reach the groom's village they are not to enter the village immediately, wait for some time for tubes of beer which is to be offered to bride's party. A few girls of the groom's village will receive the bride who would offer the beer first to each member. A reception party would arrive beating the brass bowls. They would symbolically put obstruction on the way to the bride's party. After reaching the village all would sit down for food. After eating, the party would start for groom's house. A ceremonial gate would be constructed near the house. Two banana barks laid from two poles. At the end of one bark a receiver is kept. A chicken would be killed and blood allowed to run by the banana bark. Some water also would be poured there. The bride would take a few bamboo shavings and sprinkle the blood three times over her head and back. The water is then poured down the bark which function as channel and bride would wash her hands and feet to clean herself. A new bamboo ladder is made for her as well for groom to enter. The ladder is rolled up and never used again. The bride enters the house and sit in a corner amidst feathers and bamboo shavings. She would sleep with her husband but cannot have sex in the night.

After staying for three days she would return to her parents village. She may come when her husband call her back.

Duksor took me to surrounding villages—Kugi, Nikte, Taba-chora. Nikte and Tabachora are on way to Yomcha—a Karka Gallong area appeared so remote. The people here have not changed, much remain the same as in past. Women dressed in black overall. Heavy brass ear-rings dangled from their perforated lobes, the neck is profusely covered with bead chains. Over the ankle thin plaited cane strips are tied.

Men also did not show much difference. Some are seen wearing cane helmets with horn bill beak fastened on the top. Bead stones are studded on cane belt and tied around waist over a coarse woollen black garment. The garment has only a hole in the centre and slipped down the head. No side of this garment is stitched.

There is no wet rice field nor any citrus grooves so common villages around Along. There were plenty sweet potato vines in the jhum field.

We arrived at Kambang but this time went to Nomuk to stay in the house of Jumiya Nomuk, the Political Jamadar.

Nomuk is a lively village lying on the side of Hirit river. We also visited a nearby village Kato.

A tragic happening left an indelible impression in my mind. A phenomenon increasingly evident in gallong villages—the result of betrothal at early age.

One of the girl of Jumiya Nomuk's clan was married to boy of Kanki to the house of Jumiya Kanki—another influential man of the area. There were considerable exchange of dowry.

At first for few years the marriage was alright. The girl used to visit the in-law's house and then returned to her parents. Subsequently her attitude changed. She became adament and refused to go any more to her husband who was much younger than her age. At her father's place she must have conceived in illegitimate love and later delivered a child.

The uproar was tremendous—it happened during my visit. Almost the entire village of Kamki landed at Nomuk.

No amount of cajoling or intimidation could move the girl—she remained stubborn. Tears flowed down her beautiful cheek when she narrated the ill treatment at the hand of

in-laws who were cruel to her all along.

But custom die hard-such sentiment have little effect.

All of a sudden a few youngmen quietly got up, rushing in lightning speed snatched away the child from the lap of the attendant and ran away. The other Kamki villagers also followed them almost immediately.

There was such a pathetic yell from the young mother. An overwhelming sympathy overtook me. I looked at the face of other people but surprised to find no emotional change. It was as if so natural.

I could not reconcile myself with the attitude of the people. Gallongs otherwise so lovely and passionate tribe how could allow such a hideous custom. I felt that there ought to be reform, sooner the better.

Moving with Duksor in the villages I acquired some knowledge of the language. Amused audience used to hear me when I began: Dolu Nyi gadde, Buppie Tachen toke. Ngok menjinam Agom Tachinma Milo Kokilo Burchiyeku—Hi! all audience hear me talk. If you do not hear repentence be on you!

Later I became proficient in the dialect but surprisingly not of gallong but of Padam Minyong. Ange Perme—Sericultural Demonstrator was posted at Along. Finding no place he came to stay with me. He immediately became my teacher in the language as I resolved to speak in his tongue only. But Ange was a Padam from Damro. I picked up the words which were different from gallong but nevertheless it served my purpose well. I found by experience that a rapport with the people is best established when ideas exchanged in their own language.

Leaving Duksor at Bene I went to Kambu on the opposite bank of Siyom. We crossed by a suspension bridge near the Pobdi. Here the river passed through a narrow gorge. The depth must be several feet as the water was deep blue. Duksor warned me that in such places spirits hover and no one should go near it.

At Kambung I had a bout of fever from fatigue and exhaustion. I was staying in the house of Takar Minu—a friend during my first visit. Takar called a Nyibu who took

some rice swaying the bamboo shaving over my body he scatterd the rice. Later a red cock was brought, its stomach slit open. The liver was examined carefully for mark of distortion and spirit responsible for the trouble. Nyibu continued a chant and swayed the bamboo scraps. He blew the wind three four times over me and then quietly withdrew himself.

The night passed off in great agony but morning brought the refreshing relief. All fever vanished. It must have been a natural cure but my faith in Nyibu's power deepened.

Moving among the people I was amazed to see a tension free society. Here no casteism bar anybody nor there is clash between rich and poor. Here community work is done by every one—an obligatory function of each individual and none can escape from the customary law. Kebang met out justice on any one found guilty rich or poor alike. While on work all share the food from the same plate and sit together as equal partners. What is more striking is the self reliance of the people—young and old. Begging is unknown as also the samine or pestilence.

Along, now slowly undergoing change with the shifting of Headquarters of Abor Hills district. An advance party already arrived. There was hectic constructional work of big thatched barracks near the bank of Sipu. The airfield was improved for the occasional landing of air craft which brought the supplies.

In the middle of March we were invited to witness the festival of Mopin in Darka village. Mopin is the biggest festival of the tribe for the good crop and harvest.

Images of bamboo shavings were installed with leaves or twigs of auspicious trees. The images were of Mopin God and Goddesses.

A Nyibu came, swinging his bamboo shavings, purified the area where images were installed.

The most interesting part of the Mopin was to smear each one's face by rice paste. We were not exception.

Many pigs, fowls, mithuns and cows were slaughtered. The blood of the sacrificial animal were then collected in bamboo tubes and smeared on bamboo shaving. After the sacrifice Nyibu started dancing with accompanying song—tracing the

myth and history. The parties join in singing the chorus—welcome Mopin. During the dance each one smear the face of the other with powdered cake.

I was interested to know the origin of this festival—its mythological banckground. Later I collected the information from Minkar Ete—the gam of Darka.

Sisi—the earth had two sons Tani and Taki. Both brothers became jealous of each other as they grew up. The jealousy turned to bitter feuds and hostility.

Taki once managed to take Tani above a big waterfalls and threw Tani by a cunning trick where he got drowned. Taki with a trap 'Takom' caught the body of Tani. But this was seen by Jiku-Miku, the sun. Jiku Miku thought that without Tani all creation will be futile.

Jiku-Miku made labur—a chant and tied to a Jirdo Bodi—a thin hollow bamboo with kebo yasik—a coloured thread and decorated Jirdo Bodi with feathers collected from a fowl. He then threw the labur to the stream telling it to find out the corpse of Tani wherever it is.

Labur went down the water and reached the trap of Taki. Taki earlier took Tani's body and ate it leaving the eyes which he kept over the fire place.

Jiku-Miku from high up the sky followed labur and reached the place where it got stuck in Taki's trap.

Jiku-Miku asked Taki whether he has eaten up Tani to which Taki pretended ignorance. Then Jiku-Miku said if he has actually eaten then with the touch of Koni Kama he would standup and if not nothing would happen.

Koni Kama consists of a bamboo stick shaved in both ends. The bunch of shavings hang loose. The stick is split where feathers from leg of fowl are attached. These are then thrown to fire along with bunch of shaving.

Jiku-Miku then blew the smoke towards Taki and soon Taki stoodup. Taki then had no other way but to confess the truth and told that Tani's eyes were kept over the fire place 'Rapko'.

Jiku-Miku then took the eyes and went to Donyi Giri the dwelling of the sun. He asked Talo Taniya—with what substance to make Tani again. Talo Taniya told him to make this with Nipu—the bee wax. Donyi's daughters went to get the wax from the deep forest.

From wax Jiku-Miku made an exact replica of Tani. Over this Komsi-Kamgi—a type of mud was pasted. The bee wax later on washed off. In the sockets the retrieved eyes were fixed.

Hitum Jore—a spirit suggested opening of the cast after twelve days.

Then various spirits—Donyi, Jero muglo, Joje Yapom, Mopin, Bute Yapom, Karu Kate, Moji Pingku Pintu, Jiku Jile promised to bestow gift on him.

After 12 days the cast was opened and Tani emerged as a male child. It became a problem to find some one to nurse him.

Jore on the advice of benevolent spirits agreed to feed and look after Tani. Spirits promising to give yillibong—the gifts and retired to their abode.

When Tani grew up he did not know the cultivation. He did not know what the spirits promised to do but Jore knew all about this and advised Tani to perform a ceremony—Mopin with the help of Nyibu-Donyi Jilo.

Tani performed the ceremony as told with great fanfare and Nyibu invoked Mopin to help the cultivation.

Since then Mopin is celebrated at the time of cultivation with great expectation to reap a good harvest.

The financial year which end in March was coming to a close. Bills are to be presented in time to Treasury to receive the cash. Wireless message came from Pasighat asking me to come at once.

The time was hardly two days by which to cover sixty miles. There was no alternative as Government rules are strict—Treasury would not honour bill beyond the stipulated time.

I started at once. First leg of journey up to Yambung though 25 miles was rather easy. The Inspection Bungalow had visitors. Some one brought the awful news of bears prowling in the area. Half of the face of a villager slashed off by the mighty slap of a bear. The bear is most dangerous, it look to the human eyes as potential target.

Apparently I became uneasy but the witty fellow in the

I.B. told the amazing story that here animals are rather afraid of men and therefore, try to avoid them. The man who was mauled by the bear must have gone out of his way where bear least expected him and hence purely on self defence it had to attack him. So I need not fear at all—I shall be following only the beaten path.

Long before the dawn, carrying a lighted lantern I came out of I.B. to the road to cover a distance of 35 miles to Pasighat.

Despite the assurance I was scared. Only a peon was accompanying me, he being a plains man will be of little use in the event of danger. Actually he got more nervous seeing every shadow cast by the lamp.

The gruelling climb over Yambung river soon exasperated us. Most of the time the road passed through forest, yet to take rest was unthinkable—we must hurry up.

With the day break we reached a clearing where luckily a family was staying. We unpacked our food packet and took some bread and eggs for breakfast.

The road went up climbing the big hill over Rotung. Speed in the hilly terrain can not be steady it never exceeded 2½ miles an hour. When there is continuous climb the rate is still lower, a mile an hour.

When we crossed Renging the darkness descended. Here forest was too thick. Tall trees appeared like ghosts. To add to the ordeal the lamp also went off. In total darkness we moved forward. Now and then feeble lights of glow worm showed the faint mark of the path.

Luckily we were near a sawyers pit. The sound of men at last brought some hope in us.

The sawyers were good enough to give us hot tea which partially restored the energy. We borrowed some quantity of kerosine and lighted the lamp and pushed ahead.

The night far advanced when we reached Pasighat. No one was awake—only stray dogs were barking.

My friends in Bachelor's lodge heard the incredible story. To them 35 miles journey was unique—very few could do so.

Next day it was all pain and swelling. I badly required rest.

The peon had it—never in his life he dreamt of such an erratic march. He quietly slipped of—getting into a plane which came in the afternoon and was never seen again. He rightly found in me a formidable companion who defies all normal law.

My new boss was a tall lanky fellow from Southern Mizoram—K. Saptwana. He was moody and often appeared unpredictable. He picked up all slang of local dialect and opened the talk with, 'ekki mite perog mite'—dog sheath and chicken sheath.

The officials were literally scared of him. I never saw so much of panick and fear. As the head clerk of the office wanted to resign but fortunately got away with a posting to Naga Hills.

I saw a totally shaken staff when Saptwana in a rage came menacingly and shouted: I will slap you right across the face and throw you in Dihang. The official cowardly swallowed all the insult. Later in life he rose to high position and might not have forgotten the episode.

Yet Saptwana was not a villain. His outer mask was only a camoufledge. He merely acted and never meant any harm.

I do not know, it was still a riddle to me as to why Saptwana always behaved well with me. He never uttered a harsh word though I had several meetings with him.

Later we became good friends. He was a keen observer on human characters and reminded me to judge a man by his deed and never trust by mere words. The greatest punishment one can inflict on any one is to neglect him. When I last saw him in the streets of Shillong, he turned in to an evangelist. I had a feeling that Saptwana would have made an able Administrator under a good guide.

Aching Mori—the Tragic Episode

From mid April 1953 the scenerio of Along was under going a change. More officials began to arrive to strengthen the district Administration.

Government policy at that time was to penetrate to remote areas which were outside the normal administrative sphere.

Pradip Barua arrived in one such assingnment in late September. He was appointed as Area Superintendent in far away gusar on the fringe of Tagin country. Tagins occupy the upper region of Subansiri river about whom nothing was known much. Pradip nicknamed Tultul was my contemporary in the school. He was too young at the time to be sent in an expedition but he volunteered to go there.

Major Ripu Daman Singh, a tall hefty Sikh Officer was in command of the force which consisted mostly of platoon of Along. The men earlier had earned displeasure on the abortive attempt of mutiny.

Major Ripu Daman stayed for some days at Along before he left. Every evening we played volley ball with his team. He was every inch a sportsman and never felt sad for going on an expedition to unknown territory.

Tultul was bubbling with enthusiasm. He was appointed as an Administrative Officer and so naturally felt proud of the assignment.

Before his departure I arranged a dinner in my house. The gay party continued till late night. No one thought of the dangerous mission being undertaken.

As we were engaged in amusement some one brought a rhyme from Tagore song:

Kholo Kholo Dar

Rakhiona Ar

Bahire amái Daraye

-Open the door, do not keep me waiting outside.

Later events proved the words of the song so prophetic.

Next day we saw a long procession going out of Along crossing the Sipu river on way to Yomcha. The party consisted 165 men including an armed platoon of Assam Rifles, and porters from local tribe.

Gidam Yomcha, Political Jamadar and Kitem Jamo, Political Interpreter and Tultul also accompanied the party.

The party had no trouble on the way. Every where they were cordially received. Pradip even sent a goat to us for a party on his return.

They were camping at a place Achingmori on the bank of Subansiri river beyond gusar. Apparently friendly reception made them lax and they were in gay mood. Some of the men went for a bath in the river, a few other collectings firewood. Only a skeleton strength of armed guards kept a watch.

An old man entered the shed carrying a huge sword in the scabbord. He asked for salt. Major Ripu Daman leaped from his bed to offer him the salt. Quick as a flash the sword struck him and he died at once. Pradip was also relaxing another man gave him a blow and he too rolled on the ground.

The signal sounded at once fierce tribesmen descended on the camp, struck their swords on any one found on the way.

Alert lookout on the river bank also spotted the panicked escapees but they too fell to the poisoned arrows.

In all 45 people died. Large number of persons who belong to Karka gallong were taken as captives. Kitem Jamo, P.I. lost his life while Gidam Yomcha was taken as a prisoner.

Later Gidam was brutally killed by severe torture.

A few stragglers managed to escape jumping into the river and floated down to safety to convey to the outside world the news of grim tragedy.

The tragic episode subsequently confirmed the suspicion that it was an inter tribal friction. Gidam Yomcha was a sworn enemy of the Tagins as his clan was involved in many raids in their villages. Now they thought Gidam has brought up the Government force to subjugate them further.

The news trickled to Along after two days. An ominous silence descended in the town. Something terrible has happened.

We were dazed at the news of the massacre. The people who were so near to us are no more.

I remembered Kitem. he was from Balek near Pasighat. So simple and good natured—how one can kill him?

Gidam—a domineering personality who visited my place several times. Gidam left the maruding raids long before and devoted solely for peace. He successfully mediated in so many disputes in far away places like Jirdo, Daring. Mito Bassar was his personal friend.

Yet the vengeance was on Gidam for the crime of the past.

A lonely Dakota flew over the Tagin country to spot the scene of massacre. Tribesman thought it a huge flying bird and shoot arrows indiscraminately.

The Dakota later landed at Along. On board was N.K. Rustomji—the Adviser to the Governor of Assam.

Rustomji talked to us. It is time now that we understand the tribe, try to be friend them by our approach and good will.

Days followed by hectic preparation. Assam Rifles men in olive green outfit armed with carbines began arriving by Dakota. Their grim face showed determination. A para Unit of the Indian Army dropped at a place called Daporizo near Subansiri river. The Unit cleared the trees, levelled the land for a runway to receive Dakotas.

Three columns marched in a pincer drive to Tagin country. Hipshon Roy, Kwatim Khuma accompanied the column while R.G. Manzies the Political Officer of Subansiri

area moved to Daporijo.

Along was bursting with excitement. Grim faced troops marched out in formation reminiscent of war. Understandably the men were itching for revenge for the death of their comrades.

It would have ended in a bloody massacre but for tactful handling of the situation. The troops were not given free hand. Jairam Das Daulatram the Governor of Assam put his firm feet and thus avoided what would have been worst disaster.

Col. Mangi Ram of Ist Assam Rifles led a column of troops via Mechuka. I went up to Kambang with him. Colonel—a veteran of war however had surprising understanding of tribal problem. He did not advocate drastic measures but instead wanted pacification. He told me his experience in Mizo hills where beggery is unknown, people are proud and self reliant.

Sadly I had to admit what a qualitative difference between the two commanders I happened to meet. Col. Stracy was itching for a fight to teach a lesson to the tribe but the other man who was also product of British Indian Army suggest moderation.

The column ultimately succeeded in capturing the seven ring leaders. They were tried by a special court presided over by R.G. Menzis—the Political Officer who sentenced them to various terms of imprisonment but none were awarded death penalty.

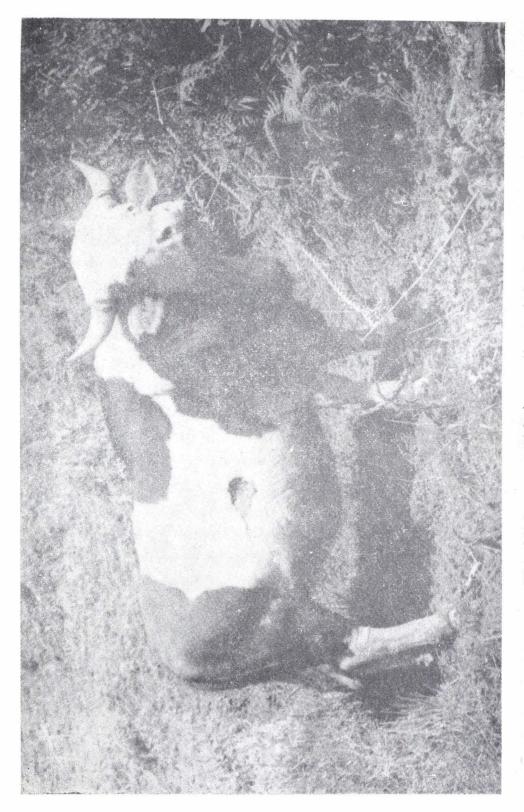
Two Administrative centres were opened in the heart of the Tagin country—Dine Koli and Taliha where Kwatim Khuma and Hipshon Roy were posted. A big base was established at Daporizo where Menzies stayed for some time.

Immediate fall out of Aching Mori incidence resulted complete overhaul of Administrative setup. Government reoriented its Frontier Policy by appointment of Dr. Verrier Elwin as Adviser to Tribal Affairs.

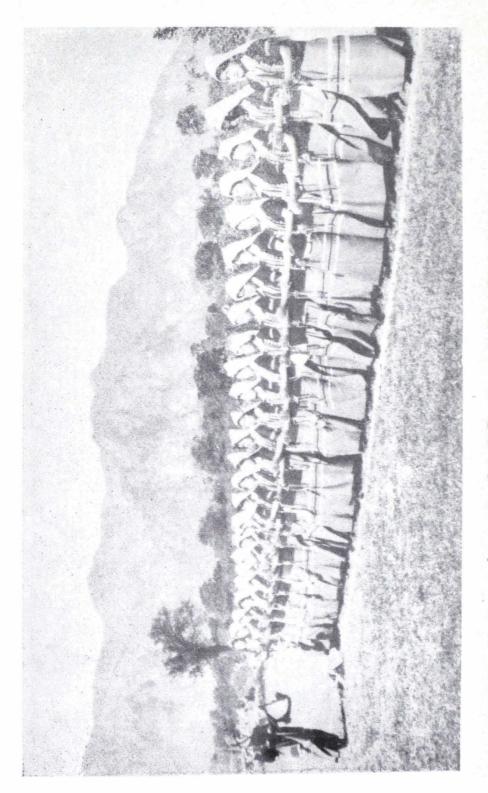
A new service—the Indian Frontier Administrative Service was created by inducting officers mostly from Defence. All districts were given new names. Thus Abor Hills became Siang Frontier Division and term Abor, a rather deregatory connotation was replaced by Adi. Developmental works were given priority and more specialized staff were appointed to implement the programme.



'An Adi Girl during Mopin Festival'



The Mithun-a semi-domesticated Animal



A group of Adi-Dancers of East Siang



Monpa Dancers, West Kameng



Adi Warriors Pasighat, East Siang

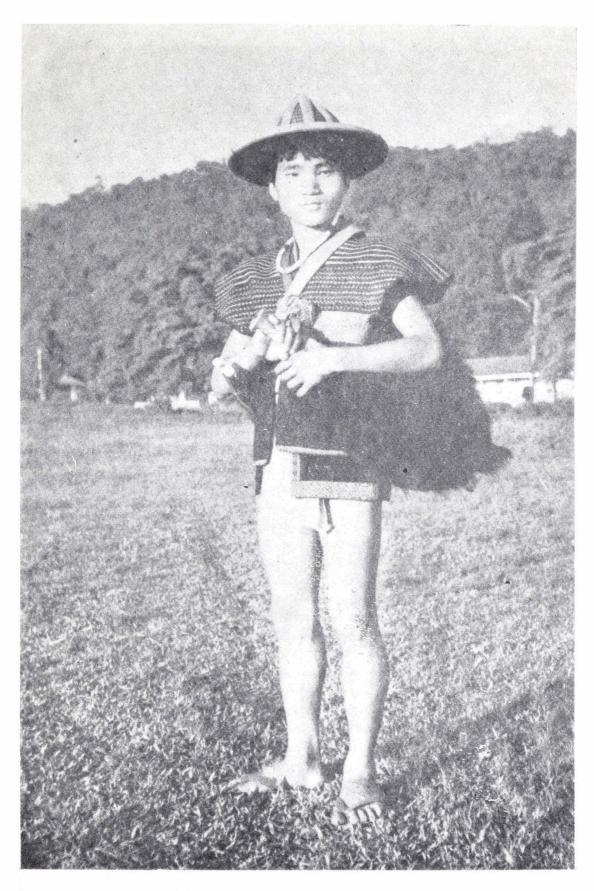


An Adi Granary

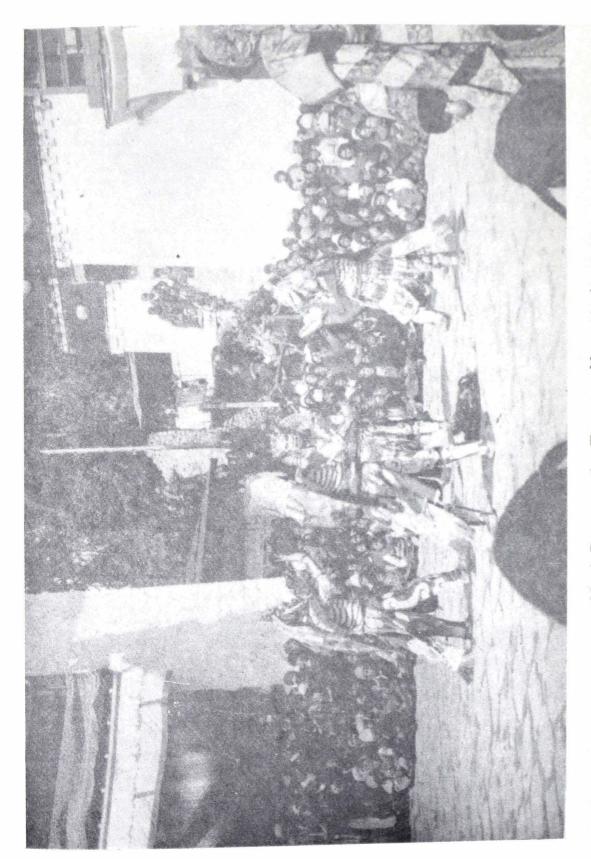


A Bori Highlander

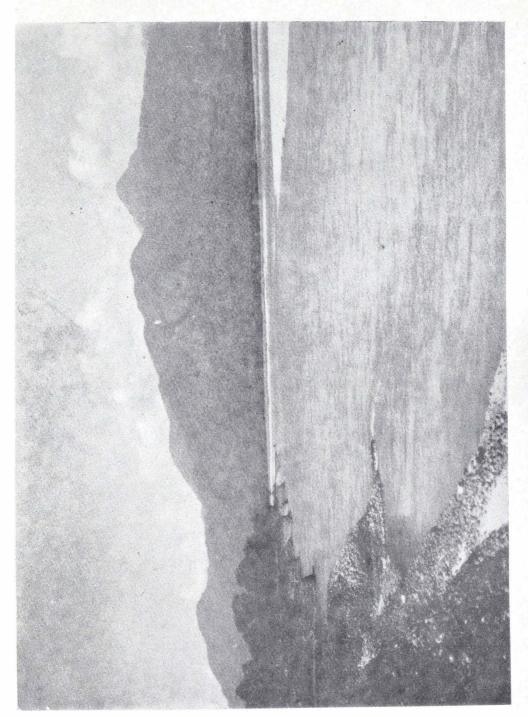




An Iduyoung man, Dibang Valley



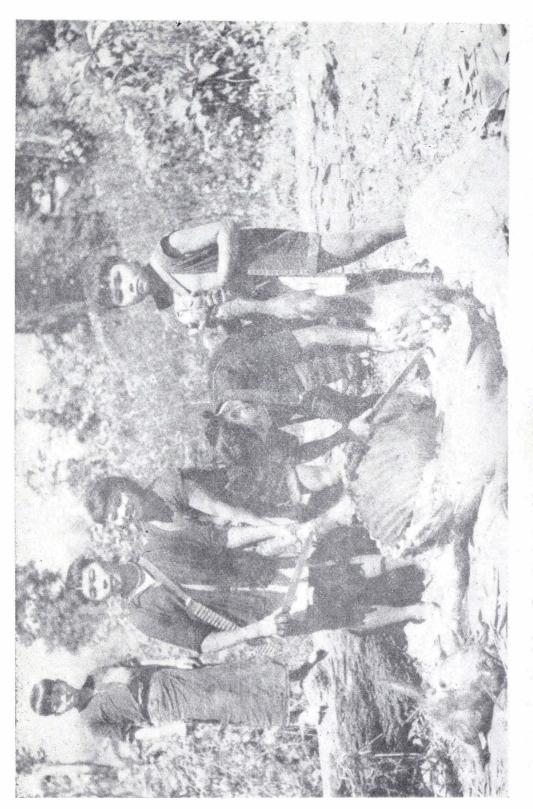
Mask Dancers the Tawang Menasteries



A view of the Siang River



An Adi in his War Dress



Idus Cutting the Meat of Mithuns, Anini, Dibong Valley



An Adi Couple



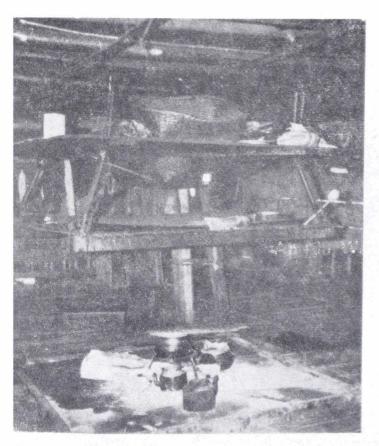
Girls Husking and Winnowing Paddy



Mask Dancers of Yangsangchu Valley



Inside an Apatani House





A Suspension Bridge High over the River

Fire Place inside the Adi House

An Old Woman Ginning Cotton

On to Pasighat Again

A new movement of Rural development started all over India. Imbibed with his experience in America, S.K. Dey, a versatile genius conceived the idea of extension by chain of community development project in selected pockets.

S.K. Dey became the Administrator of this historic project which was launched in 1952.

In North East Frontier Agency, Pasighat was selected for the intensive development scheme.

In January, 1954, I was asked to attend a six months training course on Community Development at Agricultural College, Jorhat.

Bidding farewell to my friends I boarded an Air Force Dakota and moved out of Along. As the plane flew over the familiar landscape my heart saddened with thought of leaving the place for ever.

It was at Borbheta where the college was situated. We had as many sixty officials drawn from different units of North East to undergo what was termed as extension training. A 70 year old American from Ford Foundation was the Adviser for the course.

We were all young inbibed with enthusiasm to participate in the challenging task of rural development. Such phrases as:

Extension is life—contraction is death, extension has two way channels—Lab to field and field to lab or do not jump to a conclusion, meet your enemy on the half way were included in our vocabulary. The American from the Ford Foundation despite his old age shuttled from place to place reminding us all the time: Not tomorrow but today.

Sometimes our exuberance stretched far. Once on a visit to nearby Saodang village we confronted an old man quietly seeping the rice beer on the portico of the house. A sharp hatchet laid by his side. Perhaps he was ready for the field.

Our group was led by a middle aged man—Amulya Barua but boys were mostly from Manipur.

The old man in his rustic dialect wanted to know the purpose of our visit. We were foolish enough to tell him that we have come here to teach the people the Japanese method of rice cultivation.

Suddenly the old man flared up. In a flash he caught hold of the dao telling that for fourteen generations the cultivation is in their blood but now the toddlars fresh from mother's womb have come to teach him how to do it.

The scene would have been macabre but for the tactful guide who quickly explained! No Daddy, what audacity we have to teach you. Actually we have come here to learn from you. Tell us someting of the technique?

The mood of the old man at once changed. He made a heartly laugh. 'Oh! you should have told me so. Come and sit, have some bear?'

For us the rest of the day passed off most happily.

Later Barua told about Saodang who have mercurial temperament. Engaged as executioners during the Ahom reigns they still maintain a detached attitude, never compromise with anything which conflict with their views.

In July, 1954 I arrived at Pasighat on my new assignment as Extension Officer in the Community Project.

The Project is divided in small areas comprising a cluster of villages. In each area there are subject matter specialists along with village level workers. Extension Officer is the coordinator of all activities. On the apex is the Project Executive Officer who is assisted by specialists in Education, Agriculture,

Engineering, Medical. It was a well knit organization charged with responsibility of intensive development.

At first I shifted from place to place—Balek, Sille, Ralung till I finally settled at Mirem, 15 miles from Pasighat near the bank of Remi river.

All the area are in the foot hills surrounded by dense forests, innumerable streams which burst through bank in flash flood—severely damage roads which become unfit for traffic.

R.K. Patir, a tall man with deep mongolian feature took over charge as Project Executive Officer from T. Haralu. Patir was a product of Agricultural college, Agra and belong to Mishing tribe, the riverine dwellers of Upper Assam.

Cool and level headed Patir was a determined workernever bent down with over work. When Siang threatened Pasighat. In summer of 1954, Patir drove the elephant and retrieved the precious building materials before the rows of houses, roads, avenue trees all swallowed by the angry river.

I found in him a man of courage, conviction and understanding.

Once during a journey through a forest from Mirem to Kemi Patir narrated his life story which was full of struggle.

Born in not so well to do family in Dhemaji of Upper Assam, he was only matriculate but could not go further as no one to take care of his education. He was sometimes in the Army but after the war returned to the village only to find unemployment in stark reality. There were moments of great frustration and mental agony as some of the close relatives never took kindly of him.

When the future was haunting like a nightmare, all of a sudden a friend turned up offering his place to him for the scholarship which he got for study in Agriculture. The scholarship given by the Government to the tribal boys only and its forfeiture would deprive a tribal boy.

At first Patir was reluctant but his friend prevailed upon him.

Soon he left for Shillong to complete the formalities in signing the papers.

Four years of study in the University of Agra got him degree and subsequently a job in the Agricultural Department of NEFA.

Since then his rise has been meteoric. From a humble beginning of a Farm Manager he rose to the highest office of Chief Secretary of the Government from where he retired in prime age of 58 years.

Another officer who had some impact on me was Silverine Swer, the education officer. A graduate with distinction from Calcutta University, Silverine Swer is a Khasi lady from Shillong who served in various capacities during the British regime. She had matured experience in long years of service. Several times we toured together but never found her complaining on the rigours of life. She told me three things which never come back: A speeding arrow, a spoken word and a lost opportunity.

Gentle and amiable in nature she always called me by my first name.

I was at Sille camp which borders the two Mishing villages of Oyan and Moinadubi. Mishings have close affinity with their neighbours the Adis but centuries of isolation has made them much more maleable. Many of their social custom including religion are borrowed from the neighbouring plains people. They have proverbial shrewdness which they exhibit often in exuberance.

My association with them however was cordial. I developed some friendship with important personalities—Oyiram Bori, Bahadur Bori, Lahorisingh Pao—the three stalwarts of the village. Lahorisingh Pao is an enterprising businessman of the area.

I found in Mishing an interesting trait. They always like to stay near the river on raised bamboo platform houses and not afraid of water. Man Mishing settlements are on the bank of Brahmaputra.

While at Sille I witnessed two bizarre incidents. A python swallowing a huge goat just outside our house. The big reptile must be 20 feet and coiled its body in number of loops on the unfortunate creature and slowly swallowing it. The angry villagers rushed in and beat the python with clubs to death.

Later Sakri, a Mishing Pharmacist told me the characteristic of python. It seldom attack man, prefer to stay in the forest areas in the shade of trees. Its huge jaws are elastic—can expand many times when it swallows a victim which may be an unfortunate goat, pig or even a small cow. It had some magnetic power to attract a prey. Once an animal fall into its grip it is impossible to escape. A python coil is like steel. In tightened grip it can smash the bone to powder.

The teeth of the snake are bent inward and so once a prey enters its mouth it cannot come out.

At 12th Mile, a nice forest colony was located. The reserve forest had hollock, Nahor and teak plantation. The forest also harbours tigers, panthers and wild elephants.

A small bungalow was situated in one side of the colony. Its beautiful location amidst the trees attracted my attention. While on a visit to the colony I decided to stay there.

No one told me or I would have known better. There was no light except a hurricane lamp giving out a faint glow.

Perhaps it was midnight, suddenly I woke up with the sound of distinct footsteps on the wooden platform outside the room. Some one standing near the door step heavily panting.

My immediate reaction was that of a prowling animal about which I have heard so much.

I froze with fear. If a tiger has come then I am gone. The barrier of wall will split by a single blow of the paw.

When I was immersed in such ominous thought then all of a sudden the door slowly opened. It made squeaking sound. I felt as having seen an upright figure staring at me.

It was enough for the nerves. With a loud yell I jumped from the bed. A three battery torch was luckily on the side. I flashed the beam but to my surprise found the door is closed as it was and no sign of any one nearby.

Sweating profusely and shivering I ran out of the building to the house of caretaker at some distance away. Waking him up by frantic call he came out rubbing his eyes. Hearing my experience he smiled peevishly which gave me much annoyance. He told at last that the house is haunted. None stay there alone. He thought I knew it and deliberately took risk and so he did not tell me anything.

Sille Sub Area had five villages—Oyan, Moinadubi were Mishing, Sika Tode, Byerung, Kemi were Minyongs.

While Oyan, Moinadubi were far ahead in development either in agriculture or in education the other three villages still practised jhum, a system of cultivation they brought along with them while migrating from the upland. Surrounded by forest, crisis-crossed by rivers, the low lying area was highly humid. In warm summer days the heat became unbearable. High rainfall flood the river which burst through the bank and cut off the communication.

At first look it appeared there is a grim struggle for existence.

The land is however fertile. Crops grow here luxuriantly. Our job was to encourage the people to grow cash crop like mustard and sugarcane along with major food crops.

We began to visit every house, collected statistics organised group meetings and tried to enlist their support for our extension programme. We succeeded pursuading the people of Tode to construct their houses with proper lay out.

A dozen house came up facing parallel to each other along an wide street. The houses, were in their own pattern, raised platform supported on stilts, bamboo walling, thatched roof but some ventilation were provided in the living room.

Our para medical Unit moved around spraying the stagnant pools with antimosquito chemicals, innoculating the people against typhoid and cholera. We drew up a list of children and pursuaded the parents to send them to school at Sille.

The villages were not connected by road though Pasighat was not far.

A plan was drawn up to take a diversion of 10 Kms from Kemi to Byerung through the forest. All the works are to be done by people.

The task was challenging as it involved up-rooting hundreds of trees, levelling the surface, cutting of ditches and building log bridges.

But we were in high spirit. Camping in the forest by the side of a murmuring stream gave an idea of real life adventure.

Every village turned to the road. Hundreds of people flexed their muscles with axe and spades. Slowly the road inched forward cutting a 16 ft. way through the virgin forest. A jeep thundered behind-cheers rant the sky.

Sometimes the jeep bogged in still soft earth. Lifting and dragging, the heavy vehicle was again placed on the hard ground and driven through a diversion made with fallen twigs, logs, boulders. The jeep behaved like a tank furrowing through the bush and slushy ground. We never had so much of fun earlier.

The driver of the jeep invariably was R.K. Patir—the Project Executive Officer. He was the spirit behind. His familiar gibe was: Let the dog bark, caravan goes on.

Yes, the caravan went on. Within a month we reached Byerung.

I had a shock of my life when a king cobra chased us. The deep jungle harbour all types of snakes. But king cobra was different. It does not stay near the human settlement—prefer thick bamboo bush in isolated place.

The snake was under a bush littered with dry leaves. At first there was no indication. Accompanied by two villagers—Olik and Rano Padun I went in search for bead orchid which is found in the area.

Suddenly we heard a loud hiss very close to us. The hood of a snake rose at least a metre. It had yellow stripes on light black body.

Before I had a further look Rano dragged me in a mighty pull and we ran as fast as possible. The snake must have come hundred feet and stoot there erect for full ten minutes. From long distance we saw it lowering down its hood gradually and glided back.

The reason for the aggressiveness of king cobra—the biking in local language might be for the protection of eggs. The snake though considered very dangerous but there was no instance of bite perhaps due to safer distance it always maintained.

A flash flood in October breached the road at many places. Once on a move I got almost drowned in the Tode river. It was Talut Padun, the social worker who saved me by

grabbing me in time. I was yet to learn the unpredictable nature of the rivers in the foot hills during heavy rains. Sudden on rush of water is potentially dangerous.

Seven miles south of Pasighat was Ralung where Community Project has established a model village with two dozen houses. The people came down from parent village—Takilalung and Runne situated two miles away in the hill.

A shanty hut with thatch and bamboo was the camp where Peter Knowles the village level worker stayed with his family.

Peter was from Shillong, a down to earth level worker who was instrumental in bringing change in Ralung. He worked laboriously from morning till evening, tilling the field himself to demonstrate to the people how paddy can be grown in better irrigated field or how a good vegetable garden could be raised.

A piggery unit was also located nearby under charge of Peter.

I had some happy moments with Peter and his family. They gladly accommodated me in one of the room of their house. He had two lovely children—a boy and a girl. Later in life the boy became a successful doctor and the girl after graduation joined an office at Shillong.

Taki Lalung and Runne had citrus grooves. Sale of oranges was a brisk business. People also started wet rice cultivation for which land was plenty. In the foot hills only forest to be cleared and anything can be sown. Water is always assured from the number of streams.

Accompanied by Peter I made several visits to Taki Lalung, Runne, Tekang and Yagrung where we propagated our programme. A new technique based on Japanese method of rice cultivation was being popularized. All the villages have virgin land only waiting for reclamation.

We selected an area near Yagrung village for demonstration garden. The garden was fenced and orange, pineapple, guava and dwarf banana seedlings were planted in rows. Later the garden produced some vegetables and seasonal crops like maize. Jamat Tangu, the gam of Takilalung was a frequent visitor to our camp. Soft spoken and mild mannesed, he was a bridge between old and new. His progressive ideas greatly helped us in our extension works. He had a son, Matin Tangu, a very promising boy reading in the high school at Pasighat.

Once during absence of Peter who went on leave I was invited to gam's place for a house warming ceremony where some officials including T. Haralu were present.

There were great fun with plenty of Apong. Soon I crossed the limit and became rather tipsy. My embarrassed companion, a doctor brought me back to the camp. Luckily most of the guests were too busy with their own affairs and did not notice our departure.

Next morning it was awful. The aggrieved doctor told, so long he thought me a gentleman but now he must revise his opinion.

This upset me so much that I swore in all earnestness no longer would I touch the liquor any more.

However for obvious reason this promise could not be kept though I put the limit of consumption with tolerance.

My days at Ralung came to an end on my final posting to Mirem where I stayed for two most eventful years of my career.

Mirem was a newly opened village in the foot bills—15 miles from Pasighat. A river Remi bordered the village which changed the course in every summer.

The village has been built up after clearing a virgin forest. Huge stump of trees of several feet girth lay scattered everywhere bearing the evidence of recent past. An elephant track passed through it earlier, tigers roamed freely. Now the jungle has retreated to some distance but across the river elephants still move.

Sixty houses which comprise the village were in parallel lines keeping with the pattern now evolved for the project villages. The houses were as usual on raised bamboo platform and thatched with palm leaves but some ventilation has been provided in the central room. In every house an extended portico served the need of women for fixing up their looms or

drying paddy. This portico called Tungo is a must in every Adi house. The platform of split bamboo rises 3 ft above the ground but overhead no roof is provided.

The pigs were let free which served as scavengers. The latrine 'Regum' is attached on the side of each house where one or two pigs are kept. The platform of the latrine is of roughly dressed wooden plank which rise 1 ft above the ground. The enclosure is walled by wooden planks except the side of the entrance.

Each house had one big room which accommodate the entire family. The fire place is normally one in the centre where three legged iron stand served as hearth. Size of the family however small—averaging four to six members.

People belong to three groups of Adis—Pasi, Minyong and Pangi—mostly migrated from the uphills in recent times. They are similar in language and custom. Difference is not distinguishable. But living in compact areas they want to preserve own identity. There is no restriction however in social communication and marriage.

Near the village was the water point. Three subterranian source provided enough of crystal clear water. Settlement was rightly named Mirem—meaning rich.

The village was on a slightly elevated ground overlooking the river.

A vast area of several hundred hectares of flat land extend to the east from the outskirt of the village. Only a fraction has been developed for wet rice cultivation. The soil is very rich by heavy deposit of humus and whoever raised a crop received bumper harvest.

Men and women alike cropped their hair around the crown. Copious beads—Tadok hung from their neck. Women wear skirt of simple design, men had their loin cloth of few inches width to cover the front. There was however no mark of tatoo in the face or legs. In place of 'Laleng'—the bark of a tree the areca nut and betel leaves were used which were brought from the market at Pasighat.

People clung to their tradition though now settled in a project village. Change in life style appeared very gradual.

In tillage operation bullock power not yet arrived. All purpose dao, axe and a simple hoe served the need. Jhum has been abandoned which is replaced by permanent cultivation.

Gun or the matchlock were very few. There were plenty of games all around.

The camp was close to the village, hardly a few hundred feet away. It has a primary school, hospital with isolation ward, residential quarters for a dozen staff. The buildings are of improved Basha type—a step further from the ordinary Basha type which are of thatch and bamboo only. The IBT had CGI sheet roofing—a split bamboo walls duly nailed, earthen floor covered with bamboo matting. The posts were undressed jungle wood with wood oil washing. Only the hospital was on a raised wooden platform.

The buildings were double Unit where two families stay.

I shared my accommodation with Medical Officer Dr. Chittaranjan Gupta who was an interesting person. A stickler to discipline—a legacy from the Army service in which he served during the war years. In apparent relish he always mentioned his rank as Captain.

Most of the time he was in olive green outfit with shining brown shoe. But his rigidity earned him lot of displeasure among the fellow doctors in the project area who were under his control.

I had however good rapport with him in spite of his miserliness. He counted each farthing—never parting even for a benevolent need. His tea always saturated with sugar as if I was drinking syrup. No wonder that later he developed diabetes.

Kamaleswar Rangoli was the teacher of the Primary school. He had absolute dedication to the job and looked after the students with such paternal affection that earned him immense popularity. Many of his students whom he personally cared and brought up rose to high position in their career. Notably among them is Matin Tangu, the son of Jamat Tangu who became a Member of the Indian Administrative Service.

In recognition of his meritorious contribution the Government awarded the much coveted teachers award on him. It is

unfortunate that because of degree required for higher promotional post he could not rise beyond the level of a Primary teacher.

Tali Ao was the compounder—an Ao Naga from Changi village, Mokokchung.

Ao was rather eccentric. Often he was off to the jungle with his gun. Sometimes I accompanied him trailing the deer's path. Sitting under the cover of thick canna leaves. Ao imitated the sound of a barking deer by playing with the leaf placed between the lips of his mouth. But every time the trail was abortive. Ao never had any luck.

The lure of the jungle forced me to go with him. We observed the pug marks of animals in the soft ground. By the mark one could know the time of movement. For a newly initiated it is difficult to judge—all appear as if of recent origin.

To follow the trail require caution—no sound should come. Sniffing the wind movement is vital. Some animal can sniff the wind to know the movement of a pursuar. Beside extreme patience also require to sit continuously under a bush tolerating the bites of mosquitoes. The communication only by sign language. Ao sometimes left me in the thickets to follow a trail. It was a hair raising experience for me.

But Ao had mercurial temperament. Once it burst out in a foot ball match. While tackling Rangoli he fell off badly. He was never been a good player but this time all blame was on poor Rangoli.

In a wild fury he charged like an enraged bull. So violent he was that he broke through the circle and ran towards his house to bring the gun. I dashed off madly after him and grabbed to my apartment. Bolting the doors I began to argue in a most conciliatory manner.

Among all the officials Ao had a soft corner for me—I was his companion in fishing or hunting trip.

After some time his temper cooled down and he agreed to apologize for all that happened.

Ao's wife and child—Willy was standing outside. She was a very simple and innocent lady but had to stay with such a short tempered husband. Often he used to beat her and poor Willy was taken care by some one else.

But Rangoli was naturally much aggrieved. For no fault he had been subjected to such an insult. Again I had to plead with him, we are in a family and cannot afford to fight.

Ultimately both shook their hands—at last they have reconciled.

In Ao I found a true character of a savage. He forgot the incident as if it never happened.

I struck friendship with Kokkam Pangeng who was the member of the Lego Bango and addressed as 'Coun'—a distortion of the word council.

Bango is a combination of villages constituting the higher body of Kebang. An unsettled dispute in a village Kebang is referred to Bango which also deal with other matters concerning the area.

Kokkam was a shrewd person—judge the matter before committing himself to any decision.

Mepang Moyong was the gam—a fine fellow, simple and courteous. There was an equally charming person—Loinong Iring—a progressive farmer who introduced wet rice cultivation Lopiam Kadu, Tadar Nonang, Tolosobo Iring were the leaders who had much say in village affairs.

There were four more villages falling under the Sub Area—Miglung, Mikong, Ledum and Bamin—all inhabited by Minyong Adis. Except Ledum all other villages were in higher ground and commanded a fine view of the area. Ledum and Bamin had plenty of jack fruits and oranges.

Three rivers bisected the area—Penan, Remi and Sille, The rivers are fordable except during heavy rain in the summer. In flash flood the rivers burst through the banks, change course and dislocate communication. The long suspension bridge over Remi collapsed many times.

Once during summer we were waiting to cross a diversion of the Remi. The main stream was already in high spate. Suddenly when we were in half way the huge swell of water came from the upstream. It was a providential escape or else we would have been swept away.

Big trees were uprooted, the swirling current cut away huge chunk of earth. Mirem remained isolated for couple of days.

The jeepable road was extended from Ralung upto Ledum to a distance of 13 miles. The road was far from stable—it went up and down, crossed many diversions. The river beds were strewn with uneven boulders which extended upto half a mile. The mid stream channel had knee deep water. The versatile jeep heaved, rolled, tilted to an angle of 45° and move forward coughing continuously in four wheels drive. The fifteen miles journey from Pasighat was never less than an hour.

Around Penan river between Mirem and Bamin village was the famous elephant track. Dense forest in Bilat was a favourite rendezvous of tigers, wild boars, deers. Several times we saw the pug marks of huge tiger on the soft earth and still warm dung of elephants. There were patches of wild banana which are food for elephants.

Forest around Mirem was deep and awesome. It held gigantic trees of massive girth soaring several feet high to the sky. Innumerable creepers hung on the trunk providing a swing to monkeys and squirrels. Thick foliage covered every inch of ground. Broad leaf 'canna', cardamom, tall black stemmed banana, canes, wild sago, screwpines, berries, bamboos, mosses, variety of ferns, parasitic plants and epiphyte gave a grandeur view of the extensive forest.

Here sun light seldom penetrate. Rain water drip through the leaves only to be soaked by layers of humus. Fallen twigs, broken branches, thorny bush would have made insurmountable barrier—but for the elephants which while on move make a wide path through which trekker can easily pass.

There are fruit bearing trees—from tiny berries to large size pomello. Many are edible. A pink colour fleshy fruit hung near the base of a tree have delicious taste. This tree is found on the fringe of forest. Another species bearing similar deep colour fruit however poisonous.

The fruits provide the source of food for the deers. A fleshy fruit with hard nut is specially coveted by deers. An alert hunter always wait for such an opportunity.

Removal of fruit trees and the foliage is one of the reason for disappearance of wild life in one's favourite habitat. Regeneration of forest with few species of trees which are uncommon in the area do not attract animals. Dangling from the branch of trees are the varieties of orchids which bear violet, blue, white, yellow and purple flowers. The flowers only bloom in season. At that time the jungle appear in splash of beauty with hundreds of orchids blooming, innumerable flowering trees bursting out with tender petals.

There are also ground orchids along with ornamental plants which include a species of fern. Leaves of this plants bear spots or stripes. Some of the creepers climb to a height of few feet and have beautiful tiny leaves.

The moist forest harbours large number of parasites notably among which is the leech. The length of a leech varies from an inch and one half inch. These are light brown colour with faint white stripes. The leech feeding on elephants are much larger and most determined of the lot.

On bushes along the path or in the floor of the wood the leech will wait for the prey. The first man to pass is normally safe but vibration in the ground together with odour of the person would stir them to activity. Attached firmly by rear suckers the leech would stretch as far forward as possible. rearing up wards and searching around by moving the forward end of their bodies in inches or else creaking towards the path. The body is stretched out, the front sucker is attached and rest of the body then drawn up during which operation the creature arches its back in a high loop until the rear most sucker, is attached to a point close behind the front sucker, it then stretches its body again and whole cycle begins a new. Leeches can travel quickly in this manner. It was fascinating to see army of leeches lying in wait along the track ready to attack, waiving to and fro as they sought for their prey, or rearing up their backs as they approach from all sides. Leeches always find a gap through which they creep. If a leech manages to reach a suitable area of the skin it bores a hole in the skin with its iaws and injects in the wound a substance which prevents the blood from coagulating. Only when it completely satiated with blood does the leech let go and drop to the ground where it rest for a period to digest its meal. The boring of the skin is not felt by the victim who generally notices that he has been attacked by a leech only when the creature has let go and he feels a thin stream of blood flowing over the skin. The substance which

stop coagulating the blood cause the wound to go on bleeding for a long time. If the leech is dragged away from the skin it leaves behind part of its teech in the wound. Easy way is to drop juice of tobacco, pinch of salt or touch by burning cigarette.

Buzzing around all the time is the tiny mosquitoes and flies. There is also continuous chorus of beetles. Its monotonous chant is only broken by approach of bigger predator. Seasoned hunter knows this and lay in wait for the game.

When the darkness descend glow worm flash their luminescence lights all over the place. Sometime dead wood give out fluorescent light. In the swamps the marsh gas burst out in bubbles of light giving an eerie feeling.

Burrowing in the holes are various species of rodents—long tailed mouse, the house rat, large toothed rat and white bellied rat. Squirrel species include giant flying squirrel which make wide leap from tree to tree. Bats live in the shadowy recesses of the cave. A species of bat is the vampire which has ghastly look and sharp claws.

A long thread like nematode is seen in the moist ground. Milipedes and centipedes are everywhere but scorpion is rare. A black beetle which crawls on the ground and live in the dung, rolls at once in shape of tiny marble on approaching danger.

There are innumerable spiders from tiny to giant size of all hue and colour. A poisonous species with black and yellow tinge with sinister eyes weave net in the dark caves and holes. The bite from this spider is very much painful.

Armadilo is the most interesting speciman. It burrows deep in the ground clawing away the earth in rapid stride. Its grip is so strong that to drag it out from the hole require enormous effort. It feeds only on ants and termites.

Bees, wasps, ants are every where building up nests in trees or in the earth. A species of yellow bee won't allow any intruder to come nearby. Its sting is most painful, a person may collapse if stung by a swarm. Redants are also not less vicious. It is better to avoid their path while going on a trail.

Often porcupine also seen. Porcupine has large number of sharp needles on its body. When on alert it raises the needles backward and if attacked it thrust the quills inside the body and run away leaving the quills in the body of the unfortunate animal. Porcupine can be hunted by trapping.

There are various size of earthworms. A species of earthworms has a girth of thumb with one to one half feet length. The earthwarms are valuable for the fertility of the soil.

Another interesting spectacle in the sprawling jungle is the large number of birds. Except hornbill which I did not find, almost all species living in lower altitude have their nest here—chirping and whistling of the birds remind one that jungle is alive. Perched on tree top is the hawk with crooked beak which swoop down on the ground to lift an unwary rodent or snake. Once we happen to see a hawk swoop down to the ground in great speed and flew away with a snake.

Shrike, minivet, cuckoo, broad bill, woodpecker, dove, pigeon, jungle fowl, patridge, snipe, parrot bill are common bird species. In the swamp and the lakes cranes are seen. During winter siberian crane used to decend on riverine areas.

Snakes are found everywhere. Python live in moist areas on the bank of a stream. Cobras both black and brown, krait, pit viper, green viper are often met. Snake bite however seldom heard despite the abundance of snakes everywhere. Snakes in search of food climb to great height of trees—an astonishing sight I witnessed several times. Once I saw a snake coming down from the tree, it slide down backward in slow motion.

The forest receiving the full force of monsoon rain which exceed 200 inches a year offer enough food for the elephants. Large herd move around. It denudes an entire area tearing the soft sheath of tender trees, breaking off branches.

Elephants seldom live in one place—it continuously move on the new ground. The sound of elephants breaking the branches is nothing unusual but its shrieks are definitely unnerving.

It was at Mangnang—a few miles from Miglung village not far from Sille river where a small settlement had come up. In the midst of virgin forest the daring settlers cleared a patch of land where they have sown the paddy.

To cheer them up I planned a visit to them. It was almost dark when we reached the house, an improvised long

hut with an extended platform. We were sitting on the platform when trumpeting heard as if hundreds of chairs are being drawn over an uneven surface. The sound was very near—the elephants were just behind the trees but in the darkness it could not be seen.

At first it was so sudden that it took time for me to realize the situation. A herd already on march and now their target is the settlement with standing paddy. The nerve wrecking shrill is the signal to impending attack.

The panick stricken villagers immediately grabbed the tin canisters and began to beat in continuous rhythm. Tamut Darang, the elderly man who had a gun fired a few shot in the air.

Luckily the herd dispersed. Next day it moved far away.

Elephant hunt is almost impossible with a gun. The skin is so thick a bullet cannot penetrate. It is on the vulnerable portion near the ear or the temple that a shot can be effective.

But Tobuk Tayeng of Mebo village on the other side of Siang river killed an elephant by poisoned arrow. Tobuk was a hefty fellow dressed in typical Adi attire, sleeveless shirt—Galuk, copious bead necklace—Tadok, a strong cane helmet, Dumlup.

A solitary rogue was creating havor destroying paddy. Tobuk took his muzzle loader; poisoned arrows and stood in a vintage point. Arrow poison is derived from a conite extracted from a tuber found in high altitude. The poison is deadly once it come in contact with blood.

The elephants have poor sight but have uncanny capacity to feel the presence of man by smelling the wind. Tobuk took a sheaf of grass and drop one by one to the ground to observe the wind movement. Luckily for him it was in opposite direction. The elephant did not know the presence of the hunter. As it exposed its body a sure shot of poisoned arrow released from the muzzle loader hit near the ears. Perhaps taken by surprise it wanted to run but collapsed on the ground and died after few hours.

The killing by poisoned arrows were not infrequent.

Subsequently the Government took exception to this practice and declared elephant as protected animal.

I heard the nerve wrecking tale of bull elephant mutilating bodies, ransacking the houses, crumpling the utensils, tearing off all that necessary in life. The bull is most dangerous if driven away from the herd.

Tupidhar Gogoi, the Village Level Worker narrated his own experience. A run down a vertical slope saved him almost by hair breadth from the charging bull.

Following the road through a dense forest he was moving with three porters. It was late afternoon but camp was not far. On one side of the road was a vertical slope going to a stream. The pachyderm was standing behind a big tree hiding the huge bulk. Nothing appeared unusual till a porter who was on the front saw a small tip of the trunk projecting outside.

The elephants are most cunning in their habit, can remain absolutely still under the cover of foliage. If it has to move there is almost no noise.

The porter's sixth sense alerted him at once. Throwing the load he immediately jumped from the road. Soon others followed him slipping down the stiff incline. Almost immediately the huge monster rolled up its trunk in a ball and ran like an express train but being unable to slide down the slope it stopped at the edge, fuming with uncontrolled rage. Its huge feet kicked the boulders which came crushing down to the stream below.

They were lucky enough to reach the bottom and climbed to a safer ground completely shaken. The elephant looked at them for nearly half an hour then slowly went back after badly mutilating the bed roll and boxes.

In another incident in the foot hills an enraged bull pulled down the building of the Agricultural Inspector, broke his box with a mighty crush, drew away the files containing the valuable documents and trampling on till these reduced to shreds. Poor official who narrowly escaped death however became more sad because loss of his valuable papers.

The vengeance of elephant is proverbial. It can stand guard on hours and pelt hard 'outenga' fruit—'Idilenia Indica'

like cricket ball on the target to which it cannot reach. There are incidents where vehicles are upturned and badly damaged.

Killing of elephant is done for meat. Once I tasted the meat at Mikong in the house of Talut Messar. Talut was an avid hunter. After killing an elephant near Ruksin Rombo he brought huge chunk of meat and dried on the shelf. A portion was cut and boiled for an hour. Yet when I tasted, it was still hard—much harder than the beef.

In jungle we encountered many animals. Tiger though not seen but its pug marks appeared in many places. Loss of mithuns occasionally reported. Panthers are more cunning, live in the deep forest and seldom come near the village. It can climb on the trees and supposed to have an hidden eye. Panthers are more feared than the tiger.

In Mongku Padam area across the Siang river the grassy land is the traditional den of tigers. Ashit Das, the Extension Officer of Borguli had a grim experience. He was in an improvised hut which had a bamboo platform. A big tiger quietly sneaked under it and made growling sound. Terror stricken Das jumped from his cot which was also of bamboo. In the impact the entire platform came crushing down with a splitting sound which must have surprised the tiger which quietly got away. The incident had so much unnerved Das that he arrived at Pasighat next morning to plead for his posting else where.

Wild buffalow 'Benjak' is a dangerous species which are found in the left bank of Siang river amidst thick sun grass and reeds. Its huge semi circular horns have very sharp points at both ends.

Makbul Pertin of Ayeng village told me how once a buffalo chased him. Only luck has saved him. The bull which guard the herd is most unpredictable, it can gallop in lightning speed and if the victim is caught then will be reduced to pulp.

Makbul was out fishing in a small stream far away from the village. Suddenly he saw the bull lowering down its horns, ready for a chase.

Without losing a second Makbul climbed to a tree which luckily was nearby. The bull came rushing. Finding the victim up in the tree it rubbed its bulky body to shake him off.

Later it stood at the base for full two hours then slowly went away.

Makbul had to stay on the tree till evening afraid of bull which might be waiting nearby.

Killing of buffalo is also done with poisoned arrow. The animal once hit is bound to succumb which may not happen with a gun shot.

We heard of wild mithuns—'Bamin' but did not see any one. This animal is distinguished from semi domesticated mithun by its more pointed and shining horns. There is no white pigmentation in the legs.

Bamin is also dangerous. A hunter must maintain extra caution.

Once in Silli river I saw an wonderful scene—crossings of wild pigs. In all there must have been twenty. They slowly swamped across and climbed to the bank in a single file.

Pigs are abundantly available. It thrive on wild yam. The boar has very sharp curved teeth protruding outside. The hunting of boer must be done carefully otherwise an injured one sure to attack the hunter. The injured boar lie in wait only to pierce the pursuer with its sharp. Death is inevitable in such a situation.

Sometime boar used to mate with domestic sow. The litters born bear faint yellow stripes.

Swamp deer seen in the forest along with spotted and barking deer. Deer hunting is more easy though male deer 'Dumbo' at times is dangerous if happen to catch the limb. It has got very sharp teeth—razor like incision and can cut through the bones. So to secure an injured deer the hunter quickly seized the horns and twist the head backward, not giving any chances to bite at him.

During monsoon when fruits fall from the trees the hunter wait patiently for the deer to come. He may imitate the call of a deer by playing on a folded leaf held in the mouth. The sound is exactly like the bark of a deer.

All animals have keen sense of observation either by hearing or sniffing the air. Once it smell the danger it bolts away quickly, leaving the hunter in fruitless pursuit.

Patience is the main requirement during hunting. Agonizing waiting may wear the nerves but hunter must be cunning like the animal.

While on a visit to Mikong village I witnessed a tragedy. Rare though but accident do happen.

Uning Panyang was killed by Tayom Padung on mistaken judgement. Uning was in the jungle collecting leafy vegetables. The sky was over cast and there was some drizzles. He had a cane haversake with sago bark covering. He was dressed in a black sleeveless shirt and skin helmet. While bending down to pick up the leaves the impression from the distance appeared like a boar.

Tayom was convinced of the boar so near to him. He took a sure aim and fired. The bullet pierced through the shoulder. With heart rending Yell Uning Collapsed on the ground.

The incident would have sparked off violence else where but not with this tribe. They have fine ethics. Their law considers accidental killing is not a murder.

The Government however seized the gun. Sengam had tobanish to the jungle for some time and elaborate propitiation done to appease the spirit.

The jungle harboured plenty of common brown monkeys and long tailed langurs which has black face. People eat the flesh of monkey with relish though to me it tasted little bitter.

The fish we had enough in the streams. Most are however scaleless. We caught by net or hook using earthworms bait. But an ingenious way of trapping soon found more advantageous. It was by hammering the stones where fish sheltered. Stupified by the sound the fish float to the stream only to be caught by hand.

During night we moved to the stream with lighted petromax. Attracted by the bright light the fish come up to fall in the trap.

The other method of fishing frequently practised by the people was 'Shibok'—diversion of channel of water and drying up the original bed. The channel to be diverted is first blocked with banana leaves and wooden stumps weighed down with

heavy stones. Blocked water then run through a new channel leaving the original course dry. Collection of fish is always substantial which provide a regular diet for the people.

Big fish however found in deeper water quite far from the village. We seldom venture so far.

Preservation of fish is done by smoking. The intestine is thrown away. A bamboo stick is inserted inside. The fish then hung on the fire place. The crude way of preservation however serve the purpose. If the duration is long only then maggots appear.

To eat the fresh, fish better way is by boiling it in a canna leaf. The fish is wrapped in the leaf and put inside a bamboo tube filled with water. The open end of the tube is also closed with leaf. It is then put on a fire.

The steamed fish is delicious with salt and chilli.

In the river bank hiding beneath the boulders are a species of small brown beetle 'Tari' which provide food to the people. Removing its larynx the beetle can be eaten with relish. Larynx contain poisonous gland and if not removed but eaten then severe purge may result and victim may show sign of temporary insanity.

The jungles provide enough leafy vegetables, edible mush-room—a seemingly inexhaustable source of food. Every evening small buskets laddened with the collection are brought to the house. These are simply boiled, no spice is added. With salt and chilli the taste is not bad.

Ornamental plants, flowers and orchips offered to me an opportunity to open a garden near the house. I cleared a patch and fenced with 'Tadar' a soft species of bamboo. Roaming in the jungle with my faithful companion Lopium Kadu we brought species of beautiful ornamental plants, ground and tree orchids, ferns, mosses and creepers, hanging epiphyte. Soon it turned into mini botanical garden and people wondered what new innovation added to the project programme.

The project had few priorities—communication and Agriculture. My immediate task was to construct four miles jeepable road to Mikong. A meeting was called with representative of all five villages. In Adi villages the Kebang or the

village council is most powerful organisation. The Lego Bango which represented all the villages of Sub area unanimously agreed to the suggestion of construction of a road. The work to be executed on 50:50 basis, peoples contribution in the shape of labour and Government share was payment for each mile on a flat rate. The amount of earth work is not computed for the payment.

Gokhani our Overseer made the alignment which passed through a flat land except for a mile from Penan river to Mikong.

The enthusiasm was spontaneous. Each village had a share of works to be done collectively. Cutting through the virgin forest the people laboured feverishly uprooting the huge stumps by sheer muscle power. Swampy areas were pitched with stones. The drains were cut in both sides for water run off.

All the officials were on the road. They were not for mere supervision but on active participation—sharing the labour with the people. It was thrilling to stay in the dark forest. During night we put huge fire to scare away the elephants.

It took three months to complete the road upto Penan river. The opening ceremony was done by the project Executive Officer who came on a jeep driven upto the river. It had a tremendous impact on the people. Subsequently on any programme they rallied behind us.

Agricultural practices still followed the traditional method of slash and burn, known as jhum. The introduction of permanent cultivation was largely due to project initiative. credit went to pioneer worker—Kharlukhi who first introduced the system in Ngopok area where virgin land was reclaimed. He himself worked laboriously in the field teaching the few cultivators around how to sow seed, raise seed bed, transplantation and harvest. Response was too limited at first but gradually people realised the potentiality of wet rice cultivation seeing the bumper harvest from a single field.

We picked up a few progressive farmers, gave them tools and expertise. The virgin land reclaimed for which a subsidy was paid for the cost of labour. The soil was too good with large deposit of humus.

At that time the Japanese method of rice cultivation sought to be popularised in the country. In small holdings in Japan high yield has been achieved through few package of programmme.

Soon we took up demonstration in the field. The improved variety of paddy seed IR-8 and Taichung were first put in a bucket of water to discard the dead seeds. After drying up, these were then treated with a fungicide 'Agrosen GN' in seed rotating drum. A raised seed bed was prepared with elaborate drainage and heavily manured with compost and cowdung. The bed were periodically watered. The main field was throughly tilled and puddled. The seedlings when attained a height of six inches were uprooted carefully and transplanted in line—equidistance to each other. Only one seedling was put in a hole dug by a stick to prevent damage to roots. The water was then released to the field keeping the level upto two inches.

A spray of BHC dust brought down insect attack. Most serious pest in the area was cutworm 'Cirphis Unipuncta' and ear bug 'Leptocorisa Varicornis'. The water was withdrawn when shoots appeared.

The package of practice was soon became popular. Working along with them in mud and water, in sun or rain I discovered that success of any programme depend on total involvement. At times we merged with the people—moved with them as they moved, working as like them with hatchet or the spade. We shared together the noon time meal 'Pimpu' packed in canna leaves. The intimate contact gave me an insight view of their manner and custom. By now I almost picked up the language and did not require any more the help of an Interpreter. Adi language is most sweet—easy to understand and speak.

All attention was then focussed on Mirem—where project programme made a tremendous impact. It became the centre for all visitors. There were frequent rush and we had to orient our programme to impress them.

Most of the visitors were city dwellers. They never took off their shoes to go to the field or trek to the forest. What they saw or heard are all simply amazing.

One day a party of journalists of well-known papers descended in our camp. I was briefed by anxious Patir and K.C. Johorey, the Assistant Political Officer, Pasighat, to be discreet while we talk.

Hurriedly I prepared a chart giving the heading—'Mirem' at a glance'. Sufficient copies were then typed out for circulation among the Newsmen.

When the party arrived, each one of them were given a copy and that was my undoing. The vetern Journalists took out note book and pencil and paused for questions. I looked at the uneasy face of my boss and soon realised that a way must be found out.

Suddenly I pointed to the huge stump on which one of them sat—telling that only in recent times a king cobra had a nest here. This gave him such a jolt that he immediately jumped off the stump as if King cobra already raised its hood. Perceiving the curiosity. I then went on giving lengthy talk on how this place was an elephent trail and how man eaters roamed here freely. Cobras, vipers are still found everywhere.

The rest of the time it was all fun. With nice tea and snack the party was seen off.

The distortion stretched to maximum. One of our colleagues had deviced many subterfuge to fool the visiters. The Japanese method of rice cultivation was much talked about. The visitors have come to the area to see the development works. Our colleague pointed to a distant greenery which was nothing but thick thatch and quietly explained this as a paddy field which has been brought under Japanese method of rice cultivation. Later he also told in same breath a bunch of local variety of ordinary sugarcane as CO-419, a high yielding variety of sugarcane introduced under Project programme. The visitors as usual did not proceed from the road to see the field. The cunning fox had such ingenuity to fool them which was amusing.

A high level territorial meeting was held at Mirem with the arrival of S.K. Dey the Administrator of Community Project. I had a close view of S.K. Dey who appeared as a pragmatic person. His optimistic view however too lopsided as tradition bound society in India and cumbersome bureaucracy were sure hindrance to Community Development movement. It was sad that within few years of launching an ambitious project S.K. Dey went to oblivion.

Rashid Yusuf Ali also came with S.K. Dey. He was the Political Officer at Along after Bhaskar Bhuiya's departure and now posted at Shillong as Deputy Adviser to the Governor of Assam.

Yusuf Ali, a scion of an aristocrat family of Hyderabad, Deccan, was an army officer and rose to the rank of Lt. Colonel before inducted to Indian Frontier Administrative Service. He served as ADC to Sir Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam and subsequently married his beautiful daughter Amina, who also came with him to our camp during the visit.

Amina was a charming lady. Some years later we heard that both of them separated and she has married Ft. Lt. Jayal, the Assistant Commissioner, Tuting.

Yusuf Ali was a fine gentleman, a man of refine taste although he had his whims which any way strictly his personal affair.

The new Political Officer was however of a different breed. Middle aged, hefty fellow and bespectacled P.N. Kaul gave an impression as pseudo boxer. He along with other officers visited Mirem during an educational camp. We soon found him interested in gay life. He gave us dull and monotonous talk eulogizing the importance of learning Hindi for advancement in our career.

There was interesting side light. The Political Officer of of Lohit Frontier Division—a Colonel from the Army was too rigid in his behaviour. One of the officer wanted an interview and asked whether he could come in. Prompt came the reply, 'No you will not'. It was curt and Officer naturally felt bad. Luckily the Lt. Colonel could not continue in the IFAS and preferred to go back to the Army.

Colonel P.N. Luthra, the Development Commissioner came on a visit. An Officer with domineering persocality Luthra was fussy for the details. On arrival at the camp he called each staff separately asking him to explain his works.

He used to flare up easily—shouting at the unfortunate staff who fumbled.

When my turn came I was wandering what sort of question he might ask.

He looked at me intently and wanted to know the population of the villages and vital statistics.

Staying with Medical Officer I knew what was the vital statistics and replied at once whatever figure came to my mind.

Apparently satisfied he dismissed me with a wave of hand.

Col. Luthra always worked overtime—never get tired. He was a terror to the staff, driving them too far. He behaved every inch an army officer as if commanding a battalion of troops.

Sometime later the exterior posture of P.N. Luthra radically changed. Matured by experience in civilian set up he became more maleable.

R.N. Gidwani, the Agricultural Officer created a problem for us during his visit to Mirem. No one knew he had such abominable dislike for Apong—the rice beer.

In a gathering as is the custom a junior staff offered him a glass of beer.

Gidwani flared up calling him 'Jungli'. This upset the official so much that he created a scene. He felt it was an insult to the community as a whole. With great difficulty we controlled the situation and packed off Gidwani to Pasighat.

In later days I came across several such people who came to serve in the Frontier and did not know how to respect local sentiment.

Ledum, the last village of the Sub Area bordering Sille river was five miles from Mirem. Inhabited by Minyong Adis the village is one of the oldest settlement. There were plenty of jack fruits and oranges.

The village is connected by the jeepable road which extended upto Sille river. There were fifty houses standing haphazardly on a slope of a low hill.

Below the village near the road was the primary school and teacher's quarter.

The school had 40 students, not a respectable enrolment but judging by the response to educational programme at the time this strength was considered satisfactory. Subal Kakoti the teacher was one of the oldest hand—veteran of many years from the time of British. Subal Kakoti was a honest and upright man. His sprawling school garden with seasonal vegetables and flowers was a treat to see. He made a craft centre where works of the school children were displayed. It was interesting to see the children made so many models of different animals, houses and village even jeep and aeroplane.

Sitting on the porch of his quarter I heard Subal Kakoti narrate about Peter James who was a legion. James popularly called as Jembo was a man of extraordinary quality. He was fluent in Adi, made extensive contact with people old and young alike. There was no village where he did not go. Every place was known to him.

James stamina was almost proverbial. He never known to have broken down with fatigue. Once he was summoned from the tour to far north to meet Wavel at Sadiya. Covering the distance of 120 miles in just three days he met Wavel and returned on the same day to Pasighat and participated in ponung for the whole night. The secret mission of Wavel later commonly believed was for discussion on crown colony in the event of British withdrawal from India.

His Bunglow, a two storied structure of thatch and wood stood on the bank of Siang. The bunglow was gutted by a devastating fire in 1945. There was a bizzare tale on the cause of the incident. A mysterious stone 'Ere Lidung' believed to be of evil significance was brought by James from Riga in Upper Siang Valley. The stone caused extensive damage to a number of dwelling houses during war with Padams.

Disregarding the warning of villagers James brought a portion of the black stone and kept in the house. Sometime later, the entire house, a beautiful bunglow over looking the wide Siang river was gutted by a mysterious fire.

Many stories circulate on James who was fond of sensual pleasures. He had number of girl friends but surprisingly even so may years after his departure no one made derisive comment.

No wonder his human character overshadowed the stray erratic behaviour.

I once had a chance meeting with Peter James in Mohan-bari air field. A tall lanky fellow with a lady was talking to some one in Adi. I guessed correctly when he introduced him as Peter James, the Manager of Doomdooma Tea Estate. The young English lady was his wife. I told him the immense popularity which he still held in the district. It was surprising that he remembered the name of many persons long after his departure.

Contribution made in the annals of Primary Education by teachers like Subal Kakoti, Kamoleswar Rangoli, Tangut Morang need a mention in the history of the Frontier. Motivated by a spirit of service they sacrificed their personal comfort to build up schools with greatest care. Wherever they served whether in the inhospitable foot hills or in the interior their institutions were maintained neat and tidy with flower garden in the front and no wonder many of the boys who passed out from their hand later made distinguish mark in their career.

Beyond Sille river there were three Gallong villages Korang, Koyu and Tene. Korang had a Political Jamadar Mariyam Ringu whose son Takap was a smart and intelligent boy. Later in life he became a member of Indian Administrative Service and rose to very high position.

Once I accompanied Silverine Swer to Tene Village which appeared so remote. The track was narrow, twisted and followed stoney bed of the streams. We were fore warned of elephants in the jungles and must have to be careful, living so close to danger al! the time yet people never thought of shifting the village to a safer place. Only disease and pestilence could have moved them but that situation never came.

The teacher at Tene was sad when we left the village next morning. He seldom see visitor except dak runners. We brought to him cheers and joy even though it was momentary.

Sille river had shallow depth but during monsoon it rears with sudden onrush of water and burst through bank, uprooting trees and rolls with boulders downstream.

A long suspension bridge hung on the river. Only 2 or 3 persons at a time could cross the bridge. Sometime later after my departure from Mirem I heard the tragedy, Political Officer Lungalung and dozen of officers badly bruished their limbs as the wires snapped and all of them fell to the river bed.

We had a humorous character at Ledun, a village level worker B.M. Lungkumar Ao, whose full name was Beriapangba Merejenakaba Lungkumar Ao.

A short statured fellow with wrinkles in his face he appeared every inch a joker. A khaki overall and a baggy pent, a smoke hanging between the lips Lungkumar shuttled in and out of the hut perpetually worried with many problems.

Girls soon discovered enough fun. They sneaked to his quarter in the evening and ran away with provisions only to invite him later to a feast. Lungkumar never knew that feast is made with his own precious ration. Next day he found his store have been empty and jumped in the front of his house like a frog to the great amusement of the girls who giggled and made more fun of him.

Later he hung a notice on the wall of the house 'girls are not allowed entry after 6 p. m.'.

Next day some one neatly erased the word 'Not' and so girls continued their visit.

Greatly exasperated Lungkumar then called a Kebang to punish the girls. But Kebang found him instead guilty as the notice said, 'girls are allowed entry after 6 P.M.'!

It was on the Mikong road construction that I had real problem with Lungkum ir. He could not speak Adi and his Assamese speech also distorted.

One day he rebuked the people when they were taking rest. Visibly annoyed with tardiness of progress he said in Nagamese 'Tomaloke sob Ekki Acho'—you are all same. But instead of saying Ekei he pronounced Ekki—which in Adi meant dog.

Immediately all jumped up. Removing the daos from sheath they rushed to him uttering abusive words. Had I not been there he would have received some thrashing.

In spite of eccentric behaviour Lungkumar was a good

fellow. He had no malice. So many people received so much of help from him.

A year later he was transferred to his native district in Nagaland.

Leinong Iring and Mepang Moyong were the ideal pair at Mirem. Honest and hard working they soon gained our confidence. Loinong was tall and slim, did not know any other language than his own. Mepang Moyong—short statured and bulky functioned as Gam, the headman of the village.

Both of them perceived the change. Taking advantage of various schemes of the project they reclaimed the virgin land for planting crops like sugarcane, mustard, potato which were all cash crops and fetched good money. Ultimately Loinong purchased a pair of bullocks to plough his land.

The gushing spring water in the village had been running waste. We constructed a beautiful bathing place by pitching boulders. But Loinong had better idea. He took a diversion from the channel and fed to a big pond to rear fish.

The idea struck him to go further for bigger pond in the field where he could grow carps. Later his income multiplied yet Loinong Iring remained unassuming, a simple villager all along in spite of enormous capital he builtup.

Both Loinong and Mepang became my fast friend. I passed many happy evenings with them hearing their life stories. They told me the eerie tales of spirits who live in deep jungles, in the depression, tall trees and constantly threaten the people. It is the Miri, the shaman who can see them, might have a dialogue and finally cast off their shadow from the victim. There is the black veiled spirit—Nipom which drag the child from the womb of mother, develop hysteric spell in woman. Nipom the most dreaded spirit hobbers around the village. Quack sound of a black bird in dead of night is a sure enough proof of Nipom's moving shadow approaching an unfortunate woman.

A house caught fire during a night. The bamboo and thatch raised a blaze several feet to the sky.

We rushed with buckets and spade but fire was too intense rendering our all efforts futile. The accident occurred from a spark in the tray hung over the fire place. The accumulated black soot provided enough of cinder. Soon the spark enlarged and glowed. No one noticed till it reached the upper tray. By then roof was near and it was too late. Luckily however due to our energetic efforts neighbouring houses were spared. The roofs were quickly dismantled and buckets of water thrown in. We made a human chain from the water point and relayed the buckets within minutes to the site.

The owner and his family had to stay in jungle for three days according to custom. An improvised hut was made for them.

The fire was due to wrath of the spirit as they believed it. The spirit therefore must be driven off. Long banana sheath was carried and beaten on the ground. The men went round and shoot arrows in all direction shouting Hi—Hi—Hi.

A new house was soon constructed by the people. It is obligatory on their part to voluntarily participate in the work and all help must be rendered.

I seldom witnessed such a feverish pitch. Within a day the entire house was constructed.

The success of the project programme added fresh colours to folk song and dance. The village belles dressed in their best staged ponung during every rush of visitors. A new rhymes was added to the song:

Village Porject Community Porject
Village Porject
Ob dolung Mirem Dolung Ob Dolung.
Community Project is the Project of Mirem village.

A territory level seminar was organized at Pasighat, in early 1956. This was attended by Development Commissioner Political Officers, other officers of Administration and Development. We had a hectic time in organizing the seminar. There were interesting discussion on how far planning should be done to meet the need of the time without disturbing the social system. Most of us participated in the discussion and there was eagerness on the part of the senior officers to know our views who were from the field.

Seminar also provided an opportunity to us to come in contact with many new faces. Bhimsingh Kharayat, Base

Superintendent posted in Tuensang District was a jolly fellow. who kept us laughing with the stories of his exploit in Naga Hills. He was a daring person—many times he had providential escape from the hostile's bullet.

Jren Manick Sviem—a short roundish fellow from Cherapunji was a Base Superintendent in Tirap Frontier Divi-He appeared so young among all other officers. Active and energetic J.M. Syjem later climbed up the ladder and retired from the Government service as Secretary, Supply and Transport Department. As Deputy Commissioner of various district he left behind visible marks with his meticulous way of dealing with papers, austerity in living and great care for the office. Unfortunately not many officers are like him.

In mid 1957 I got a surprise order of posting to Along. Our team gradually dispersed as the project now converted to an extension block where staffing strength has been considerably reduced. My team mate Ashit Das became Extension Officer. Fisheries, Nirmal Roy went to Roing, B.E. Wallong to a district and myself to Along. Only K.P. Pandey remained behind.

We had always worked together—sharing our good and Amongst us Nirmal Roy was most intelligent, he worst days. had great presence of mind and tackled the numerous visitors with tact and efficiency.

I preferred the land route which go along the foot hills

then climb to Daring, Bassar and finally to Along.

As I moved the familiar landscape again greeted me—Tene Dove, Jirdo, Daring, Bassar. But five years have brought visible change. A camp located every few miles—a hut of thatch and bamboo quite comfortable to stay for a night, more staff posted to run the school, Dispensary and to undertake extension A national extension Service Block opened at Bassar with the posting of a Block Development Officer.

I introduced myself to Amiya Phukan—the newly posted Block Development Officer who is also the Base Superintendent, the Administrative Officer. Phukan, a tall lanky fellow, quite homely in conversation but gave an air of superiority. He was nursing his Alsatian dog, a pet must for a Bureaucrat.

The old hut where I stayed and Dispensary building no longer exist. The hospital is shifted to higher region. The foot path now converted to porter track ran along the gentle gradient. A strong suspension bridge spanned the Kidi river.

I went to see Mito Bassar. He has aged considerably yet there were occasional sparks. The face radiating the personality.

Mito greeted me with poka—the invigorating rice beer. We chatted for long time, talking about community project and the tremendous change it has brought to Pasighat.

Back to Along—Journey to Bori Land and Experience in Kaying—A Minyong Village

From the height of Darkang I caught a glimpse of Along, what a transformation within four years. The bank of Sipu and the slope and the ridge all lined with O.B. type buildings. A long black topped run way replaced the improvised air field. The village Dego shifted to elsewhere, the land taken for further development. Below the village on the bank of Siyom the houses on stilts and raised bamboo platform lined the either side of the road—these are the residential quarters of officials.

A forest plantation has come up on way to Pakam, Asssam Ritles lines retreated further, a road cut through my old residence—a new building has been built on the plot for Medical stores.

Along is now a sprawling town with dozens of stores selling various goods. An eating house (Barua Canteen) by an outside businessman drawing daily customers.

A drive can be made by the jeep on the town road. The vehicle has been airlifted for the Political Officer.

Post Office, Wirless Telegraph Station, Treasury. Hospital, Farm brought more comfort to staff. No longer the place is remote as in early fifties. Slowly but steadily the crust of isolation now breaking away under the impact of development.

Construction of a reinforced Landing Ground has been a magnificent achievement of the Army Engineers. Heavy Bull-dozers, mix machines, rollers dismantled part by part, airlifted to Along by Dakotas and reassembled. Stones were brought from the river bed were pitched to a depth where rollers rammed this to strengthen the foundation. Heavy concrete mixture churned out tons of mass which were spread over the stones. The task was difficult as Dakotas stopped landing and resorted to dropping of stores.

The 3000 ft. long run way now capable of taking heavy weight of the air craft. Along no longer depend on head load caravan from Pasighat.

The arrival and departure of Dakotas bringing passengers and mails created excitement. On hearing the drone of an aeroplane every one run to the airfield just to see what the plane has brought. The excitement never died down though spontaneity decresed with the time when frequency of landings increased.

The weather of Along during summer was freakish. The low cloud hung over the valley. Several times the booming sound of the plane heard overhead but pilot unable to find a hole through the veil and return with the load of wary passengers back to the base at Mohanbari.

The Air Force took over the supply air drop mission as more out posts were opened. A Directorate of Supply and Transport opened at Rowriah, in Upper Assam. A veteran Army Officer was deputed as Director. One Sub Depot opened at Mohanbari under a Deputy Director who was also from the Army.

All approach to out posts realigned with 5 ft wide porter track. Improvised log bridge laid over the depression of the streams. Steel cable provided for cane suspension bridges.

The Agency Service Corps renamed as Agency Labour Corps with some improvement in service condition. They were provided with some clothings, ration, monthly salary of Rs. 30/and Re. 1/- for each day of convoy duty.

There was no Electricity yet and no piped water supply. The water was carried from Sipu river and distributed to each house hold in buckets by the water carrier.

After departure of P.N. Kaul, R.N. Haldipur, an Indian Police Service Officer inducted to IFAS joined as Political Officer. A dynamic personality, an erudite scholar, Haldipur soon earned name as an able Administrator. He had an equally gifted wife Krishna Haldipur who was also a post graduate in social science.

Capt. K. Banerjee, an Army Officer, now in IFAS was the Assistant Political Officer, a shade different from Capt. U. Chakma, whom he relieved. U. Chakma was rather eccentric and often harsh to officials. He was nicknamed as Ulta Chakma—topsy turvy. K. Benerjee was more rational in his dealings and had quick appreciation of a situation. He however did not continue for long.

W. Saiza, a Tangkul Naga from Manipur Hills came in place of Capt. Banerjee. W. Saiza, a post graduate in Public Administration was a gentleman to the core. He had more easy approach. He proved himself quite capable to tackle a situation.

The juniors in the rung were Murari Monohar Lal, S.B. Sen—both Assistant Political Officers. Thanuram Das, Administrative Officer who looked after the accounts of the office, Matin Dai, RPS Sarin as Base Superintendents.

M.M. Lal was a law graduate—an intelligent officer—but he had some conservative ideas—a belief in fundamental religion. S.B. Sen though had talents was erratic in his behaviour. He could never appreciate a situation—rather vague in his approach and his manners were often childish. Later he was addicted to heavy drinking.

Thanuram Das, a post graduate in geography always remained neat and tidy. He was methodical in his works but at times too much rigid to part with the money.

Matin Dai, was the only Tribal Officer from the district. He married the daughter of Kutik Moyong of Pasighat and was the first graduate from the Adis. Matin Dai was a simple and affable person and easily approachable.

RPS Sarin was however a man apart. He was always suspicious of others and his dealings with the staff often harsh. Sarin was most of the time in cosy posting and never been to an out post.

Ugen Pulger—the Base Superintendent at Manigong in Bokar area was a perfect gentleman. He hailed from a respectable family of Sikkim and came to the Frontier in mid fifties. Widely travelled in difficult areas Pulger had good grasp of local situation.

Pattern of Administration was single line—there was no delegation of authority. The Political Officer presided over all the departments. He was directly involved in planning, execution of works. District Officers functioned as adviser to him, answerable to any lapses. Political Officer therefore yielded enormous power and authority.

This pattern evolved soon after the Achingmori incidence in October, 1953, where a ghastly massacre took place. Governments realized the need for reorientation of its Frontier administration on a more stable and sustained basis.

Nari Rustomji was replaced by K.L. Mehta, an ICS Officer. Introvert in nature K.L. Mehta was more shrewd and maintained a posture of gravity. He was instrumental in bringing a change to the system of the Administration. His wife Gisela Mehta, an European lady had never ending demand for curios and orchids and officers were hard pressed to satisfy her whims.

The single line administration was more effective as Political Officer exercised full control on all affairs of the district. The developmental programme geared up at his direct initiative.

A dynamic officer like Haldipur took full advantage of his authority and successfully implemented various schemes.

However the new system produced a group of sycophants as in the imperial court. They moved around the all powerful Political Officer, dancing to the tune of his whims and moods, sometimes it had a tinge of comic.

Once P.N. Kaul, Political Officer, had an information that a certain Medical Officer is visiting the weaving institute hostel where girl students were staying.

Political Officer wanted to know the purpose of his visit and asked an officer to verify the fact.

But the officer exhibited the extra-ordinary zeal and immediately began to shadow the doctor. But the shrewd

doctor saw him just in time and at once knew what he was doing. He quickly took a turn as if entered the hostel but instead went straight to Political Officer's residence to report on the officer.

Seeing the target vanished inside the hostel the officer in apparent glee also went to Political Officer's residence by the back yard.

The Political Officer was sitting on the portico. The arrival of the two was simultaneous. Pointing to the shadow behind, the shrewd doctor told the Political Officer, 'see sir, this man has been spying on me'.

Taking a turn Political Officer saw the embarrassed look of the officer behind him. Raising his voice in anger he shouted at him to get out of the house.

But the zeal of the officer did not stop. It spilled over the limit. He was all the time busied himself to please the Political Officer.

Dr. Verrier Elwin once came to Along and stayed in the house of Political Officer as his guest. The over zealous officer took the butler of Dr. Verrier Elwin to his house and gave him a VIP treatment.

The concentration of power in the hand of Political Officer encouraged snobbery. The ambitious officers who were higher up felt themselves as a privileged class. They were much conscious of their rank and position—an unfortunate legacy of the imperial days.

I have again found K. Saptwana as my boss. Though I did not have much of a problem to work with him but my colleagues had difficult times. Saptwana had a comic character. He caricatured each staff in their presence—much to their discomfort and annoyance.

A long tour to Bori area was planned by the Political Officer at the end of rainy season of 1957. All the district officers were asked to accompany him. This he thought was necessary so that on the spot decision could be taken. The departmental officers must know the problem and initiate action accordingly.

Suddenly to my surprise Political Officer called me. Au

order was issued that I should also accompany him during the tour.

I collected bunch of fruit seedlings which are to be distributed in Bori area.

We marched off from Along and followed the left bank of Siyom river by crossing the suspension bridge near Bene village.

Following the course of Siyom we crossed Bogne, Kerang, Paksing, Regong and finally arrived at Bogu—the first Bori village. The visit of Political Officer was announced earlier and so path was cleared off jungle.

It was October but mountains now breathed cool air. A thin layer of snow had fallen on the top.

Boris remained as they were. Nothing has changed here. From Bogu we went to Poyum, Dupu, Iyo, Gaming, Gasheng and finally arrived at Gatte—the farthest village on the foot of giant Pari mountain. The path was tortuous as it did not fall on the track leading to out posts and so no alignment had been cut. There were deep precipice, massive rock rose from the river. A very narrow track passed through the vertical rock where ropes and ladders were laid for support. An unwary step potentially dangerous and therefore required extreme caution. Huge boulders hung precariously on the face of the slope. Yet Boris—the children of the mountain moved with ease in cat like motion.

While Political Officer moved on I was left with a doctor on the face of a big rock on which a single rope dangled from the top as support for a climb. Below us roared the river—its silvery water foaming and fretting while passing through narrow gorge.

So scared was the doctor that he pulled out a page from his notebook and gave the address of his home to notify in the event of his death.

I had to console and literally carried him across. He was visibly shaken. Later on hearing his posting to a place further North he hurriedly resigned and went away.

Mountains always present an awful appearance—dark and foreboding.

A newly appointed official landed at Pasighat for posting

to an interior place. Seeing the high hills bared in all ugliness due to earthquake, demoralised him so much that he took the return flight immediately.

At Gate—the snow came down almost to the village. Silvery water of the mountain stream rushed down the slope. Over head majestic ceders drew a thick black line.

The village was on a rugged slope strewn with boulders. There were thirty houses. A 'risheng'—the girls dormitory was on a corner and mosup was on the centre.

Bori men and women are inveterate smokers. Crude tobacco leaves are stuffed into pipe of bamboo. Its obnoxious smell is nauseating to the uninitiated travellers.

We had an Anthropological Research Officer in our team who carried a costly camera. He took me along to help to take photographs.

We entered a Risheng unannounced during the night and saw to my surprise boys and girls sleeping together almost naked. The entire Risheng had no space left. A primordial scene indeed. The enthusiastic Research Officer found an ideal opportunity to click as many photos of the semi nude bodies. The puzzled look of the inmates caused great deal of embarrassment to me.

Next morning the Political Officer called him aside and gave him a good dressing. Poor fellow, his research venture stressed too far.

Leaving the Bori land we arrived at Kaying via Tumbin by the same old route through which I crossed five years earlier.

At Kaying the Political Officer was shocked to see the clumsy houses and nauseating filth and debris. Suddenly he veered round and asked me bluntly could I do anything to improve the lot.

Taken by surprise at the tone his voice I promptly replied to give me six months time and a worker.

He looked at me intently and then said, choose and pick any one you like but six months time should be the target.

He then told me about Albert Scheweitzer—the great Missionery doctor in Lamberene, Gabon in French Equitorial Africa. How a doctor established a hospital deep in the jungle where no road exist. All the supplies had to come by the Ogoove river which was not deep enough for big vessel. Yet his dedication made the hospital one of the pioneering Centre of Medical treatment. Patients walked hundreds of miles through steaming forest to come to the hospital.

Before he left on the next morning he gave me the parting solace: we may loose many a battle but must win a war.

It was a war no doubt against unsurmountable odds. Never before I faced such a situation. Here no facilities available—not even a shed to live. Clothed in ignorance and superstitions people lived as if in stone age.

But I had to make grim determination. Dumping the bed roll in the house of the headman I gathered all the people in a kebang and explained what the Political Officer wanted me to do. We must change the face of the village. I told them my experience in a project village where land reclaimed from the virgin forest where once elephants and tigers roamed, roads laid, hospital and school opened. The same phenomenon can be repeated here also if people have will to do.

To drive my point I took out a stick and asked one of them to break it.

A man came forward—broke this with ease. A laughter rant the sky.

I then took half a dozen stick and gave him to do the same trick.

But this time he failed. I asked any stout man to volunteer. None came forward.

Then I told them as a matter of fact that it is through combined effort we could achieve anything like the bunch of stick unbreakable—the will to do will remain unbending.

The people looked at me in wide eyes. Never before they heard such talks. Development for them meant only peaceful existence.

I picked up Cheniram Bora, the Viliage Level Worker who was at Along. We teamed together at Mirem. Cheniram had enormous capacity to attend to any job and could drive the people like bulldozer.

He arrived within three days. By now people collected the building materials—thatch, bamboo, canes, wooden posts for our huts. We laid down our priorities. A site was selected for the camp down the slope of the village. We must have our living quarters.

Jungles around were cleared off and fenced with bamboo. Two houses on raised platform soon stoodup. No one in the village not even a child sat idle, everyone came forward to the work site.

We made a time bound programme. 40 houses comprising the village were divided in sectors according to clan wise distribution. A leader was appointed to each sector. All houses should have fenced area for kitchen garden, drains for run off water and smoke out let in the living room. The entire village must participate once a week clearing operation.

Soon the works picked up momentum. Day after day from morning till evening men and women busied themselves in constructing inter house path, arterial roads and a main street bisecting the village. A water point was made with stone slabs neatly arranged as platform. The enclosure was fenced with wall of stones. A covered bamboo pipe brought water from the perennial source which was also fenced with strong wooden posts.

We brought potato and vegetable seeds from Along which were sown in the kitchen gardens attached to each house. Huge deposit of organic manure resulted in luxuriant growth. After the harvest cabbage, cauliflower, carrot, turnips, beets, potato packed in loads and despatched to Along for sale. This fetched a good amount of cash for the people.

The visible result further enthused the people. The cultivable land of the village which were lying fellow for next cycle of ihum had huge area gradually sloped down to the bank of Pidgong river. We fixed the target for building up terraces for wet paddy cultivation.

In fifteen days eighty terraces were built up covering an area of four acres. Soon an irrigation channel dug out and water began to pour into the field where paddy seedlings were planted in the next season.

In the evening we did not sit idle. An adult literacy centre was opened where each house hold provided one person. We had no kerosene oil but teaching was done in the light of the

o

fire place. They were taught simple alphabets, numerical numbers and spelling their own name.

Within three months much of our targeted programme completed. Looking at the village from height of the hill it unfurled an wonder, how soon a transformation took place. The village looked much cleaner, kitchen garden attached to every house bearing luxuriant crop of vegetables. The best was the water point, it no longer created a muddy pool where pigs only wallowed.

Our enthusiasm knew no bound. We roamed about the jungles to collect specimen of plants. We were actually searching for pod bearing plants—legume which fix nitrozen in the soil. Kudzu vine—a perennial creeper and a legume, the roots of which are a great soil binder was planted all along the fencing. Kudzu vine which has trifoliate leaves are found everywhere.

Besides Kudzu there were wattles which throw a magnificent bunch of yellow flowers. With some improvement I felt that higher crop yield could be achieved in jhum field.

Though only 25 miles from Along on porter track, Kaying was as remote like Bori area. The communication was slender. Only Dak Runners provided diversion with their periodical visits. The Runners bring the mails which are relayed to Mechuka, seven stages up on the border. Each day of march is counted as a stage which averages 10 miles involving heavy climb and descent as path never follow even gradient.

Dak Runners were our window to the outside world. They brought news of Along, coming and going of visitors and working of the office.

Sometimes Assam Rifles men came down from the Frontier posts for their annual leave. They shared the food with us, exchange information and push off to the next stage of their journey.

I soon renewed my friendship with Tate Tashi—the master story teller. A short statured but hefty fellow with a tatoo mark on the forehead Tate Tashi's face always beamed with laughter.

He told me of the Pailibo, Ramo, Nyi Nimats, Bokars—the enchanting tribes of the Frontier. Their land lie at the foot of

the enormous mountains which are covered with snow. Musk deers, Takins gallop in the wilderness, stately coniferous forest roll down to the valley below.

When Tate Tashi was narrating the fascinating stories, a party of Bokers with their bear skin headgears, thick woollen coats, long steel swords fastened to the waist landed in my quarter. They have come from a place—Lungte on their way to Along to purchase salt.

I observed them closely as they sat squatting on the floor. The group included three women and four men. They wore the dress like Boris but wool is much thicker. A skin belt studded with white stones was tied to the waist. A hairy bear skin headgear was on their head. The back of the headgear droopped down behind. A wooden pipe with metal end dangled in their mouth. Like Boris they were also inveterate heavy smokers.

They wore profuse beads—faint blue, white and light pink stones. In the necklace hung pincer, long needles and a small spoon.

A long steel sword in a scabbard was fastended to the waist.

They kept long hairs and did not wear any shoe like the Tibetans.

Women wore almost identical dress except they did not carry the waist belt and the sword.

All of them were strong built with tough calf muscles and were rather fair complexioned.

I officeed them tex sweetened with sugar but without milk.

Tate Tashi told me their custom which resembles the Gallongs. A girl when very young is betrothed with realization of considerable dowry.

Bokers live in high hills on Tibetan border. Their villages perched in narrow valley deeply cut by mountain streams. The houses are on raised wooden platform supported on stilts. A thin species of bamboo used for roofing and walling.

They raise millets but sparsely grow paddy. Living near Tibetans they have learnt terracing, use of plough and manuring the field, but not given up jhum which avidly followed where land is not on the gentle slope.

They value their cattle for milk and meat and believe in Donyi Polo—the sun moon god and hosts of goblin yet seek the blessing of Lamas and use of 'Perchep'—talisman.

They are fine archers, long bow has high strung string of animal skin. The arrows are from a special type of bamboo which grow in the mountain.

For long time they sat squatting on the floor cracking jokes with Tate Tashi who was fluent in their language. Here are the people so simple yet stubborn and tough. They blended their characters with the mountain beautiful yet awesome.

Suddenly I had a fond wish—some day to get lost in their midst.

Years later my dream came true when I got my postings near the enormous mountains of the Frontier.

Many of my evenings passed hearing the Tate Tashi's melody. I brought my note book to write his songs:

'Siyume Umsume Dedino Solo Dei

HAIYAM

Sopone Bapi Pani Ropnebo

HAIYAM

Koume ogo din

Jajin jam

Umsine ogo din

Jajin jam

Dedilo ogo din

Jajin jam

Ashe Kate Akuma

Kate Leiya Akuma

Leia Jaja Akuma

Meum Siri Sisiga-

Across the Bayor mountain live Pailibos—a small Tribe who are expert in bartar trade. They bring varieties of goods from Tibet and exchange these with their neighbours for rice, animal skin, silk clothes.

I was sitting in the house of Situm Paron, when a man entered wearing a loin cloth, a sleeveless cotton cloth, a leather belt, a woollen coat with an opening for the neck. He had heavy ornaments of brass, copper and iron and also flattened

skin, a piece of mithun hide hanging from the back of the hat covering the neck and falling on the shoulders for protection against rain. A piece of woollen cloth wrapped round the wrist, a wooden ring in the right thumb for putting the bow string when shooting arrow, a flint lighter tied to the belt, a small knife in a leather case, a cane haversack with grass blade over the surface. He also carried a bow with cane string, a quiver made from hollow bamboo and lid containing bamboo arrows with poisoned iron tips, a pointed spear with long wooden pole and iron blade, a big steel sword. A metallic smoking pipe with a long neck dangled from his mouth. Crude tobacco burnt for the smoke which gave out a very pungent smell.

The man was Pailobo from Tagur village in Upper Siyom near Mechuka. He has come down from his village to bartar trade with the Miniyongs of Kerang. A big brass metal vessel and number of beads were the commodities he wanted to exchange for the silk cloths which Bipu Riyang of Kerang village has offered to give him in exchange.

Pailobos better known as Libo live in rugged terrain of Upper Siyom valley which is called by them as Yamgo Isi. Their neighbours are Boris, Bokers, Tagins and Ramos.

17000 ft mighty Tumkar ego range which is snow bound for most of the year separates Bokers from Boris hence route through Pailobo area provide the only access to country of the Bokers.

Pailobos like Gallong trace their origin from Sisi—the mother earth. Sisi had two descendents—Rini the creator and ancestor of man, the Abo Tani and Riri the guardian of evil spirits accredited with powers of destruction and create innumerable difficulties for human beings. To appease the evil spirits several rituals and sacrifices are prescribed. Sobo Panam is the most important ceremony of the Pailobos which last 13 days where mithuns are sacrificed to seek the blessings of the dead ancestors and also to appease the spirits.

A group of Assam Rifles men with Jarde Likar the Political Interpreter came down from Mechuka. They were on their way to Along. Jarde a hefty fellow is a Karka Gallong who had many tales to tell about his exploit in Mechuka.

Jovial and humorous Jarde immediately started a long dialogue with the men from Tagur. I could catch the lingo only partially as this resemble Gallong. The man repeatedly burst into laughter as Jarde cracked jokes mostly related to women.

Mystery of the hills always excited me. Sudden spurt of a desire took me to the Bayor hills to reach the Rhododendron forest.

We marched off. Following the course of Pidgong river—passed the abandoned village of Kaying Moli and slowly began to climb the great hill rising to a height of 10000 ft. We burst into chorus in excitement and joy:

Bille Bille
Bayore Adie
Bille Bille
Che Vanile Le

Gho Yapik Lo Pingkai.

But reaching the Billi camp on the first leg of our journey the enthusiasm evaporated. Rhododendron bush did not bear the flowers at that time of the year. We decided to return to the village again.

One day I went to Tato—the village of Bijum, the Political Jamadar. Bijum, a medium height, fair complexioned man in his forties was a Gallong who had enormous influence in the area. The village Tato lie on the bank of a beautiful mountain stream—Sirin.

Tato was 4 miles from Keak and 7 miles from Kaying.

The houses were of same Gallong house pattern. Platform raised 8 ft.-10 ft. over the ground. A wide portico in the front and the inner room for the family to stay.

Their women cut the hairs by the side of the ears but keep it long on the back, wear black draped skirts which look more like petticoat. Brass ear rings suspended from the lobes of the ear, profusion of beads drape their necklaces. Metal discs worn on the waist produced a continuous tinkling sound while they move.

The village had no wet paddy field nor grooves of orchard. People are 'Karka Gallong' once reputed as quarrelsome and unreliable. Bijum fed us with sumptuous meal and mugs of poka and took us to a fishing expedition down the river. Here water was closed by a heavy bund made out of leaves, wood, and weighed down with stones. The lower channel dried up rendering scores of fish lying prostrate on the dry bed.

Bijum came to us a few days earlier. What he witnessed at Kaying as if a miracle. A sleepy village suddenly awakened and pulsating with life. Now he too wanted the same magic touch in his village.

But I had to disappoint him as we had plenty of works left with us.

In a Kebang in his village I told what we meant as development—a living standard for them. It does not mean abandoning their culture and break with the past. Each house should send a child to the school at Keak. With the enlightened knowledge the child will bring light to the village.

The talk produced good result when 15 children collected in the next morning and marched off to Keak to enrol in the school.

My hut at Kaying was on a slope. The rear was 8 ft above the ground. Raised on crossed pillar support the structure was all with bamboo except the roof which had palm leaves cover. The bamboos were splitted, interwoven and tied with cane strips to the pillars and rafters. The platform made rattling sound whenever any one climbed to the house. Theft was unknown and so doors, windows were closed with simple contraption. Opening and closing done by pulley system.

The bed was also of bamboo, rising 2 ft from the platform and fixed to it.

We added lot of innovation. With improvisation, tables and chairs were made with roughly dressed wood. Kitchen soak was filled with gravel and sand. Water brought by bamboo pipe and filtered through fine mesh of bamboo nets. Toilet was provided with a pit dug deep to the ground. Flat stones placed at the seat and pipe drain led to the pit.

Some flowering plants indigenous of the land were planted in the compound. Bahunia which bear pink and white flowers soon struck roots. Tender leaves of Bahunia provide a delicious dish. Bahunia is a legume and we encouraged people

to grow these on their boundaries.

We had a medical aid centre mainly for first aid. A crush programme in community project taught us treatment of wounds and dressing. I had a certificate from St. John Ambulance Corps.

Medicines were brought from district dispensary. Assam Riflesmen coming down from Mechuka dumped their surplus bandages, swabs and tincture benzene, some sulpha drugs for chest pain, inflammation, Aspirin tablets for headache, Bicolates tablets for stomach pain, potash permanganate for wash and wound.

We made a dressing room fitted it with an improvised bed, stool and receptacle for dumping rubbishes. Medicines were kept in a big cane almirah hung over head with red cross mark.

Soon it attracted attention. For minor scratch also people will step in.

Once we treated a really serious case, a bite from a saw scaled viper. A woman was bitten on the middle finger while gathering Yams in the field.

There was much commotion in the village. A snake bite is a bad omen. Immediately the village was out of bound and a strict taboo was imposed.

When we got the information it was already an hour late. Rushing to the house we saw the woman writhing in great pain. The bitten portion was much swollen, the poison slowly travelling upwards.

Examining the spot we found two distinct marks of teeth, a sure indication of the bite from a poisonous snake. Immediately we started our first aid. Cheniram had dealt with such cases earlier. Two strings tied above the elbow. A deep incision was made with a razor blade on the bitten portion and blood squeezed out. A thick mass of black fluid oozed out. The strings were loosened alternately. Pressing hard on the surrounding portion of the limb more and more blood was thrown out. It took more than 30 minutes to complete the operation. The bitten portion was then washed with weak solution of potash permanganate. The strings were loosened alternately every few minutes.

To our great relief the victim recovered. We did the dressing every day till the wound healed up completely.

Later we found the snake which was killed by her soon after the bite. It had a triangular lacerated hood. The length was barely 2 ft. The body was brown with white belly marked with parallel ed scale.

A few days later Cheniram went on a month leave and I was left alone. It gave me an opportunity to do all works by myself. For a month I talked only in Adi. Soon my note books filled up with information—a valuable collection for the future.

One day I witnessed a woman in severe labour pain. A dog was slit open and blood allowed to trickle down her body. Elderly women were holding her down. The agonizing pain continued till more propitiation done, a fat pig was slaughtered near the Tungo—the portico. The priest continued his monotonous dialogue to appease the dreaded spirit 'Nipom' responsible for the trouble.

The delivery took place in next morning. A male child was born to her without further complication. The husband was obviously very pleased to see the birth of a male child.

Olik Padung came as replacement of Cheniram. Docile and soft spoken Olik was from Sibum village near Pasighat.

Once he had a terrific fit—clutching the stomach in both hands, yelling hysterically he rolled on the bamboo floor with agonizing pain. His wife, a simple village girl tried to comfort him by pouring more rice beer to his mouth.

I dashed at once with Bi-colate tablets the only medicine which I had. Warm oil massaged on the stomach. The pain continued throughout the night though with decreasing intensity. In the morning it subsided.

Later Olik told me that he took some berry like fruits in the jungle. These must have been poisonous and caused intense cramp in the stomach.

Our moment of success came when Tage Palong got the appointment as Political Interpreter. We groomed Tage for the post from the very beginning in adult literacy class. The favourable despatch to Political Officer has the desired effect. The appointment of an influential person to a Government post

further consolidated our position and Tage became our main spokesman.

It was April, 1958 exactly six months after my arrival. A runner arrived with a cryptic message from Political Officer calling me back to Along.

A shadow cast on the village as I prepared to leave. Rhyme of a song echoed through the air:

Gidakku Odi Diyunge

Gidakku-

I burst into tune of the favourite song:

Giyeku Giyeku

Engo Sotso Iye Iye

Giyeku Giyeku-

-dancing like the fish in the river I will part with thee.

A long procession followed me to the river Pidgong.

Never before I felt so much sadness in my heart when I saw the crowd of people still waiving from the bank of the river long after I crossed the suspension bridge. Six months with them was too short a period yet I had the fulfilment. To live with them as like them; sharing their joys and sorrows, hope and aspirations was the greatest achievement.

Arriving at Along I found a new assignment has been waiting. Saptwana appointed as Administrative Officer and already left for his posting place. I was asked to look after his job till the arrival of regular incumbent.

A heavy responsibility immediately fell on my shoulder. The Political Officer became more demanding. He used to call me anytime to discuss a point and wanted in depth analysis and never believed in rhetoric.

As a scholar Administrator his interest was far-fetched. Sometimes he asked my opinion on varied topics stretching from New China's agrarian reform to cow slaughter in vedic age.

If the summon was in the evening to his residence the talk was endless. He was the sole speaker and I became the patient listener. Yet I was always impressed by depth of his knowledge.

We had an Agricultural Farm at Along. The maintenance

of which was rather haphazard. The growth of weeds hardly allow any crops to grow.

One morning I was called to his residence. From very look it was apparent that he was in bad mood—fuming with rage. I was curtly asked to sit in the jeep. Not a word was spoken as he drove the vehicle madly towards the Farm.

Screeching to a halt at the gate he called all the staff to line up. The Manager, a middle aged hefty fellow rather dull answered vaguely on the sorry state of affairs.

The Political Officer though intelligent yet often lost his composure when the answers found irrelevent. His temper was proverbial. Shouting at the nervous staff he gave them notice to pack up and go.

A sudden impulse told me to do something. At once I came forward and told him to give me seven days time to improve the Farm.

Taken aback by the interruption he glared at me but said only one word—alright and sped away.

I almost fell in deep morass. A promise has been made but how to keep it. The Farm was in a real mess. All the fruit trees have been covered by heavy weeds. There was no proper layout of plots either.

But community project has taught me one thing—never accept defeat. Face any situation calmly and boldly.

I chalked out a plan and worked on it. Every day from early morning till late evening I was in the Farm—taking my lunch packet along with me.

The Farm was divided in several plots. Each plot faced a path. All paths led to a broad road which passed through the centre. The weeds around fruit plants were cleared. The base of each plant lime washed. In a small triangular plot in the centre a sign board was hung projecting all the basic datas including the humidity and rainfall.

The gate renovated with an arch. The shape was impressive.

The Political Officer did not forget the promise I made to him. Exactly on the seventh day he arrived.

But the surprise look at the gate gave the first indication of satisfaction. The straight road led to the sign board where he went and read every line. After a round in the Farm he shook his hand with me and left without uttering a word. We knew now that the battle has been won.

The Political Officer was fond of phrases when elaborating a point. If I had doubt on a scheme his pet reply was—we may loose many a battle but must win a war or when mentioned lack of initiative in subordinate staff he would say, Mohammad did not come to the mountain but mountain came to the Mohammad. Keeping the files pending irritated him and so he said, "The paper is not mere paper, human being involved behind it."

Later in life I found these quotes were so appropriate.

Along, now a district town has been undergoing rapid changes. Kalinga Air Lines—a private company started operation from Pasighat for massive airlift of timbers for building construction. The timber trees around Along were scarce. The exploitable forest lie far away where road transport has not developed.

The first permanent building at Along was the Treasury which stood on the ground where once Assam Rifles had their sentry tower.

Air maintenance was taken over by Indian Air Lines from Air Force. For Along the base was at Mohanbari in Upper Assam. A sortie took twenty minutes to cover the distance.

There was no approach road—the only jeep belong to Political Officer which could be driven in the town.

The bucket water strictly rationed was distributed to each house. A clerk in Political Officer's Office was the supervisor of the distribution. He was an interesting character. Slim and weak in constitution yet possessed enormous vitality. With never ending demand for water everyone ran to him. He was the saviour or more appropriately a deliverer from the crisis. Nick named as Paniwala—the water carrier, he shuttled like a sparrow where there was a smell of Apong as he was exceedingly fond of it. Despite heavy booze Mr. Paniwala never failed in his duties whether in or out of office. There was no task which he could not do. He can go to any extent to settle a problem. Such people often proved an asset. At

Along in late fifties this was more than true.

I soon discovered new friends in circle of Along—Chujang, Jamir, Toshiba, Emti—all Aos from Nagaland. They were staying together in a common mess.

Chujang was a Veternity Doctor, Toshiba Ao an Engineer, Jamir and Emti village level workers.

It happened all of a sudden when I landed in their place. Finding no where to stay Chujang volunteered to keep me. Since then it was easy. Soon I found we were in the same wave length.

They used to bring beef parcel from home. Not knowing my habit and faith they fed me at first only with vegetable soup. I was naturally up set as beef or pork was never taboo to me. It was a great surprise to them that I could be so liberal.

They narrated stories of high placed officials visiting their land and their pernicious behaviour to local etiquette. When I tried to argue that it may not be true in every case they agreed on the exception but a Governor once refused to touch a cup of rice beer. Was not if a down right insult? Some years later I had an awful experience at Haflong in North Cachar Hills where I had accompanied foreign visitors to a Zemi Naga village. The village headman offered us rice beer according to traditional custom. While the distinguished visitors politely took the cup from the hospitable hand the escort from Delhi behaved just the opposite—he refused to take the cup and curtly said so. The beadman who was an educated young man was very much offended at this insolent behaviour and told him bluntly that he has shown disrespect to the whole village. I was ashamed to see that our basic approach to tribal people did not undergo change in spite of vast progress in education.

Much of my friends anguish was due to turmoil in Nagaland where many are caught in cross fire. Chujang's brother was killed in an operation. It was impossible for him to forget the incidence. His brother often appeared to him in dream

But staying with them for months—sharing their life and habit I soon discovered the true human character—simple,

honest and straight forward. They were the representative of great mass of people who want to live in dignity and honour, maintaining their distinct cultural identity.

Chujang was deeply religious. He methodically read every line of Bible and was sure enough that the day of final Judgement is not far away. Before meal we would solemnly sit to hear his long prayer in soft soothing voice.

We had joyous session in the evening. Each one of them was a singer—playing the tune with the music. Chujang played an accordion, Toshiba, Emti guitars, Jamir a tambourine. My voice being flat I could play only with the foot!

Emti was romantic of all—girl friends every where. Once he landed in real trouble at Kambang—emotionally involved with a betrothed girl. With great difficulty he was rescued and sent off to another posting.

Eventually our contact snapped as one by one they left for Nagaland which became a separate state. Chujang went for higher studies to Sweden from where he sent me many letters.

New ideas were catching up with Political Officer, village development on intensive scale, water point, open air hut, approach road, wet paddy land and orchard plantation.

An institution was set up—Yame Rutum, the Youth leader who would be the instrumental for all development works.

Surrounding villages of Along we're chosen as focal point. Each village was allotted to an officer who would familiarize with the problem by personal visit and contact.

There was immediate response. Villages burst into spontaneous activities vying to get an edge over the others to earn a name for itself.

Soon the Yame Rutum proved a viable organisation. Krishna Haldipur the wife of the Political Officer—with academic distinction like her husband was not sitting idle either. She had another brainwave—literary activity.

A type written journal came out—bearing the name as Siang News Letter. Humours, anecdotes covered its pages along with serious articles. I was much thrilled when I saw my first article appeared in the pages of the Journal.

The new programme on village development enthused people to work feverishly to bring the jeep to their village. Within two months Pakam, Kombong, Jini, Panya completed the work and jeep rolled to their villages.

To commemorate the event Pradip Barua—the Block Development Officer organized a village leaders camp at Kombong. Slowly but steadily the march was on. No longer the sleeply village clothed in ignorance and superstition.

A far more challenging task was road building—165 kms long motorable road from Along to Majorbari on the foot hills. The task was stupendous bristled with all sorts of problem. The alignment ran through one of the most difficult terrain. Hundreds of streams bisected the valley, low unstable hills. Deep forest of gigantic trees, bamboos and canes was a night marish experience of the pioneer surveyors.

Yet the indomitable spirit of the people over powered all difficulties. Hundreds of them came down to the road with crow bar, shovel, pickaxes and spade. With hard blows of axe and swinging their daos they cut and cleared the trees as the road snaked forward.

The payment was insignificant yet there was not a slightest ripple. Cheerfully all have accepted the task.

The saga that was Along Mazorbari road cannot be told in few lines. Day after day, month after month either in rain or sun or in bitter cold of the winter they stayed in the inhospitable jungle to complete the assigned task. The power of human bulldozer created miracle. Within six months 50 kms of road to Basar was completed.

The pioneers—V. Jacob the Surveyor, M.R.L. Rao the Base Superintendent and scores of others stayed with the people all along sometimes going ahead to fix the line. They faced all sorts of danger yet never turned back.

Along Daporizo and its Neighbourhood—The Tour with the Political Officer

Political Officer summoned me again. This time the call was different. Get ready to move with him on long tour to Gusar on the bank of Upper Subansiri river.

I sat by his side as he drove the jeep on a 50 km. run to Bassar.

It was memorable event. Everywhere wild cheers greeted us as if we descended from the heaven. Entire village poured out—men, women and children. Girls draped in their best dress swarmed the ground—dancing and singing in chorus. For them it was more than an event. It was something beyond their imagination.

I was lucky to be the first passenger of the jeep which made its maiden entry in Bassar in the winter of 1958.

Leaving Bassar we took the track to the hills. Our first halt was at Tirbin surrounded by three villages. We are now entering Karka Gallong area. The life style here too now under going a change—a visible impact of development. A school has been opened at Tirbin where 35 children from 7 villages have enrolled their names.

The girls are better dressed in white skirts with black borizontal, parallel designs and green or black bodice. Grooves of oranges and banana plants have come up. In the valley area wet paddy fields have replaced the jhum. In the village we saw water points fenced, approach path constructed.

My old friend Dr. Nandi has shifted his Ayurvedic Dispensary from Bassar to Tirbin. Ayurvedic is an indigenous system of medicine and the despensary was the only one in the district.

Our party included R.N. Haldipur, the Political Officer, Dr. N.C. Pal Choudhury, the District Medical Officer, Astadal Senapati, the Base Superintendent, Boken Ete, Tapang Taki, the Political Interpreters.

From the top of the Lika Geko we saw a magnificent view of the chain of mountains criss crossing each other. Perched on the low hills were one dozen villages.

We reached Dumporizo—an wild forested area to celebrate the New Years day. On way we passed through Gamlin Moli, Maro, Ropuk. These people are known as Karga Gallong—till recently engaged in bloody feuds.

Hair style of the women, colour of clothes, heavy earring bead necklaces signify differences with their immediate neighbour.

Dumporizo covered with thick forest on vast flat expanse. Inside teem barking deers, wild pigs, fowls and innumerable species of birds.

We struck our camp in a small forest clearing and gorgeously celebrated the New Years day with deers meat.

From Dumporizo we climbed to Topo Echi area and arrived at Aranalo, the village of Ijer Nalo—the Political Jamadar. Ijer Nalo had nine wives but no child. Though very rich with herd of mithuns, costly beads and extensive jhum land yet he was very sad as no one to inherit his property. So he planned to add another woman who might give him a son.

Ijer Nalo fed us with plenty of meat and best of Poka.

Later in the evening the girls of Ara Nalo staged a Ponu for us—the rhymes of the song so enchanting:

Sina Le - Sobo Sina Le

So - Le Sina Le

Pipo Pi Lo Le Goisha

Topo Echi area has 18 villages—the centre of which is the Aranalo. The houses are large square size which rises 10 ft above the ground. High hills are not seen here. The villages are situated on the gentle slope. The jhum is rather close to each village.

People though Gallong are different from Along or Bassar area. Women wear profuse beads, crop their hair in front and by the side of ears, have brass rings in the lobe of ears. At first sight people of Topo Echi appeared dull and drab.

From Aranalo we halted in three more villages—Daliripe Bulo, Nguki and finally reached Gusar the headquarter of the Base Superintendent Astadal Senapati.

Gusar is in Tator Tani area which has nine villages. But here I saw some visible changes because of coming up of an Administrative Centre. The approach roads, water points better maintained. Some wet paddy fields also came up along with grooves of orchard. Children are also going to school at Gusar.

On way we halted at a place—Beak near the Sinyum river where one Lodin Bage of Risha village had developed an area of 2 acres for wet paddy cultivation, planted an orchard of banana, oranges and raised a crop of potato. What was interesting that all he did by himself borrowing some ideas while on a visit to Along. He has constructed a nice hut to stay during the cultivation season.

His progressive ideas impressed the Political Officer who gave him some presents as an incentive.

There was no village near Gusar. The camp which had a dozen staff and platoon of Assam Rifles was the forward base station of ill-fated Tagin expeditionary party of 1953.

Astadal Senapati—a smart youngman was a sportsman of repute in his college days but here in Gusar he could play only volley ball and indoor games. His other hobby was gardening. The sprawling backyard was full of cabbage, cauliflowers. In the front flowers gave a pleasant look to the lawn.

Dakotas dropped supplies to Gusar—only the essential commodities for the survival. There is no shop. Officials however resigned to the situation and seldom complain of hard life.

From Gusar on way to Daporizo we came down hill to the bank of Subansiri.

The river which rises in high Tibetan Plateau has heavy discharge of water in summer and create havoc in the plain areas. Near Daporizo its width is only 300 ft. In winter it is much docile. The river has plenty of fish, a paradise for anglers.

There was a cane suspension bridge over the river but we preferred to cross by a raft which was waiting for us. Water was deep but the current was not strong. The raft buoyance was maintained by tiers of long bamboos which were tied with bamboo strips.

Daporizo is now a Sub-Division under an Additional Political Officer. Major Hranga, a Mizo Army Officer now in IFAS has taken over the charge after the unfortunate death of Captain Sailo. Captain Sailo was also a Mizo died a few months earlier due to some illness.

On arrival at Daporizo we first went to the grave of Captain Sailo and laid a wreath.

A medium statured, broad Mongolian feature, slim person Hranga appeared as an active officer. He was dressed in an Army jacket with black pea cap and brown leather boot. Commissioned in the Army as Second Lieutenant in early forties he rose to the rank of Major and joined the Frontier Administrative Service in 1953. Since then he extensively toured the border areas, located places for out posts. He possessed extraordinary tenacity and never mind climbing the high hills.

We encountered another person—P.K. Phukan, the Assistant Political Officer but every one called him Genda Migom. Fair complexioned with a heavy figure he looked like a bull dog. His face was ruddy with excessive booze, two eyes fierce as if pouring out anger. No wonder people were very much scared of him.

He maintained a run of Yorkshire pigs which were

periodically slaughtered to provide him meat.

The other officer was Krep Sing Swer—Base Superintendent. He appeared unassuming. But he too a good sportsman—an expert in badminton and football.

Political Officer's bungalow constructed with thatch and bamboo was on an elevated portion of the township. It commanded grand view of Subansiri and surrounding areas.

The Aching Mori episode opened up Daporizo when Para troopers dropped by Dakotas cleared the virgin forest for the landing of air crafts. The 3000 ft long run way now laid with perforated metal strips. The supplies are brought by plane.

Slowly but steadily the place is developing with opening of a hospital, Craft centre and a Middle School. Two shops have come up where one can buy soap, tobacco, tea leaves and cheap mill made clothes. The food stuff except vegetables are supplied from the Government store.

Further north of Daporizo is Taliha where an Assam Rifles post has been opened. It takes three days to reach the post by a porter track which has been constructed only recently.

We were taken to Dulom, a Model village under Block Development Programme. A three mile long bridle path has been constructed. The houses are of traditional Gallong house pattern. Only difference is that these are on line to give a symmetrical view. There are water point, an open air house—the howaghar which is a must now in the development programme.

The inhabitants here are Gallong but the Sub-Division has other major tribes, Tagin and Hill Miris both belong to broad group of Adis.

I never had contact with Tagin. Talut Rano the Political Interpreter introduced me to an important Tagin headman who came down from Taliha. Draped now in red coat—the symbol of authority, the gam appeared as docile and friendly like any other villager. He covered his privacy with a mithun horn slit open on the centre which was tied to a knot on the waist. A deer skin hat was on his head, the back drooped down a little. He was wearing a profusion of beads—yellow,

blue and white and in waist rings of thin strip canes studded with beads.

There was no indication of treachery or suspicious look so commonly talked about.

Gam gave his name as Tamiya Raji hailing from Puru village near the bank of Subansiri. It is five days foot march from Daporizo. Further up to another seven days march is a place called Limeking where Subansiri river is joined by a stream—on the head of which is Taksing where people are not Tagin—possibly of Tibetan origin.

Tagin land is full of lofty hills so abrupt that valleys are very narrow. The river enters through gorge. The foot path is aligned on the bank of the river appear too dangerous but to Tagins this is the best track they have.

The villages are perched on high hill—always on an incline. It gives them security either from an enemy or from disease as high up one go the air is cool and healthy.

The Tagin villages are small—only 3 or 4 houses. The houses are rectangular in shape but large and spacious. It rises on wooden pillars 10 ft to 12 ft above ground. The floor is of split bamboo and roof is thatched with fronds of cane. A pig sty lie on a side which serve as latrine.

Their dress is meagre, women wear a rough skirt with no special design. White cotton blankets extensively used by men and women alike. Metal rings, cylindrical ear plugs, metal bangles decorate their body. A mithun horn cut open longitudinally in the centre cover the genital of the male.

Both men and women wear rings of thinly sliced cane round the waist. For men upturned cowrie shells stuck on the rings while women use small metal discs suspended by strings.

Men wear a cane woven hat but skin hats made out of mithun or dear hide are also used.

Their hair allowed to grow long. Men cover the forearm or right hand with finely woven cane strips or animal skin.

Like the Gallong their family consist of man and his wife, unmarried daughters and sons. The girl after marriage go to husband's place.

Marriage is arranged after payment of heavy bride price. Payment depend also on the status of the girl's father. If he is a rich man the demand naturally will be much higher. There is no restriction in the age of marriage. But once a girl is betrothed the marriage cannot be dissolved except payment of heavy compensation. Only the adultery or barrenness may lead to divorce.

Tagins practice polygamy but Polyandry like Gallongs not followed.

They believe in Donyi Polo—the Sun Moon God. All oath are taken on his name.

But the malevolent spirits hobber in their land. It is they who require propitiation to ward off trouble.

Priests called Nyibu and occupy a very high position. They diagnose disease through omens marked in the liver of a fowl or pig.

Priests also narrator of myths of creation. They attain certain mystical power by which innumerable spirits could be approached through a dialogue unintelligible to lay people.

The most important festival of the Tagin is the Si-Donyi the earth and the sky. The festival is held at the beginning of the year by the community after the harvest of the crops.

The festival is held rather as a community worship to creators—Si-Donyi. By appropriate prayers made by sacrifices people seek the blessing of the creator for prosperity of their land, crops, family, end of disease or quarrels.

At the beginning elderly person will examine with the egg yolk to know which priest will be suited for the function.

The selected priest then read the omen on an egg yolk to know the mood of the God—whether the performance will be auspicious.

After receiving a positive answer the priest will start chanting text addressed to various spirits which are always too numerous. The chant continue for 2 to 3 days.

After the recitations are over two mithuns are sacrificed for Si-Donyi. The white fowl is offered and put on a long pole.

The mithuns meat is then shared by all. The festival binds them to strong sense of brotherhood. Every one must contribute something—rice, mithun, beer, fowl, pigs.

The festival also include folk dances—Chune Rabo, Hoye Penam, Takar Gene and Koniyi Bokar. The last one is performed by selected few who carry long drawn sword and hand shield. They dance vigorously round the sacrificial place to demonstrate their courage and strength.

Tagins burry their dead near the house. The death except on old age is always associated with the wrath of spirit who has not been appropriately appeared by proper sacrifice.

The dead body is kept in the house for two days to allow the relatives to see. A monkey is killed and placed with the body as monkey is considered most intelligent who can guide the soul on its journey. After the burial the family observe restriction on movement for five days when only clan members are allowed to come to the house.

I wanted to know on Aching Mori—the scene of the massacre. But the gam immediately became apprehensive. Am I trying to open the issue which is burried in history? Taluk was also reluctant to talk any more on the subject.

I could feel the fear in their mind. Aching Mori was a tragedy—borne out of suspicion. A Government party accompanied by one of their worst adversary who traded in slave. A secret Kebang—then consensus of opinion. The die was cast. Swift and brutal attack followed. Their biggest trophy was the capture of the formidable enemy who was then slowly tortured to death.

Fall out of Aching Mori opend the hidden land. Ring of out posts covered the entire Tagin country. For the first time in the history they realized that it is no longer possible for them to live in isolation.

Yet the lurking fear persisted even after five years of peace. The tremor may again shake the foundation. Any mention of Aching Mori may open the wound.

Aching Mori now Dinekol i is placed and quiet. A circle headquarter has been established. Dakotas drop provisions. A store depot supplies salt to the people. Dispensary provides treatment to the patients who suffer from a skin disease which peel of layer of skin.

I heard the gam telling me about his land and people and wondered how little we know about the tribe and tend to jump

to conclusion which is not always true.

Before I came out of the house I shook his hand warmly and expressed the wish to visit his village some day.

We are now out of Along for 20 days—a long time from Headquarter. Political Officer decided to return via Yomcha.

Our halt was at Paka and Liromoba—before arriving at Yomcha. Marching during winter however very pleasant. The obnoxious leeches did not trouble nor rain soaked the body. Cold wind however gave some discomfort. The improvised camp constructed with banana leaves hardly gave insulation from the bitter wind. We had split bamboo cot on the earthen floor.

During tour with Political Officer, our schedules were very tight. There was no rest or privacy. The camp was crowded all the time as if we were in a carnival. The girls in their best flocked around for ponung—the poka in a bamboo mug move round the hand, the reception and slaughter of mithun, pigs and dozen of invitation to visit the houses. Yet I had to find time to go to the field to gather important data to formulate schemes.

Arrival of Political Officer was a great event in their life. For days together the preparation was on, the approach roads were made, jungle cleared of vegetation, village swept off litters and debris. A big welcome arch on traditional bunting was put up on the approach. Improvised benches and tables made with split bamboo were struck to the ground.

The entire village turn to the place of reception some distance from the village. Gam in red coats greet the party. After profuse garlanding and hand shake the girls immediately start ponung advancing the Political Officer along the way to the sitting place. Poka is poured to the bamboo mugs, some boiled meat and eggs are placed on a leaf plate. The dance continued non-stop where all members of the party also dragged to join. But amongst us very few were adept to follow the steps. There was immediate laughter from the onlookers.

The function continued till midnight. People were never tired though eyes droop down with exhaustion and fatigue.

The visit of Political Officer had tremendous impact. He had come all the way on foot to meet them. He sat with them

on common platform to discuss about their problems and explain Government view points. Intricate cases were brought up for discussion in the Kebang and after thorough deliberations decision reached to the satisfaction of both the opposing parties.

The greatest advantage of such visit was a bridge between the people and Administration.

After arrival at Yomcha I took leave to visit some villages in outlying areas. Leaving me behind Political Officer then moved to Along.

Left alone I had enough time now and visited Likar, Belo, Putu and Ronya villages. I have struck friendship with the grand oldman of Akker, Yomrak Yomcha who is also the headman of the village. After the death of Gidam—his son, a charming young man—Damle became the Political Jamadar of Yomcha.

Akker and Tapior are two parts of Yomcha, I was amazed to see the rapid progress made in the cultivation. Yomrak is now a progressive farmer like Rekkar Bassar of Soi and Loinong Iring of Mirem. He had developed 5 acres of paddy field and planted oranges, banana, pine apples on the surrounding land.

Sitting on the porch of big house he told me of his vision of the future. A chain of wet rice fields in the valley area, orange and banana orchard in every village and a child for the school from each house.

At the time he did not think of a jeep road as Along was 25 miles away and hurdles were many.

Yomcha had a Primary School which completed seven years. The school owes much for its growth to Jogeswar Das an able and efficient teacher. He had developed a vegetable and flower garden, a craft room for the school. All students received his personal care and attention.

I visited the house of Gidam Yomcha in Akker village. His house was like Mito Bassar—large and spacious. Visit brought to me nostalgic memory of Gidam with whom I had a good rapport. I felt sad remembering the old days.

His daughter who had completed her training in the weaving institute is a charming girl. She has learnt good deal

of etiquette while at Along. It was encouraging to see the weaving which was dying has been revived and girls are taking an active interest now a days to weave their own clothes.

With Yomrak I visited group of villages in further interior—Boye, Boje, Potom, Poyom, Raksap. These are Karka Gallong. The area has been slowly opened up with the posting of a village level worker at Boje. Yet the age old custom still remained, dominant in their daily life.

A Raksap village nestling on the foot of the great mountain. I heard a sweet ballad sung by a Nyibu—the priest. The theme was wonderful—the story of water. How water the virgin locked inside the rock ultimately found the way to meet her fiance.

Holding the long sword upright in one hand, the Nyibu with his two companions on either side began to recite the long text. After each line this was repeated in chorus. They remained standing in the same place—making only the rhythmic move with every refrain of the song.

The story told was interesting. In the beginning the water was not seen anywhere except in the perspiration in the body of the rock. No one knew how to get the water from the hidden source in the rock till Bagi Abom came forward to show a mark in the body. Bagi Abom who knew the secret allowed Kebo Yaro who was yearning for the water to go with him. While coming out with the water Bagi Abom slipped and broke his limb. The precious liquid was lost. They quarrelled and Bagi Abom left the place.

Kabo Yaro then pleaded with Komte and Komro the twin creatures who then volunteered to go and find out the source. They succeeded in locating the hidden source and cut a passage through it. But suddenly the flow was stopped and would not move.

The water who was a virgin remained so long in the locked chamber. She now want to come out in full bridal fineries and accompanying custom to meet her fiance Kabo-Yaro.

Her wish was fulfilled. As plants, animals and birds which live in the water gave her costume and filled the air with

sweet melody. She then danced in sheer joy and moved out in Gay abandon.

The ballad was sung continuously to complete the entire story. The lines of the ballad which I subsequently collected ran as thus:—

Me—Lo	Ru-Le	Oge—le
Hi—Si	Ru—Ge	Kom-ji-e
Ri-Yi	Rue—le	Oge—le
Do—ji	Ru-Ge	Kom—ji-e
Ka—bo	Ru-ge	Kom-ji-e
Ri—yi	Ru—le	Oge—le
Ya—bo	Ru—ge	pip—pa
Re—Ya	Ru-ge	ogo-le

At Raksap I saw killing of a bull by driving it madly with shoothing arrows.

Half a dozen youngmen stood on a ground and shot arrows at random. The bull mad with pain ran in full circle till it collapsed on the ground.

There was wild jubilation. Waiving the Daos they danced towards the fallen prey and immediately began to cut the meat.

To our sophisticated mind the cruelity to animals might appear abhorring but then we must have tolerance to age old custom.

Kore, the gam of Bagra invited Political Officer to visit his village. Kore was always enthusiastic in new deal and a great admirer of the Political Officer.

This time the occasion was construction of an approach road by Yame Rutums. Bagra village already earned a name being in the forefront in every programme.

I had to go to help my friend Phresmohan Roy, the Agriculture Inspector who had built up terraces for plantation of pineapples and oranges.

Phresmohan is a Khasi from Cherrapunji and is a very practical man.

The slopes of Bagra is ideally suited for horticulture. It was due to him that village has taken up terrace building and already planted large number of fruits.

Political Officer bubbles with fresh ideas. His new passion was cash crop which will bring plenty of money. However the communication not yet developed, a captive market not available and sale of crops naturally would be a problem.

Yet at his initiative we put an acre under termaric crop in Along Farm.

The produce far exceeded the market demand and ultimately allowed to rot in the store. We had also cardamom but subsequently found no market.

In the community project, Pasighat, a programme was launched for large scale cultivation of mustard which fetched good money. The result was almost disastrous when produce did not sell and price slumped to minimum forcing the farmers to abandon the crop during next season.

We arrived at Bagra in a procession. Bagra is a large village with more than 200 houses. Now a road has been cut linking their village with Along and Bassar.

A new spirit was immediately discernible—the people want development. Ligin Bomjen, the Political Interpreter was in the forefront. He belonged to the village hence took the initiative in the works. Ligin's intuition is proverbial. He could catch the mood in right time and perspective.

Wild cheers greeted the Politica! Officer. The girls in their white skirts and black designs in the centre, green bodice started the song but this time they choose their own words with a mixture of Hindi and Assamese:

Jane Jao Majote

Jane Porega

Kiu Nai jane Porega.

-Through the centre must you go, why should not go?

Their impromptu innovation of selecting words for a song had a touch of humour when they mentioned about Amiya Phukan—the Block Development Officer.

Bullock Ke Migom

phukan Sab Migom!

Instead of saying Block they told Bullock. Phukan was obviously not pleased.

The community welfare schemes has brought new awareness among the girls who no longer want to be tied to tradition and did not like to confine themselves in the village. The inner feeling was reflected in songs in ponung where desire is expressed. In Dosing village near Siang river I heard a group of girls singing.

Oi Ramro Dekhio

Kot galing geling—e

It looks beautiful to see a wearer with coat and shirt; It was Peter James who sung in ponung with his own wordings:

Salam goodmorning

Very good Salam Goodmorning.

ОГ

Don't be sorry

My dear sister

Don't be sorry.

The trend is disturbing no doubt but then change is inevitable in a developing society.

Face to Face with Verrier Elwin

The visit of Dr. Verrier Elwin always create a Flutter. He was the Advisor to the tribal Affairs. An Englishman by birth Verrier Elwin came to India during early twenties and lived most of his life in tribal India. An erudite scholar par excellance he has written dozen of books dealing with tribal life. All his writings were based on his personal experience.

Incidence in Aching Mori during 1953 jolted the Government to think of a new approach and Dr. Elwin was brought to guide the policy.

He was deeply conscious about the need to preserve the tribal identity. They should develop according to their own genius and not succumb to culture which is alien to them. He has spelled out his own way of thinking in a book, 'A philosophy for NEFA', which became a guide to the Frontier Officers.

I only heard of Dr. Elwin and his almost pathological attachment to anything tribal. Some of the officials were allergic to his ideas but dare not say anything since he was close to the Prime Minister.

To show off their support to Dr. Elwin's philosophy, the snobs and sycophants along with their wives draped them in tribal costume especially during visit of Dr. Elwin. The shops were checked and all the items of luxury—from toilet soap to silk cloth were quickly removed.

On his arrival a conducted tour around the town showed him the best of preserved culture.

The zeal to appease Dr. Elwin sometimes went to excess. U. Chakma who was Assistant Political Officer thought it is his bounden duty to keep the tribal away from any innovation. Chakma was an eccentric and very rash in his action. He used to taunt the school boys wearing shirts and made them to pull off the garment from the body.

Soon the situation was simmering. The boys marched to his house to demand an explanation for his misbehaviour. Fortunately Chakma realized the gravity of the situation and made amend to his ill conceived move.

I had a surprise meeting with Dr. Elwin. At the instance of Political Officer I wrote an article, —'A letter to my friends in the field', which appeared in an issue of Siang News letter. It was a discussion on jhum cultivation where I mentioned that jhum is not a destructive system as it is made out. Rather we should go for improved jhum that is to reduce the possibility of soil erosion and build up forest cover. I also told about the serious disturbances that will occur in the society once we suggest abandon the jhum. Socio-religious function of the tribal people revolve round the jhum. The system encourages collective living—community works and eliminates lethargy and drudgery so alien to their life.

Dr. Elwin must have read the article but I had no idea and prepared nothing for the meeting. In the Political Officer's spacious drawing room he was sitting on a sofa smoking a cherrot.

Bespectacled, smooth hair and broad face glistening in reddish glow he appeared as an University Professor.

In a very soft voice he asked me to tell him about jhum.

I felt some nervousness as Political Officer all of a sudden left the room for some works.

Gathering some strength I told him my experience in the village where I saw famine is unknown, scarcity condition seldom happen as produce from jhum give a substantial return.

This produce is not from a single crop but combination of crops. I saw the people how they work—clearing the forest, fence the field involving the entire village right from preparation of land to harvest. Moreover the Community function always give them a break from the monotonous schedules during the cultivation. After the harvest the entire village celebrate the occasion with grand feast.

Dr. Elwin was puffing cherrot while quiety listening to the talk. He said nothing except uttering monosyllables—OK, well.

Thanking him I came out immediately from the room profusely sweating. I thought I have spoken badly.

Subsequently I heard from the Political Officer that he has appreciated my views.

In later years I had opportunity to know him much better. He was an humanist, a profound scholar and combination of many qualities. Unfortunately he was much misunderstood on his philosophy for NEFA as some felt that what he actually wanted is to preserve the people as museum specimen. Nothing can be farther from the truth.

It was Dr. Elwin who inspired me to write. He honoured me with a nice foreword for my book on the Shimongs.

With the Padam Adis—a Colourful Tribe

Frontier was rumbling with disturbing events in Tibet. In March, 1959, Dalai Lama, the tutelar head of the Tibetan Govt. fled to India via Tawang with a huge retinue of officials and followers.

The threat to border now appeared real. Government now decided to strengthen the Administration by appointing more officers who are to be recruited from various departments keeping in view their special knowledge and aptitude of working in the area.

To my surprise my name was recommended by the Political Officer along with two other officers from the District.

I was then preparing for an advance course in Dairy technology. The application was forwarded to the Government by the Political Officer with strong recommendation.

It was April, 1959. I was busy in the Farm when postman delivered a telegram—some one conveying best wishes.

I thought it might be Government approval for the further study for which I have applied.

But soon a runner came with instruction from the Political Officer to see him at once. I arrived to his residence where he received me with a handshake—congratulating for the appointment as Base Superintendent with a posting to Damro near Pasighat.

I did not receive the news enthusiastically. I told him about my ambition in life but he cut it short by telling that he has done what he thought would be best for me and now I may go.

The appointment of Base Superintendent—the Administrative Officer is something a big event. It is a much respectable position as the post carried prestige and authority. In single line administration he is on the apex when posted in an independent area.

At that time Base Superintendents were very few not even dozen officers in a big district like Siang Frontier Division.

Many came to congratulate me for the fortune to be inducted in the Inner Circle. I now belong to the fraternity.

Political Officer's soft attitude to me irritated some of the officers who never liked that a junior official should move with him. One of them who thought he has become my boss had the temerity to suggest to Political Officer to drop me from the entourage because of heavy works in the Farm. He got a deserving retort from the Political Officer asking him to do the job himself and get out of his chamber.

The same officer came round to congratulate me. I never found such hypocracy.

The very name of Damro unnerved many of my well wishers. The place is riddled with politics. Many humiliating incidents happened and officers were reluctant to go there. Political Officer perhaps thought like wise. He suggested my continuation at Along to acquaint with the works.

But adviser did not agree. I was asked to report immediately to relieve Dying Ering, the Assistant Political Officer who is proceeding on leave.

I did not know much about Damro except that it is situated 40 miles from Pasighat on the left bank of Siang river. The people are Padam—rather colourful not exactly like the Minyongs—about whom I knew fairly well. My friend Ange Perme who was my teacher in language in 1953 belong to Damro. From him I heard the stories of high mountains above the

village where a dreaded spirit rule.

I arrived at Dibrugarh by a flight from Along on my way to Pasighat. Here too whoever heard of Damro sympathised with my lot, there ought to have been a better place for me.

At Pasighat I reported my arrival to Additional Political Officer L. Lungalang. Lungalang who belong to Zemi Naga community was an Indian Police Service Officer now in the IFAS, asked me if I knew about Damro. He told me to be cautious as people are rude.

The thought was depressing enough. How am I to function in such a place?

Lungalang had reason to be agrieved. He was badly humiliated by one of the clan who did not accept his judgement in a case. They came down to Pasighat in a body and surrounded his house-forcing him to listen to them.

But he was of different mantle and refused to yield.

The dispute was on a piece of cultivation land—Tilkong where rival clans, lego and Pertin laid their claim. As usual the dispute continued for generations and never came to settlement due to strong clan politics. When Political Officer wanted to settle it judicially he ran into difficulties. It was simply not a court room case. Ultimately Brigadier Sen, the legal Adviser to the Government came and suggested that the dispute be referred to traditional oath—Amkisinam. The mithun from the rival clan will be subjected to divine oath. A she mithun from Lego clan given to Pertin and Pertin likewise gave one to Lego. If the donated mithun die either alone or loss the offspring in any time during three years period the party to which it was donated will forfeit the right on the land.

Amkisinam became binding on both the parties and Tilkong dispute retreated to background.

It happened so, after sometime the mithun donated by Lego to Pertin died thus they emerged as victorious and claimed the right on the land.

Though Lego got the land the dispute lingered on as Pertin refused to give a she mithun as agreed earlier.

Lungalang advised me to be cautious in my dealings with the people.

I left Pasighat in a jeep which brought me upto the river bank at Raneghat. The river already swollened with the few showers. The expanse is more than 800 ft. at this point.

We crossed by a dug out rowed by two expert Padam boat men of Ayeng village. The boat was taken upstream a few hundred feet and released. The oarsmen desperately steered it off the current and finally brought to the shallow water. It was an exciting experience.

My party consisted of five Agency Labour Corps men, one Office Assistant who was going to Yingkiong further up from Damro.

Following the forest path upto a mile we struck the river again. The footpath passed by the narrow edge of the river bank strewned with boulders. Some times water came so near—a careless step might spin the body to the river.

We reached Bodak—the first Padam village, where we found our shelter in a newly constructed Inspection Bungalow which had plank floor, glazed doors and windows—quite a luxury in the jungle.

The village is situated in narrow valley not far from the river. The houses are roofed with banana bark known as Kojing, distinct from the Minyong houses where it is with fronds of cane or palm leaves. People appeared same like Minyongs with strong similarity of language and custom.

Upto Bodak 9 miles from Pasighat we did not have much of climb as path followed the river bank. The next stage—Silli 7 miles distance however was tortuous as it passed through deep gullies and huge landslides.

The village Silli is on the bank of Yamne which came down from a hill near Damro. From Silli the next stage was Padu involving a heavy climb for 20 minutes. From Padu the last stage to Damro 15 miles up the hill was really a tough march involving a climb of 45 minutes just before reaching Damro.

News of my arrival was already relayed. Assistant Political Officer Dying Ering alongwith dozen of staff came down the camp and extended a hearty welcome. Here too Assistant Political Officer told me to be cautious in my dealing with

people—a constant reminder I had to hear from Along on-wards.

Dying Ering had a charming personality. Generous and large hearted he had proberbial simplicity. He was the first Tribal Officer of the Frontier now in a responsible position in the Administration. Educated in Sadiya and Guwahati his early life bristled with many problems as the Government of the day did not encouraged higher education. But by some luck he managed admission in high school at Sadiya from where he passed matriculation examination and went to a college in Guwahati. It was Jairamdas Daulat Ram, Governor of Assam who noticed the potentiality in him and helped him to continue his studies and finally inducted him to Government service—first as a Language Officer then as Assistant Political Officer.

We were known to each other while at Pasighat. I found comfort and solace to work under his guidance in a difficult assignment.

Situated at 4000 ft. height on a plateau overlooking the beautiful Yamne river a tributary of Siang the Administrative Centre was at Rabuk very close to Damro village. Being situated on an open plateau the climate was mild in the summer but bitter cold in the winter when the wind blew from the snow mountains not far from the village.

The view of Damro is magnificient. In the Northwest a huge triangular mountain 'Pasidinu' perpetually covered in snow—the setting sun cast a crimson glow. Below the village the murmur of the water of Yamne sometimes raise a cresendo when water rushes from the melting snow or heavy rain swells its body.

All the residential quarters of the Administrative centre were of ordinary Basha Type—a thatch and bamboo construction. Near the residence of Assistant Political Officer was the Assam Rifles Unit with their Wireless, Quarter Guard and Barracks for men. Three quarters of a mile away along the spur was the another part of a camp—Mukchang where hospital and some staff quarters were located.

Besides A.P.O. the officials included a Medical Officer, an Area Superintendent, an Overseer of the Public Works Department, Agriculture Inspector, Accountant, five clerical staff, two

Political Interpreters, one Political Jamadar, 25 men of the Agency Labour Corps, a Lower Primary School with two teachers, a platoon of Assam Rifles men under a JCO.

All the supplies are dropped by Dakotas which came only after placement of demand. The supplies of Central Purchase Organisation included essential food items and canteen goods. The dropping zone was on a saddle of a spur over the camp. Two large barracks accommodated stores of CPO. The plane took 40 minutes flying time from its base at Mohanbari in Upper Assam.

There was no piped water supply. A Kilometer long bamboo pipe brought the water from a stream to the camp. The supply line often disturbed by stray animals.

The Kerosine oil was strictly rationed as this is parachuted in Jurricanes in limited quantities. The kerosene lamp provided the only source of light.

The mail is received and despatched through runners who took three days to cover 40 miles distance to Pasighat. In summer there was frequent interruption due to high flood in the river. Relay mail also came from Yingkiong, an Administrative Centre located 25 miles away in Northwest. There was no Post Office. Urgent messages only transmitted over the Assam Rifles Wireless.

The village perched on a narrow slope of the hill was the largest in the district. It had 2000 people divided in eight clans—Perme, Pertin, Ratan, Megu, Lego, Borang, Irang. Tayeng. The people are all Padam—a colourful group of Adis who are agile, vibrate with zest of life. Each clan had own area and strictly confine themselves within their own boundary which often led to much bitterness and rivalry.

The houses are rectangular shape raised on crossed wooden posts hardly 2 ft. above the ground. The platform and walls are of split bamboo or rough dressed wood. A notched ladder gave access to the entrance to the house. The inside is like a Minyong house—dark and smoky. There is an extended open portico—Tungo, where women dry their paddy, work in their loom or gossip. The covered portico is used for keeping some household articles. The latrine—Regum which is also a pig sty is attached to one side.

The roof is done by kojing—the fibres of tall banana found abundantly in the jungle. This helps to insulate the heat. The roof ambles down almost to ground level denying light to penetrate inside. In winter when outside is freezing cold, a Padam house is very cosy like an air-conditioned place.

The houses are never in line but thrown haphazard. Passage between two houses often very narrow. The main street run down along the slope almost vertically. There are open places for meeting and gossip.

The nearest clan to the camp was Perme and farther was Tayeng. There were grooves of bamboo, palm and citrus in every corner. Fenced kitchen garden lie near the house. Granneries are situated some distance away to avoid fire hazard.

There were Mosup buildings in each clan—a long house with half wall covering. The largest Mosup was of Pertin and Lego. All the important meetings are held in the Mosup—the hub of community activities as well also centre of intrigue and gossip. Rasheng like Minyongs was conspicously absent though association of boys and girls was never under restriction. Padam girls are very smart, active and of cheerful disposition.

They are far adept in weaving. The cloth designs are excellent. Healthy and robust they are much fairer than their cousins of lower valley area.

Both men and women crop their hair round the crown of the head. The line of cut is one inch above the ear. The hair is cut by lifting it on a blade of knife and chopping with a stick.

Profuse beads—Tadok, light blue and yellow are worn by the men in double string chain. The women wear neck ornaments consist of beads with brass chains and flat square box. They make skirts with blue, red, green, yellow yarns with horizontal and vertical ornamentation in zigzag and triangular patterns. Two skirts are worn—one as a petticoat and other to cover it. These are held by yarn strings or belt.

The skirt is folded like a cone and worn as a kerchief over the head. They wear full or half sleeve black velvet or cloth blouses. Black velvet blouses—kirti galuk is much coveted as it gives a better look to their wear. Yarn though available in the shops yet cotton is cultivated in the Jhum field. The ginning machine is locally made, consist of two vertical wooden posts fixed to a flat piece of wood. The rollers are geared to move in opposite direction. The roller is set in motion by means of a crank attached to the end of one of them. In one hand the crank is moved and the other machine is fed with cotton. After the seed is separated the cleaned cotton is put in the sun to dry. The rolls of dried cotton then spun on a simple spinning wheel.

The Padam loom is very simple. One end of the warp passes round a pole and other end is fixed to another pair of stocks at the free end. Two pieces of wood with tapering ends are placed in between the folds of the warp and the other is fixed with the first one keeping the warp in between the first and the second. A belt made of bamboo strips are attached to the two ends. The length of the warp varies with the length of cloth. To compress the threads a straight flat piece of wood is used which has a tapering end. The shuttle is used for shooting the thread of the woof between the threads and warp in weaving.

They are also expert in making cotton rugs. The rug is made with thick yarn where small cotton balls are fixed. It is used either in bed or as a wrapper and quite warm in the winter.

Men wear three types of coat. One is long blue with fulllength sleeves with circular designs, another is shortsleeved, black with bands of a triangular motiff across the waist and lower ends. The third one is full sleeved, green in colour.

The Miri—the lead man in the dance wear a red skirt over the usual dress.

Padam marriages are arranged by mutual consent. The boy fancied a particular girl with whom he had already friendship will inform his parents. Parental consent however taken to see the desirability or the advisability of such union. The mother of the boy prepares Apong, three smoked squirrels and ginger paste and goes to the girl's house to make a formal proposal. If the proposal is accepted then boy and girl became formally engaged. The boy then visit the girl almost regularly and present the inlaws with Apong and smoked squirrels, rats

or meat. Subsequently a final celebration is held when girl prepare large quantity of Apong, meat, food and send to boy's house and boy also reciprocate by sending a pig to her house.

Divorce is allowed with mutual consent and by approval of Kebang. However husband will have to pay heavy compensation in cash or kind for the disgrace he has brought about on the wife for wanting separation without her previous consent.

Adultery is punished by a fine—Yopot Ajeng. The heinous crime is marriage within the prohibited zone. Formerly any case of incest invariably received capital punishment. Though incidence are rare yet any such happening in present day also severely dealt with by the Kebang—the guilty persons are ex-communicated.

Below the village, 2000 ft. down runs Yamne river which rise from a nearby high mountain—Kelong. It meets Siang after traversing a course of 25 miles. A cultivation area—Tilkong gently slopes down to the river. The slope is terraced where wet paddy is grown. There are large jhum fields near the village and across Yamne. As cultivation is done extensively the village is always self sufficient. They grow maize, finger millet, job's tear, foxtail millet, Yams, gourds, chillies, tobacco, potato and other exotic crops which were of recent introduction. There are jack fruits in warm areas near the river and oranges in the village. Jack fruit trees are much coveted and fines are imposed on any one wilfully destroying the tree. During season the fruit attract young and old alike who devour the fruit like greedy pest.

I was accommodated in APO's house—an ordinary structure on bamboo platform and thatched roof. The walls were also made of split bamboo.

I got the first taste of obstinancy of Damro people in next morning when dozen of gams came with their red coats and gun licences and threw at A.P.O. telling him that they are no longer at the service of Government. The grievances were something trivial—APO's reluctance to give them permission to try a case.

But it was not so. APO wanted them to try the case in

a Kebang after he heard it. But they would not listen to his good advice—hence the procession followed to surrender all they obtained from the Government.

The patience had limit. A.P.O. lost his temper and told them curtly to behave properly or get out. They left the place immediately murmuring some protest.

The Tilkong episode did not die. The tension between Lego and Pertin the two powerful clans persisted though the dispute has been referred to an ordeal test—Amka Sinam. Taking advantage of Lego Pertin dispute other clans also sided with the parties according to their traditional links—thus a vicious politics developed in the village. There were disputes on minor matters, the Kebang unable to settle any one. Some of the saner elements though felt for unity yet conservative leadership of elderly persons discouraged any move for reconciliation. Administration could not control the situation as every interference brought forth a counter move. Only solution appeared at the moment to take drastic measures—removal of Gams and re-organisation of Kebang though this might cause some disturbances.

A tragedy occurred at Damro in May 1958 when an Indian Airlines Dakota on supply dropping mission crushed over the dropping zone killing pilots and one ejection crew. Two ejection crew survived the crush—one unhurt but another badly injured. The plane came with salt bags in an inclement weather. It had once flew back after reaching the approach but again returned in low altitude. The approach to Damro is not obstructed by hills as the river valley provided a wide corridor.

The plane lost the height perilously—the Pilot perhaps wanted a force landing on the plateau—a few miles from Damro on north west but it hit the ground just below the DZ. The impact torn away one of the wing. There was no blaze however as nose burrowed deep in the soil. The pilot was immediately killed—the co-Pilot and navigator survived for sometime. The heavy salt bags crushed the ejection crew who was near the cockpit. The other two were in the rear and miraculously escaped death—one however had broken limb but other without a scratch.

The tragedy cast a deep shadow. Visibly moved APO immediately planned to construct a landing strip on the shoulder of a ridge at Mariyang—5 miles from Damro.

The Mariyang is ideally suited for an Airfield. There has been no obstruction on its approach. The wide corridors on either side could give enough maneuvrability to an approaching Aircraft.

The plateau is at an altitude of 4000 ft. height commanding a magnificent view of the valley and the mountain.

However the land was undulating—the cutting and levelling would involve enormous labour as an entire small hillock to be removed.

The crush generated enough sympathy among the people. They responded to the call of APO to shoulder the responsibility of construction by providing free labour.

Every village surrounding Damro came forward. APO himself handled explosives to blast the rocks. Yet the work could not progress due to enormity of the task.

A few days after my arrival APO left on long leave. The entire burden of the Administration all of a sudden fell on me.

I had to go to Along for some works. While climbing the hill of Logong across Yamne river I saw the approach of a low flying Dakota. I felt my heartbeating—might be a repeatition of earlier scene.

I stood fixed on the ground for long time to see the plane hovering over the DZ. It made several perfect runs and ejected the cargo. The last two drops were from a height—parachuting the fragile materials in containers.

After the drone of the plane was heard no more I heaved a sigh of relief.

The marching was tedious. The narrow foot track passed through a deep forest across the high hill teeming with leeches.

From top of the hill I heard the roar of Siang. The river has to be crossed to reach the other bank. Swollened by the monsoon rain the river was in a high spate. Its huge waves continuously crushing on the banks raising a terrific din. The trees lining the bank continuously shivered with spray thrown by the waves. Huge trees and logs ran down the water with the speed of an express train.

The river near Komsing is more than 800 ft. wide—it has never been quiet even in winter. Eddyies continuously churning the water creating whirlpool—the very look is terrifying.

A 1100 ft. long cane suspension bridge hung over the river at Pulung. All canes loosened which were tied to nine steel ropes. The bridge perilously sagged in the centre—a few feet over the water. This is the longest suspension bridge in the Territory.

The few wire ropes became slippery with the moisture requiring extreme caution on every step. Any time the grip might loosen and a false move would be dangerous

I was accompanied by Talut Gao—a Gam of Komsing village. The rain was beating on the face mercilessly. The tension heightened when I entered the bridge. The bridge began to swung with the weight of our body. Below me the angry river roared—its turbid water staging a devilish dance.

I gripped the two side ropes—the feet balanced on two bottom ropes.

Suddenly I saw to my horror the bridge moving with the water. My feet became unsteady—the hands loosening the grip. The thought of death immediately crowded the mind. The face of all my near and dear one mirrored before me.

But it was the Gam who saved me. He was immediately behind and saw my unsteady feet and shouted, 'Migom, Danma Peka'—do not be shaky.

This brought me to sense. Gathering some strength I tightened my grip on the ropes, lifted the eyes from the water and started a full throated song as I moved forward.

At last I crossed the bridge. For full five minutes I closed my eyes to utter a prayer for the deliverance.

I returned from Along by the same way. But this time I knew the bridge and crossed over without difficulty.

Two stages short of Damro a runner reached me with an urgent message to come atonce. Greatly perturbed with the ominous news I hurried over the hills covering a distance of 20 miles and arrived Damro—in the same evening.

The incident was plainly disturbing. A serious law and order situation developed. The Medical Officer was accused of misbehaviour with a married woman patient. The Kebang was

already summoned. The Doctor was a lampoon, vain glorious, superflous character devoid of all practical sense. Though he had his wife with him yet made several passes to the girls but none assumed so serious as the latest incidence as the woman happened to be the wife of an important person.

In his first briefing APO cautioned me about the Doctor and need to keep him under constant surveillance.

Soon after arrival I held an immediate closed door meeting with my staff. To save the Doctor and his wife from a humiliating situation we decided to pack them off to Pasighat atonce before people could come to raid the house.

A few trusted ALCs were detailed to carry the loads. By midnight we send them off by a diversion route with instruction to cover two stages involving 25 miles journey. A crash message was sent to Political Officer informing him details of the incidence.

Next morning long line of gam3 from the village arrived demanding to see the doctor. We pretended ignorance of his where abouts. The ruse played. A hour later they returned back to the village after receiving assurance of justice.

Subsequently the Government took some action against the Doctor. He was transferred from the district with disgrace.

The domineering personalities in the village were Sanor Lego, Bogir Pertin and Subrom Borang. Others who were immediately behind them were Komiyon Tayeng, Ange Megu, Natel Perme, Bakong Perme, Pakbo Irang, Abid Lego, Konni Pertin, Beyir Pertin, Okep Tayeng, Kekut Ratan, Takjir Ratan, Sopol Perme, Yame Ratan, Penan Tayeng. Most of them were leaders by their own rights and Government recognised them by giving red coats—as a symbol of authority.

The trio on the apex Sanor, Bogir and Subrom who were erudite speakers.

Gifted with the knowledge of myths and customs they carried a great deal of conviction with the audience while expressing a thought. They were extempore speakers—voice rise in a crescendo while elaborating a point on customary law and belief of fore fathers since the days of Pedong Nane—the mythical mother of all beings. It is a treat to see how they speak in a Kebang. Holding a long spear in one hand, steadying in same

place, surge the body forward, swinging rhythmically, recite an wonderful passage of ancient history and glory of the tribe before they drive at the point of issue. They fume and fret almost hysterically in mock anger pointing the finger at the accused or the opponent, raise the voice to a high pitch but never let loose the tension to overflow the limit. That is why in Adi Kebang violence never heard of inspite of terrific howling and worst invectives showered on the opponents.

I found Kharlukhi my good friend from community project Pasighat stationed at Damro. He has married in the powerful Pertin clan—the girl belong to Siluk village in Lower Padam area across Siang river opposite Pasighat. He had already some influence on Bogir Pertin as Makbo—the son-in-law.

Transformation of Kharlukhi—a Khasi from Shillong to Adi is really fascinating. Beside the language he has adopted many of their custom. It is impossible to distinguish him differently—he has become one of them by choice.

His wife remained an Adi all the time and children followed the mother. I have not seen many such happy partnership.

Short statured but with a straight physique Kharlukhi had an exceptional built up stamina. He is seldom tired either from a long march or a day of hard work. To keep company with him specially during tour is rewarding as he was fond of talking almost endless. Never mind whether listener turning his thought elsewhere. My mind wandered after an idea when Kharlukhi continued his talk. Being a Makbo in a powerful clan some people were naturally envious of him. There were whispers on his alleged partisan approach. My close association with him soon raised suspicion.

Apel Perme the Area Superintendent carried some influence. A tall lanky fellow Apel had an elementary education but developed leadership by his own efforts. He was intelligent but not enough shrewed to judge a situation. He belonged to the village and married to Pertin and Lego clans. His elder wife was really a gifted lady—imbued with rare quality of perfect house management. She was not educated but picked up knowledge by intuition. Beside the routine job of visiting the cultivation field, fetching firewood or weave a cloth she used to bartar produce to earn money, educate her children, construct a

permanent dwelling house with corrugated iron sheet roofing platform, walling with sawn timbers. In a place like Damro-40 miles from Pasighat without a motorable road communication, the carting of building materials from far distance was not an easy job.

She kept her hair long—a departure from the existing custom. Indeed none in Damro at the time thought of it. How the fashion fancied her is difficult to say but this certainly added to her beauty and grace. She was a very good host and in numerous parties which Apel arranged it was she who served the best. Her son Raising was a talented boy—smart and agile like his mother. He was in Lower primary class at the time but already showed enough promise for a bright future.

Apel's other wife—a girl from Lego clan was rather unassuming. She was too simple and remained under shadow of her partner.

Nane Mamang—the grand old lady was the Apel's mother. She was loved by all and was the common grandmother.

Face already heavily rinkled with old age Nane Mamang never stopped her work for a day. Balancing on a stick her frail body made frequent appearence in our camp asking nothing but our welfare. She was lady of composure, kind and generous.

Nane Mamang's other son—Banom Perme was our Political Interpreter. He was a talented folk singer—the master exponent of Abang—the traditional ballad of the Adis—the tale of the myths of origin of the Tribe. In Solung festival Banom Perme remained in trance for three days—eloquently reciting the Abang from chapter to chapter.

His other passion was Apong—the millet beer which gave him much of stamina. He was naturally sought after by the girls to led them in song and dance.

As a worker he was hopeless. Often found boozed with heavy drink his talk did not carry weight and we had enough of trouble with him.

Bedang Irang was the Political Jamadar. An aged man with a stooping body he had enough of difficulties. He was a quiet person, noncommital in any Kebang. His son Borik ran a shop which stocked provisions used by the people.

Drapped with costly bead necklace Botem Tarang, the Political Interpreter was not Padam but a Pangi from Sibum village, 25 miles down stream of Yamne.

Small statured and medium built Botem was a sober person, never given to emotion or involve in village politics. His advice always helped me in dealing with critical situation.

His wife developed peculiar symptom—a definite indication of a miri—the priestess. During possession by the spirits her words became unintelligible to laymen. The words were of original language long forgotten by the people. She began to drape herself in the dress of a shaman, bamboo shavings and beads tied on the loose hair on the back.

Her peculiar nature however diagonised as hysteria—the periodical feat in barren woman. Borik the son of Bedang Irang had some relation with her and once he was caught napping in his shop. Botem understandably visibly annoyed. However Kebang imposed a fine—Yopot Ajeng, the penalty for adultery and let him off. Though reconciled to the decision of the Kebang Botem continued to nurse a grudge against Borik.

Karga was the Dak Runner who belonged to Dalbing village North West of Damro. A small stocky fellow—he was always in a smiling face. The job of a Dak Runner was tedious—to go up and down the hill on long distance run yet Karga was never absent in his duties.

Kakol Ayum the Peon was also from Dalbing village. Kakol was small and very active. Though much young in age he was ambitious. Ultimately he got an appointment as Political Interpreter to work with me in Yinkiong where I went some time later.

Tado Nyodu Peon was a Gallong from Nyodu village of Basar. Sober and obedient he had good reputation as a worker. His wife was from Jeru village 30 miles from Damro in Yamne valley, was a flirt and gave him enough of worry. Exasperated by her habits Tado divorced her and married a nice girl from Bine village of Adipasi. Being a good worker Tado got promotion as Political Interpreter and posted out.

Karo Ratan was the teacher who belonged to Damro village. Though not a matriculate but he was appointed as a Primary School Teacher in keeping with Government Policy to

induct local people to the service. He was a simple fellow but occasionally involved in village politics.

Ama Lego a dull and idiot was the oldest member of Agency Labour Corps who belonged to Damro village. He never mind carry loads even foregoing the convoy leave. An ALC after three consecutive load carrying days earn a day of rest termed as convoy leave. They get free ration plus cash Rs. 30/- and Re. 1|- for each load carrying day. But Ama Lego's money and ration evaporate to feed the guests who flock to his hut. Ama Lego's overall was gunny bag. Putting a slip in the centre he made a garment out of it. Though appeared like a clown yet bitter winter of Damro must have given him some comfort.

Dull headed yet jolly was Tage Langkam—an ALC who was nicknamed by APO as Hindustani. He wanted to express his thought in Hindi but always mixed up right words with wrong one. Thus large spoon became chota chamoch, Ao became Jao. Hindustani always gave us free entertainment with his new found vocabulary.

Once I asked Hindustani 'what is the distance of Sibum from Damro?' Looking at the hills he paused for a moment and replied in all seriousness that according to his guess it should not be more than a mile. A distance of 20 miles quietly reduced to a mile! We all burst in repeated laughter and Hindustani beamed with apparent satisfaction.

Tamar Pangeng our Dak Runner was another simpleton. He only knew to obey the order and never said No. He wanted to have girl friends but all cheated him. Tamar Pangeng however never mind—thought girls all fell for him. Since he was one of the most obedient fellow, we used to send him on long distance run with important mails.

Amak Ngopok the Peon was a calm, quiet person, very obedient and dutiful. He was from Milang village—North west of Damro.

Jorin Modi and Uki Lingi were the ALCs who ran every errand. Uki was an Idu from Sissar valley—the only one from the tribe in Government employ at Damro.

Toni Boko—the Peon was from Komkar village—15 miles South west of Damro. Short height with strong built physique Toni was addressed as Boko Toni. Always smiling and obliging

Boko Toni never mind doing any work.

Gombu Lego was the Chowkidar of the Office. Being closely related to Sanor Lego—the head Gam of Damro he maintained an aura of importance but strongly suspect in the eyes of the Pertins. He was however sincere in his duties and kept to himself.

Kompil Pertin was the ALC Sirdar who fluttered like a sparrow—gatherin all the jokes to humour others.

Marku Lego the Veterinary Field Assistant was jolly happy to go lucky fellow. His passion was drink but he seldom got boozed. Like Kharlukhi he was talkative but quite humourous. Marku Lego was a good company in my long distance march. Gori Iring, the VFA was also a jolly man. He was an expect in 'Ponung'.

Taruk Iring—the Village Level Worker was from Balek village near Pasighat. A tall lanky fellow Taruk created quite a furore when Nyortem—the daughter of Sanor Lego fell for him. Taruk ran with her and Sanor became furious—demanded his daughter back. No amount of compensation would satisfy him. But the girl turned violent. Defying her father she ran with Taruk and Sanor could not retrieve her.

Nyortem was a lovely girl—fair complexioned with rosy cheek. It was natural Taruk should fell for her.

Obang Iring also from Balek was the senior Village Level Worker. Much older than his actual age Obang remained a bachelor. The girl never interested him though many wanted to hook him. Obang had a disenchanted view of life and full of pessimism on future of Damro.

Vibrating with the zest of life was Bidyadhar Dole—the Village Level Worker. Always dressed in creased pant, shirt and with a narrow brim hat Bidyadhar was a hero of the girls. He belonged to Mishing communty of the foot hills area thus quite at home with the people. He had lovely disposition which made him a good worker.

Sib Sharma the teacher at Geku was a comedian. A joker par excellence, his very appearance raised a laugh. He delved in palmistry which made him much popular. A get-together was impossible without Sib Sharma. A call went every now and then to distant Geku village for his presence at Damro.

Tepiram Barua, the teacher at Milang was always with laughing face as if no worry or anxiety exist in the world. He was the perfect embodiment of all that is beautiful. Tepiram's passion was gardening and art—quite an engrossing hobby.

Jamat Bori—a Mishing from Oyan village was the teacher at Padu. He was very much devoted to his job and seldom parted from his duty. But once he slipshod and landed in real trouble with a flirt girl who enticed him only to malign. Later we felt sorry for Jamat for all that happened.

Makpak Ratan was the teacher at Adipasi—a Padam from foot hill village who joined the service as a non-Matric teacher. He was of a simple and obtuse nature.

Makpak had a girl friend in Sikko opposite the maivillage. A deep depression ran in between. During night Makpak beamed a signal with his flash light announcing his presence to the girl. The girl used to come up to him but once the trick leaked out with much embarrasment to him.

Assistant Political Officer who was full of humour composed a parody which he sung in presence of Makpak. But being a simpleton he could not get the meaning and laughed with others in apparent amusement:

Angong e Angong e

Ngokke Bijuli Latbong em

Kali Dunia

Kalinge Kalinge Molarumang

Kalinge Kalinge Shabash.

-Friend oh friend,

Did you see my blinking torch

Yes yes I saw it so enchanting—

Shabash!

Apparently dull and demeanouring character was S.P. Ganguli, the teacher at Riew. But his outward veil of pessimistic look betrayed the inner quality as a good worker. He was much devoted to his work inspite of difficulties under which he had to work.

Sengom Tayeng was VLW from Sibum. A tall slim fellow, Sengom was much fond of hunting and fishing.

Pursung Lego, VLW was from Milang. Jolly and

humorous Pursung had ready wits and cracked jokes every now and then.

Once fed up with nagging of his wife he told her to shut her mouth with newly bought lock and stay one feet below him!

In Office we had Mohi Kakoti—the Upper Division Clerk who was also the Storekeeper of godown. J.N. Sengupta, Uma Bhattacharjee, P.C. Roy, Bapuram Saikia were the other Assistants.

There were four shops owned by Tangom Borang, Borik Irang, Yokkin Pertin, Kurkek Pertin—all from Damro Village. The shops stocked Biri—a few packets of cigarettes, cheap mill clothes, tea and tobacco leaves, yarn, soap. The selling rate however exorbitant due to heavy transportation charge from Pasighat. The willy shop keepers charged the price much higher than the actual rate.

Tangom was an Ex-Assam Regiment man who served for eight years in the Army. Always meticulously dressed he inherited best of quality—a pleasant disposition and straight forward dealings. As he had no scruples to play, customers began to flock in his shop to much chagrin of others. Because of steady business some became very much envious of him and tried to malign him in petty disputes.

Kurkek Pertin named as crooked but he was not that dubious character. His clan attachment only was too deep as it was natural in politics ridden village.

Yokkin was rather a simple fellow—showing an appearance of innocence.

Borik's flirting with woman landed him in real trouble with Botem Tarang and they never became friends again.

It was interesting however that inspite of so much difficulties in bringing supplies from Pasighat the shops seldomclosed. Somehow business flourished. We had strong suspicion that some of the Assam Rifle men secretly patronizing them by supplying cigarettes, soaps and milk tins.

Bakin and Dana Pertin were the two bright boys from Damro who were in high school at Pasighat. Bakin, sober and intelligent boy already developed some talents in him. Though much young in age yet he carried some conviction while dealing

with elderly persons and they had secret admiration for him. Dana on the other hand though good in heart was unsteady and lived in make belief world. He wanted to project him as leader but could not succeed.

Jomin Tayeng a boy from Dambuk village in Lchit Frontier Division was exceptionally bright. He too was studying in the high school at Pasighat and used to come for a visit to Damro where he had some relatives. He came very close to me and often discuss some topics which revealed the depth of his knowledge. He kept himself busy in study and always secured high position in the class. Sober and intelligent Jomin I observed already destined for a bright future.

Another boy Yomut Perme from high school of Pasighat sometimes came to Damro. Yomut was from Ayeng village near Pasighat, was jolly and carefree. He was a sportsman and showed some promise in that direction. Yomut became my favourite as he had a pleasant disposition.

The platoon of Assam Rifles provided life in Damro. Most of the men were hardy Nepalis hailing from the hills. Jolly, carefree—never bothered for tomorrow they had an easy rapport with the people. See provision or delayed pay did not worry them.

They were expert in improvisation—making cots, tables from packing boxes, glass out of empty bottles. To make a glass, mobil oil is pur upto a limit. A red hot iron is dipped in it. A crack appears around the bottle on the level of the oil which breaks the bottle in two parts. The lower part with the bottom then turn into a glass.

The huts in the A.R. Line were kept neat and tidy. Dirt and filth were not seen nor the men move around lazily or look depressed or dull.

This para Military force had a glorious record. Born out of contingent requirement during the last century when extended frontier of the East India Company required armed protection. The force grew up first as Cachar Levy then as Lakhimpur Police and finally emerged as Assam Rifles. Ever since its creation it earned name and fame wherever it went—be in the punitive expedition or the peace keeping or in the theatre of war. It even functioned in the famous 'V'

force behind the Japanese line.

Compared like mountain rats the men are unique combination of extreme hardiness and malevolent temperament. They perform seemingly impossible task—comb the jungles, scale the mountain yet find time to relax with music and dance. The song of Relimai reverberates the Unit line every now and then.

Assam Rifles functioned as Police force of the Administration. It provided men for guard duty, escort and took part in punitive operations whenever required. Their obedience to command and toughness has always been an asset.

At Damro the O.C., a JCO who has put thirty years of service in the rugged mountains and hills of the North East. Rising from the rank of an ordinary recruit he has acquired the command of a platoon—the high position to which one could aspire. He knew each of his men like palm of his hand.

Below him was a senior NCO who functioned as second in command. There were section Commanders of Junior ranks. Discipline though not rigidly enforced yet men were obedient. It is only mishandling of a situation when they become erratic.

The men never addressed each other by name. They were called by number. It was amazing to hear when one calls the other by his number. Only last digits are mentioned. Thus if his unit number is 1115 he will be known as penero (fifteen).

The post maintained a Wireless station with high frequency transmitter to connect the battalion HQ at Dinjan in Upper Assam and Civil Administration centres inside the Territory.

The Platoon at Damro had some interesting men who provided diversion. Amongst them was the Borabhai—the big brother. A tall hefty fellow he was from Godavari district in South India. He was an Ack Ack gunner in the Army. An Assam Rifles recruiting party brought him to the Frontier. Borabhai was always jolly and like to demonstrate his talents in a fashion which raised more laughter.

His brass voice never suited the music yet he would participate in every function.

With full throated song which threw entire audience bursting with laughter. To humour him further there were frequent applause and Borabhai's performance went on and on.

Borabhai was never depressed but once he was uneasy as he did not get letter from home. The BN HQ did not respond to his anxious call. He ran to me with a desperate plea to get the news of his home anyhow.

An urgent message was drafted to Political Officer seeking welfare of Borabbai's family. Within two days the reply came from distant Godavari—all well—no worry.

Borabhai danced the whole night—threw a party in sheer joy. What his Commanding Officer could not do Base Superintendent has done a miracle.

Borabhai remained grateful to me ever since.

Harka Bahadur Limboo has put 16 years in Assam Rifles yet never bothered for promotion. To him promotion means responsibility—he will have to command, demand obedience and cannot lead a carefree life. So he drinks aviation petrol to keep himself happy.

I did not believe the amazing story when first heard. But soon found out the rendezvous where he was quietly seeping the liquid. To him Apong—the rice beer has no kick and new Base Suprintendent is too strict with Ara—the distilled liquor, so he had no choice but to find the petrol in one of the burried wing of the crashed aeroplane.

Dil Bahadur Gurung the W.T. Operator was the crazy little fellow who frequently sneaked out of the camp with a catapult in hand to shoot birds. He often came to me to tell amazing stories of war in Burma Front during Second World War when Gurkhas fought in hand to hand combat. He was known as Jhandiwala in the Unit—a rather peculiar address for the Wireless Operator who keep the line of communication.

He considered himself as an educated man having passed Ninth standard but Signal Commander, a half educated rustic suffer from inferiority complex, run him down and thrown him to an outpost. His messages piled up even though marked priority. There are four categories of messages—ordinary, priority, over priority and last one is crash which must be transmitted at once.

But HQ Operator wanted to have humour. Responding to the call sign once after long delay which irritated Dal Bahadur, he told him, why worry brother, a vacancy has fallen in cook house in Misamari—apply sharp, you being the fittest candidate.

In a rage Dal Bahadur barked: you dull headed pig, call your father on set.

Prompt came the reply: my father dead. Dal Bahadur's anger exceeded the limit. He continued to shout in vulgar Nepali—cursing the operator's fourteenth generations.

Two days later a message came from the Commandant ordering Dal Bahadur's demotion and transfer.

DZ was little far from the camp on a gentle slope. A huge 'T' mark indicated the location. A wind sock further up gave the direction of wind for the air drop.

The drone of an aeroplane created understandable flutter. Someone shouts—'Petang Gari Ayo'—flying bird coming, Everyone's eyes then focuss on the distant speck in the Lower Yamne valley. The speck gradually increased in size. If it lowers the height then it is sure sortie for Damro but if flight is higher up then it must be for another outpost further to the north.

The plane first curve a wide circle over the village and DZ. Then steadying the course it runs over the DZ—a few hundred feet up and jettison loads in a free drop. In each drop 8 to 9 bags are thrown which come crushing in a tangent and hit the ground with loud thud. The last two or three drops which may contain fragile materials are parachuted from a height. The para drop may include medicine box, canteen goods, goats in huge crates, barrel or bottle rums.

Ditching the plane further down the pilot run over the DZ for last look and nose up to great height and fly back to the base.

After the drone is heard no more there is immediate scramble to search for the load manifest attached to one of the load. The sortie may be for Civil administration or Assam Rifles. The loads are dispersed in wide areas sometimes beyond the limit of DZ and fall near the camp or village. The para may stuck to the tall tree. Once it hit directly on the roof of a house. The impact was so severe that the entire house fell apart.

It is very dangerous to stay near during the dropping

operation. In an unfortunate incident in an outpost a staff who was too close to the DZ was crushed by a drop. At Damro however we were lucky as none was hit—except a stray cow.

The dropped stores are verified and report sent to Base atonce. Rum which is meant for AR if come in bottles invariably found short. Parachute may not open or in impact bottles burst. But once I had witnessed two empty bottles intact properly corked. This explained the riddle.

Dropping sorties were not regular. It depend on weather or priority clearance. It may be abortive—return from the way due to poor visibility. Sometimes excess stores beyond the demand are dropped creating difficulties of storage. It might happen that one of the item supplied excess at the cost of the other and we could never make up the shortage.

To observe the dropping from a Dakota is a thrilling experience. There were occasional heavy loss when bags fall beyond the DZ and hit the stones but base refused to accept the loss.

During a visit to Mohanbari I mentioned this to the Director of Supply and Transport who suggested if I could go in a sortie.

I took the opportunity and boarded the Dakota which belonged to Kalinga Airlines commended by Captain Tripathy. There were three ejection crews, the Pilot, Co-Pilot Sharma.

Dakota is a versatile plane. Born during Second World War it had rendered miraculous service either as transport or fighting aircraft. Its manoeuvrability is excellent. Inspite of heavy flying commitment the loss of Dakota has been minimum.

The belly was stacked with 9 lots of loads—each lot consist of seven loads. The load is wrapped in 4 gunny bags to give sufficient protection. A strong rope fastended vertically on the open door. The lots were arranged one behind the other. The rope on the door held this back till the ejection crew swung it sideway and gave a push to fall outside. After each drop the other lot is brought to the position.

The Dakota door taken out of the plane. Safety harness

round the shoulder and waist attached to a long cord which is in turn fastened to a rope stretched along the interior wall of the aircraft. This enabled the ejection crews to move around in the aircraft without running any risk of falling out.

For para dropping containers, crate or jurricanes are cushioned on the bottom with thick mass of coconut husk. This is then tied with para ropes. The para is rolled and held by loose knots which will unfasten immediately on ejection and open up the parachute which then float in the air in a downward drift by weight of the containers.

There are two light signals—red and green. An alarm bell is sounded and red light immediately flash as pilot steadied the plane to the course. The second alarm flash the green light when ejection crew swung into action to kick off the load.

We flew over Pasighat then followed the Siang river to certain distance. The river furrowing through the hills in zigzag fashion. In plains it spread out on either side in several channels creating devastating flood during every summer.

As soon as Yamne valley opened up the plane began to loose height. On approach to Damro it made a wide swing—tilting almost 45° degree angle which threw me off balance. Soon after it was brought to position only to repeat the performance again resulting in much discomfort to me. I felt my stomach belching. The ejection crews were busy to untie the ropes—to them this is a routine matter.

We flew so low during each drop that I thought we were about to touch the house top. All the faces clearly visible but alas, they did not know I was on the board.

The plan climbed up again for para dropping. In all eleven runs were made over the DZ. After each run it curved in an wide circle over the valiey.

After the last drop the plane zoomed very low over the DZ to show me the pin point dropping. It appeared so perfect.

Later when I returned to Damro I saw the board verification report. Some losses resulted due to bursting of bags which could not be avoided on the hard ground.

An improvised helipad was constructed near the DZ by levelling the slope. Helicopters landed there only on emergency.

At first Damro with 400 houses appeared dull and drab.

Constant squeal of pigs, running stray dogs, sloth move of the mithuns, narrow streets, accumulation of dirts—all may suggest chaos and confusion.

But behind the facade—the village pulsate with life. There was orderly routine which followed from dawn to dusk. Women woke up before day break, pound the grains in the mortar, fetch water, prepare meal, serve the household, move out for works either to the field or collection of firewood. If there was no out door work they were busy in ginning cotton or weave the cloth. Men likewise go out hunting, fishing or tending the crops. No one sit idle during the working season. In festive days the entire village is agog with constant rumbling-boisterous party, feasting with food, Apong, dance and song. Ponung girls rehearse their show, beautiful ballad sung by talented Miri. Crowd watch the fascinating performance without thought of rest for the night.

The Kebang was very strong led by towering personalities. They have acquired the position by exhibiting the best quality of leadership. The Institution is not hereditary.

Adi Kebang—the council of elders which exercises the judicial and executive powers is very much democratic. Any member of the village council can participate in the deliberation without fear or favour. All grievances are heard, judgement arrived through concensus of opinion and never arbitrary.

The Kebang direct all village activities according to traditional customs. It also punishes those who stray away from the right path and watch the welfare of the community. All matters of common interest are placed before it and nothing could be done without its approval and sanction. Thus opening of new land for jhum cultivation, building of houses, allowing new settlement in the village or whatever the matter which concern the village welfare and development is discussed and approved by it. During discussion considerable heat is generated in arguments raising the voice to high pitch. But surprisingly no one would enter in fist fight nor indulge in melec. They disperse peacefully after the meeting. To a new comer this is quite an experience.

It is obligatory to carry out Kebang decision. In fact few ever challenge it. The moshup boys announce the verdict of the council and help in enforcing the decision. They are known as Lamkam, who distribute the works among themselves. Moshup is divided into number of fire places—called meroms. The boys who sit around the same merom form a single group. Boys can select their own merom according to their liking.

Each merom is a body of young men united and closely bound by a bond of friendship. When a work is allotted this is distributed to moshup boys merom wise. Each merom is entrusted with the particular task. The decision of the Kebang is conveyed to meroms by a member of the merom and in a very short time all know what they are supposed to do.

Moshup Lamkam are also engaged in all types of work—construction of roads, bridges, house, clearance of jungle. They also mount guard against any attack—sound alarm on fire accident. This is an unique association of youth who develop and safeguard the community interest in best possible way.

A Kebang has jurisdiction over the village. Inter village disputes are settled by inter village council known as Bango. The Bango comprises a group of villages. There are three Bangos under Damro Sub-Division—Yapsi Bango with Damro, Adipasi Milang, Dalbuing, Komkar and Peki Modi village, Yobuk Bango with Padu, Silli, Jeru, Pongi, Sibum, Supsing, Geku village, Nugo Bango with Riew, Komkar, Mopit, Begging, Pangi, Sissen and Jorsing village. Influential person and Gams constitute the member of the Bango council and appoint a Secretary. The penalty money realised go to the Bango fund for the welfare of Bango villages.

The highest body is the Bogum Bokang which comprises all the Bangos of the district. Inter Bango dispute may be referred to it. The Bogum Bokang may sit in any where of the district for important discussion. Each Bango has a representative in the Bogum Bokang. Adi Kebang is an unique institution. It is the people who form it, nurse for its growth to preserve the traditional system of the society. Decision of the Kebang thus come from the people. The elders—the Kebang Abu only help to enforce it. Kebang verdict is rarely violated as everyone is bound by customary law.

Customary law of the Adis are meant for the maintenance of social order and harmony. Individuals come to the Kebang for the redress of their grievances. The rules and conduct are mainly based on ethical principles that have grown out of historical and economic circumstances which have conditioned the development of the society. There are social laws on matrimonial relation, marriage performance, divorce, inheritance of property and on criminal offences as theft, assault, murder etc. The laws of the society are well suited for maintenance of order and enable all to live in peace and harmony. The penalty is imposed on the guilty according to the degree of crime or violation of social norms.

Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation 1945 recognised the age old authority of the village councils. All cases except the heinous crime could be tried by it. This has helped the Administration to settle many disputes through traditional council without resorting to law court proceedings. The village authority has been empowered to impose a fine not exceeding Rs. 50/- for the offence they are competent to try and apprehend any person suspected to have committed a crime or or remand any person of suspicious nature.

Like the Moshup Lamkam the girls also belong to different Rashengs. Any girl of the clan can be member of it. They choose their own leader. The function of the Rasheng is mainly to train its member in art of weaving and in traditional song and dance. It also provide an outlet for the girls to momentarily escape tedious daily routine.

There are keen competition among Rashengs to show their best in Ponung. The traditional rivals of Damro Rashengs were Keri Rasheng of Pertin and Lutem Rasheng of Tayeng.

In any important event in the Administrative Centre both the Rashengs vie each other for the top position. It was natural for Kharlukhi being a Makbo—the son-in-law to favour Keri but later we began to invite Lutem girls who appeared more smart.

Padam girls are very out spoken and frank. Draped in their colourful dress they look quite attractive. Camp being situated close to the village it created lot of headache for us as girls trouped in every now and then visiting shops and quarters. Some of them were very intelligent. To keep any one guessing they invented mysterious language. The words were pronounced backward—thus dolung became ngulod. No one understood a

word of it till their hero Bidyadhar Dolley divulged the secret.

It was interesting to see how the people work from morning till evening yet find time to relax. Many of them earned handsome money through sale of opium in Lower Padam area where people became addict to it. The poppy is grown in obscure corners of the jhum field. The juice of the fruit is carefully collected in the fold of the cloth. It was surprising however no one in Damro or nearby villages consumed opium.

In many occasion I had raided the field and imposed fine. But no amount of fine or destruction of the field stopped the girls from the lucrative trade. They soon found new areas. It became apparent to me unless consumers stop buying, it would be very difficult to eradicate this evil.

During harvesting time, spurt the village to feverish activity. Before the dawn long line of people—men and women run to the field with lighted bamboo torch to collect the grain. Some of the jhum field lie far across the Yamne river 4 to 5 miles from the village.

Walking through the field give a pleasant sensation. A mild breeze sway the leaves of the plants. A sweet smell fill the nostril. Jobs tear, foxtail millet, finger millet, paddy, maize heavily laddened with ripened grains. Men and women stand in line busied in harvest by a small knife. Only the upper stalk is cut and thrown into a basket fastened on the back. Some of the field lie in continuous stretch of 2 to 3 miles.

The grains are put in a long cloth which then rolled and made into bag by tying the loose ends and then carried on the back.

The procession then start the return journey to the village which continue till late in the evening to empty the grains in the grannery. Often the journey is made 2-3 times if the field is not far.

The scenery witnessed was wonderful. A never ending line streaming back to the village climbing up hill with heavily laden loads strapped on the back without sign of fatigue. I could not but filled with admiration for this versatile tribe—the Padams.

The granneries are filled to the brim—complete with a year's provision. No lock is used as theft never occur. Doors

are secured with strips of cane only. The grain houses are rectangular, raised on stilts of bamboo or wood 3 ft. to 4 ft. above the ground. A notched ladder is put for passage. This is inverted when not in use to prevent dogs climbing up. Rats however crawl in and do some damage. Sometimes thorny twigs are put near the door to prevent dogs and other predators to find an access.

A famine in Adi country never occurred not even during war. Nature has bestowed them with enough of food in the jungle and river which sustain them if the crops in the Jhum field is lost due to natural calamity.

After the harvest a grand festival—ARAN is celebrated with much pomp and gaiety when Mithuns and pigs are slaughtered. The time being the cold season we had enough of enjoyment with feasting and dance in cosy Padam houses which are insulated from bitter cold of the winter.

Hospitality of Adis is legendary. They overwhelm the guest with profuse beer and food. To refuse an invitation is uncourteous and so a visit must be made even though no room is left for the fill. In the houses of important personalities the party may continue long after midnight as the Ponung girls never get tired. Cracking of jokes which may appear too vulgar never bother anyone because the festival is the occasion to escape from boredom. Everyone must be in gay and happy mood.

Ingenuity of the system deserve appreciation. A way had been devised by their forefathers to provide periodical break in the strenous routine. Apart from the religious significance of the festivals another important aspect is quite interesting. The rich who have enough of food and animals part their huge reserve for the community thus there is enforced restriction to gather limitless wealth. It will be unfortunate if this system change under the impact of development when money will become tender and part of the wealth.

The most important festival however is SOLUNG which is held during July and continued for three days. Banom Perme our Political Interpreter was the prime narrator of Abang—the traditional ballad. The Solung rhapsody is Delong—which is very much interesting. Here the narrator go in telling in a sing

song voice a mythical event—how primordial world came into existence from 'Keyum' or nothingness. The group round the ballad singer utter the word—'Ghe Delong' after the each line:

Elang e Elang Ghe Delong Deiga Rangem Ghe Delong Lamca Rangem Ghe Delong Kekana Rangem Ghe Delong

Religious belief of the Padams are same as Minyongs. Environmental condition actually shaped their mind. The nature is controlled by hosts of spirits who are ill disposed to men and threaten their life. Their constant endeavour is made therefore to appease the malevolent spirits in sickness or in war, in death in burial, cultivation or constructional works by appropriate ritual and sacrifice of animals.

The spirits who live everywhere are unseen. But the Miri—the Shaman know exactly where they stay and can communicate with them. This belief in the spirits have come from the Myths of the tribe.

In obscure past men and animals lived together. In course of time the population of this diverse elements increased. To avoid a catastrophe they met in a Kebang and distributed among them all the property and marked their own sphere of domain. The bigger share fell to two brothers Nibo and Robo—the father of all men and father of all spirits. Mite and Miname were two spirits who came late did not get any share.

They fell very much aggrieved and soon a fight ensued where all the evil spirits sided with Robo and attacked Nibo who had no one to help him. From that day onward light against Nibo continued even with his descendents—the man

Nibo had cultivation in the hills and Robo did nothing except hunting. Nibo being more sober had wisdom and spiritual powers. Robo felt jealous of Nibo for all the good qualities. One day he tricked him to go to a high cliff where a big tree stood. A long creeper hung on the tree. Robo suggested since they were very tired, let them make a swing with the creeper and take rest on it. Being cunning, Robo asked Nibo to go for the first swing.

Nibo afraid of loosing wisdom, wrapped it in a big leaf— EKKAM' and hid at the foot of the tree. While he was out on swing, Robo who saw the 'EKKAM' quietly took the packet containing the wisdom and hid it on the top of the tree. Since then Nibo lost all the powers through which he could see anything. Robo after getting the wisdom got the spiritual power by which he made himself invisible. In a dual Robo outwitted Nibo by choosing the net which he put before his eyes while Nibo took the 'Ekkam' leaf. Through the net Robo could see anything but 'Ekkam' barred the sight of Nibo. That is why spirits could see anything but to man they remain invisible.

All phenomenon is attributed to the work of spirits. Thus whirlpool in the river is the action of Lada Layo who reside in water, any one crushed by a fallen tree or buried in land slide is due to Siyor, loosing the track in the forest is due to Yapom. Still birth and severe pain or other female diseases is due to Nipom—the dreaded spirit who reside in the depression 'GEJONG' or on the tall black banana tree.

Spirits live in a place where they have convenience and develop attachment to certain object. They have their own way of living Uninterrupted till man tread on their way which led to clashes. The spirits being unseen such clashes are unavoidable so a class of people came up to keep the spirits in their own place.

These people known as Epak Miri—the Shaman, can fall in trance and foretell of the events that will follow. From very early age cartain peculiarities are evident in them. They do not behave like others of their age. They serve as probationer under elder Miris to gain experience in large number of incantations, the name of trees, rivers where as the spirits reside and all articles of religious significance. They also learn the habits and signs of identification of different spirits, their particular taste and demand, the act of divination and ritualistic practice. Their efficiency however depend on the capacity to identify and contact the spirits who have taken fancy on certain persons due to some spiritual affinities. It is through these familiar spirits they get access to the supernatural world to find out causes and remedies for disease or misfortune.

When an Epak Miri is called he invokes the familiar media with magical rites and incantations and fall into a trance.

Once in trance he forgets himself as the familiar spirit acts through his body. It appear very strange as his behaviour become abnormal and unfamiliar. The possessed spirit then guide the Miri to the aggrieved spirit and strike a deal with him. The bargain may take long time if the obdurate spirit do not agree to the offerings and pleadings.

After a deal has been successfully made the soul of the Miri come back to the body leaving the familiar spirit. When he regain the normal posture from the trance he does not remember as to what he was doing all the time. After the wish of the spirit has been known elaborate arrangement then made for his appearement.

The Miri commence song and dance—narrating the myths of creation and reminding the spirits of their common ancestry. He wear a woman skirt to please the spirit and held a big sword while continue his rythmic dance. He perform the rites at the beginning with invocation of familiar spirits and at the end announce the remedial measures.

At conclusion he offer the spirits his share of meat. A wooden structure is made in front of the house or by the side of the wall with bamboo posts where bamboo mattings are tied with fresh branch of "tara" creeper. On a bamboo platform spirit's share of meat is placed along with beer, cooked rice. The blood is smeared on the leaves of the branches. Miri invite the spirit to accept their offerings with a prayer to leave the afflicted person after taking the sacrificed animal—Pig or Mithun.

The Miri wear special type of beads otherwise he is indistinguishable from common people. He charge a fee for the rites performed which vary according to sacrifice offered. If it is a Mithun he will get a large slice from shoulder. Sometimes he is given beads.

The Miri may belong to either sex but not many women are seen in the profession.

Beyond the world of spirits lie the Universe—whose creator is sublime—benevolent. munificence and grand. To whom they turn to seek blessings and take oath but there is no sacrifice offered. In their myths the concept of the Universe start with 'Keyum'—the great void or nothingness. From this nothingness

originated 'Sedi'—the 'Rutum' or the Supreme Creator who is the builder and architect of the universe and the world where we live. He is the Mighty—without shape, size, dimension. Thus beyond the perception of all being.

With the creation of Sedi—the Supreme God, primeval world was one with heaven and earth—inseparable, dark and foreboding. This foreboding world then witnessed a mysterious vibration—heaving and yawning but continuous upheveal created a chasm and earth appeared in a gigantic mass. Sedi the Supreme God stricken by a great desire created this world for habitation of innumerable creatures from the womb of great mother—the Pedong Nane. Sedi's massive body fell on the huge land mass and articulated the land with different shape and size. From the hairs appeared vegetation, from head massive mountains, rivers, streams from veins and arteries, flat land from belly and spurs and valleys from the thigh.

With the creation of the world the life began to flourish with joy and happiness. But abounding joy was marred by a gigantic inundation all of a sudden and entire mass was covered by water resulting in a great delusion. There was lamentation—cries of woe and agony of all those who were in the land. Sedi, the Rutum moved by the tragedy created two lights—immense and powerful. The scorching rays of the massive lights then dried up everything—the land mass soon was bereft of water. The heat was so intense that everything burnt even the huge stones on the mountains got permanently charred.

The lights were the powerful creation of Sedi and they were in pairs—Donyi Dolo, Polo Poto. All of them appeared alternately in pairs. When Donyi took rest Dolo appeared or when Polo rest Poto appeared. The continuous appearance of powerful lights focussing rays on the earth made the life more miserable as there was no night and all vegetation withered.

Again Sedi—the God moved by the woes of the creatures showed the ingenious means to destroy one pair Dolo and Poto. All but cock and frog failed and by their daring act as well by dubious means Dolo and Poto were destroyed leaving Donyi and Polo alone. Since then all heaved a sigh of relief as the world became habitable with separation of day and night.

Sedi, the Lord of the universe by his abounding benevolence

bestowed on the land plenty of resources and made Tani—the man one of his happiest creature. It was again Sedi—the articulate being who made his presence in the household as 'GUMIN SOYIN'—the protector. It is the Sedi whose spirit dwells in each household. It is to GUMIN SOYIN all people seek the blessing for the prosperity or well being. It is to Gumin Soyin the community offer propitiation as everyone believe that without him life will be miserable—full of distress and agony.

Sedi has no form so he remains beyond the grasp of ordinary man. He is immense stretching over the whole universe. Since he is formless, spaceless, he remains beyond anyone's perception. So he is far beyond—there is no eulogy on him in traditional ballad. His manifestation either in Gumin Soyin the protector of household or Donyi Polo—vital source of life and enregy are in immdeiate grasp of the people—hence he is remembered by proxy. In joy or happiness, sorrows or sufferings people refer to Donyi Polo uttering the cry:—

Donyi e Kalangka, Polo e tatlangka—

Oh! Donyi you see! Oh! Polo you hear!

Or when while uttering a curse they may say:—

Donie Dolangka—Oh! Donyi eat him up!

The summer is an awful reality in Damro. The roads torn away by torrential downpour—rivers burst through the bank—the link with Pasighat snap all of a sudden. The world then retreat far behind.

Below the village Yamne roars—its water swelled by the monsoon rain, melting snow of the mountains—spill over the bank in a mad rush to meet Siang, thirty miles downstream. In its course all the Log bridges wipe out in a single burst leaving only the high suspension bridge to which it cannot reach.

Low clouds roll over the valleys and hills, pass in wave, through the camp and the village—shutting off visibility. Only the roar of the Yamne never cease. It gives an immensity of feeling of the nature's unbound mystery. Sometimes rain continue uninterrupted day and night. Small streams burst through the bank and flood the ground with mud and stones.

When roof of the house sprung a leak the living become a nightmare. The bamboo cots which are fixed to the ground cannot be removed. If the leak cannot be plugged the bed is spread on the floor in dry corner.

There was however one consolation. Being situated on a height the disgusting heat of the land is never felt. Cool breeze in clear sunny days is most pleasant.

The Outpost heavily depend on Wireless. The link may be tenous if the set go off air. The additional stand by set may not bear the load or it may be dead. This 'Off air' phenomenon might continue for long time till the arrival of replacement.

Yet there was no despair or gloom. The staff pass their time happily within their own orbit. They had devised their method of relaxation. After the office hours there was always a gathering in someone's place—playing cards or simply gossip. Real brotherhood is only found in an outpost.

I found my company with Kharlukhi who was always obliging. We took time and sneaked to any house in the village and relax ourselves seeping rice beer or crack jokes. To me it gave the opportunity to study the life. It happened so much that my pronounciation of Adi words undergone a change—it became more Padam. Many years later Adis hearing my talk easily made out that I must have been in Padam area.

Sometimes we went to the river 2000 ft. below the village. To cut short the time we followed the hunting path which went straight to the river bank. We fished with both hook and spoon. The river was teeming with fish but luck did not smile always.

It required much skill to cast the spoon far to the current where big fish move. Once my costly spoon was swallowed by a fish but instead of manoeuvering I immediately began to roll the line. The fish in a mighty pull broke the thread and my spoon gone for ever. Sometimes the hook might stuck to a hidden stone. It required extreme caution to get it loose again. Any false step would be dangerous. For the hook we used earthworm bait but young Larvae of bee was more tempting to the fish. Some men were so adept in fishing that they knew exactly where to throw the bait.

A 300 ft. long suspension bridge—Logong hung over the

river. Government earlier provided few rolls of wire ropes. People themselves constructed the bridge. There was no secure point near the bank facing Damro. The ropes were tied to big boulders and stumps of trees. But in flood which followed after a heavy rain the ropes snapped and fell to the river. To provide access to the Jhum field we made an all cane bridge which swung so violently with the weight of the loads that everytime I crossed I felt as if I would be thrown to the river.

During occasional break in the field works the camp is swarmed with people who just come to idle away their time. The gathering may not be always congenial as some obtrusive character find time to rake up an issue. The Kebang in such matter is quite helpless as village is riddled with clan politics.

Yame Ratan brought a case against Sopol Perme for sticking claim to the land where some terraces have been built up. Sopol has threatened to destroy the standing crops if the land is not vacated. The issue was complicated as entire field earlier belonged to Perme but in a deal some years earlier the part of the land given to Ratan in exchange of a Pig Now the potentiality of the area has increased by introduction of wet rice cultivation hence Sopol has built up some terraces adjacent to the area of Yame Ratan. The boundary however remained indistinct. The only solution appeared to give and take so that interest of both parties are equally served.

While I wanted to thrash out the problem and drafted a letter, Yame came in a body, took away the draft from the clerk, tore it and fled away. This was outrageous. A warrant was immediately issued for his arrest. He was found nowhere. By the time Sopol also took up the cudgel. He said come what may he will destroy the standing crops of Yame.

I flashed a message to P.O. informing him the details. P.O. who had earlier experience in Tilkong episode rather strangely suggested to try the case through Kebang. Nothing came out from the Kebang—the only gain I could make was to keep the issue pending till winter after the harvest is completed. Sopol agreed not to disturb Yame till that time.

Then there was the divorce case of Pangkong Megu with his wife Yadeng. The marriage was on the rock as Pangkong developed fascination for another woman whom his wife did

not like. Polygamy is accepted in the Society but first wife retains the right of household affairs. The arrangement work quite well if there is understanding otherwise daily nagging, bickering made the life of husband miserable.

Now Pangkong Megu wanted to separate but his wife did not want to go. She demanded compensation—"ANI NITAK" for the shame he has brought on her. Yadeng had no issue but she said it was not her fault. Pangkong did nothing for her only flirting with other woman whom he fancied.

She belonged to Pertin clan and so clan backed the case. As usual Kebang failed to reach any decision and referred the matter to me. The genesis of the problem was emotional incompatibility. The Pangkong should have been little more understanding as their relationship earlier had been cordial. He has wooed her from Rasheng after long courtship. Both knew each other very well. Beside Yadeng was an active and energetic woman—anyone should be happy to get her as wife.

I tried to reason—called them together and advised as best possible but Pangkong remained adamant. She is a bitch no longer fit to be his wife. This hit the hornet's nest. In a rage Yadeng poured out all the sordid details of their conjugal life with much relish to the listeners. Apparently she knew also Pangkong's nocturnal visits to other girls.

These were mostly true. But such things were common in the society. If found guilty a fine is paid and chapter is closed. Pangkong Yadeng's case lingered for many months as it interwined in clan politics. Ultimately they separated after Pangkong paid a handsome compensation.

The job of an Administrative Officer in the Frontier is multifarious. His charter of duties include almost everything under the sun. He must function as friend, philosopher, guide and not merely a bureaucrat dealing with routine matters.

Sometimes we had to face certain situation which strained the nerves. Our Office Assistant Bapu Ram Saikia's son suddenly fell ill. There was no Doctor at Damro. The Pharmacist who was new did know much of medicine.

l called Dr. Raman, the Medical Officer, Pasighat to W/T Set. Then a tedious conversation started between two of us. The Pharmacist relaying the information on pulse beat, tempe-

rature etc. of the patient as wanted by the Doctor sitting 40 miles away on the W/T Set. The talk was interesting as everytime it followed repetition of the Word—Roger—Clear—Over, At the opening I had to say—Baker Sugar from Delta Mike Romeo—say Tango receive message clear. Distant Pasighat may not follow and so ask to repeat again.

Dr. Raman prescribed some medicines which I noted. Next day I informed him the response of the patient. Luckily there were no more complication and patient recovered fully, In subsequent years I had many occasions to call Doctors to the Wireless Set. The treatment of patients by Radio Doctor is unique in the Frontier. Surprising though but invariably Doctor's diagnosis proved correct.

National Days provided great deal of diversion for all of us. An elaborate programme is drawn up for the celebration of Independence or Republic Day. By contributing labour the small ground where we played Volleyball was extended to a Mini football field to stage sports events like archery, tug of war.

The celebration commenced with the hoisting of National Flag by me. An impressive march past was provided by the Platoon of the Assam Rifles commanded by the J.C.O. The day long programme ended with a exhilarating Ponung by Rasheng girls.

This was the occasion for the Keri, Keriyak or Lutem Rashengs to outwit the other by best of performance.

The evening of 27th January, 1960, on the day followed the Republic Day, a grand cultural show was in progress. It was already late in the evening. Suddenly we heard a terrific booming sound overhead. The sound came closer and closer with menacing speed. Outside in the darkness it was impossible to see anything in the sky. The booming sound of the Jet travelled North. There was great fear and commotion as everyone dashed for shelter. We could not establish the identity of the plane. Subsequently we heard a rumour of KMT Plane flying sorties from Upper Burma to rebel Khampas in Tibet.

An incident jerked me to my senses. I never knew that old system seldom die so easily. One day Bogir Pertin came

to me to ask for an order directing a young man who is his son and now settled at Bolung near Roing in Lohit Frontier Division. I thought this was an innocent request and promptly issued the order.

Sometime later this man appeared in the Office in an angry mood. He would report the matter to the Government on my action. He was a descendent of a slave of Bogir Pertin but since slavery is abolished how the Base Superintendent dare issue order to stay with his old master?

It then dawned on me that an enormous mistake had been committed. To Bogir the slave is a slave—no matter what Government might say. However to my great relief the man quietly slipped off unnoticed by others.

After A.P.O. returned from leave I narrated him the entire incidence. He cautioned me to be careful as people here like to rake up old issue. He relieved my anxiety by drafting a Message to the Advisor to the Governor of Assam explaining away the matter.

The slavery as an institution was in existence among all the tribes of the Frontier. Gradually the slaves were emaccipated from the age old bondage by Government's conciliatory policies. Some compensation was paid to the master for the loss of his asset. No force however exercised and by and large response to Government policy was favourable.

Among the Adis slavery no longer exist. But the social taboo remained—a slave can never be equal to the master's clan nor intermarry. If there were marriage the girl or the boy also enter the slave clan. It was distressing to hear the derogatory remarks like 'Pakbo Pagne'—slave man and woman. The slaves naturally developed an inferiority complex.

Another incidence occured soon after A.P.O.'s arrival. A man from Adipasi complained on loss of his beads and accused a fellow from Geku village. The Kebang could not establish the guilt hence referred to an ordeal test. The type of ordeal 'Edu Uki' was no longer permitted by the Government as it may do physical harm but A.P.O. decided to hold it.

A big crowd gathered to witness the event. A fire was lit on the ground. The maternal uncle of both the contesting parties brought water from Yamne river in big bamboo tubes.

The tubes were then placed on the fire. A screen of leaves was put up near it. The maternal uncle—the Akkie, tied banana leaves in the hand of his nephew over the wrist. Two eggs were then thrown to the boiling water of the tube. After some time both the men dipped their hand in the water and brought 'he egg and splashed it on the body of each other. They were then taken to a secured place where they stayed for three days to show any sign of injury in the hand. Three days after they were brought out of confinement and carefully examined. Except a faint sign in the hand of the Adipasi man nothing abnormality was found. However this indication was enough to prove the innocence of the fellow from Geku village. I had minutely examined the palm of both the men. It remained a puzzle to me as to why a blister did not appear when hand dipped in boiling water. People even say that nothing ever happen to the innocent person even in the severe test of ordeal where molten lead is put on the palm.

Touring with A.P.O. was a pleasure. He was always jolly and kept the party in good humour. Being an expert in Ponung, everywhere he was eagerly sought after by the girls to be their cheer leader.

We went to Milang—seven miles from Damro. The three villages—Milang, Dalbuing, Pekimodi are similar to Padam but their dialect is so different from their immediate neighbour. The speech it is told was invented during a war to focl the enemy. In Padam 'INKOLO'—where become 'HAGANU' in Milang.

Pekimodi was 15 miles from Milang and involved a tough march over the rugged terrain. Why they lived so far never known. Dalbuing is only 5 miles across the river Yamne. Another river YAMME join it below the village. The village is on an plateu facing a high mountain range Kalung. This mountain harbours Takin, Musk deer as well grow aconite—the poison which is smeared on the shaft of an arrow. My friend Ange Perme told me about this formidable range where WIYUS—the spirit live. A deep black line ran across the slope of Kalung—the coniferous belt.

There were 12 Gams—the headmen of Milang. The seniormost was Angking Ngukir—a calm and quiet person. He

talked in slow accent which was pleasant to hear. Milang people were so different in temperament from Padams of Damro. They seldom quarrelled and never caused embarrassment to Government.

Milangs were unhappy with Damro for the cultivation in Mariyang. The land they said belonged to them. The dispute created much heat but subsequently we managed to arrive at a compromise.

Too many Gams in the village gave A.P.O. an occasion to humour them. He gave each of them a title. Thus Bangke Modi became Borgam, Songki Lego the Blockgam. Others received the title Henten Gam, Micha-Michi Gam, Jai Sin Gam! After getting the titles all of them were very happy!

Panke Langkam—the Jai Sin Gam once caused me quite a sensation. He had habit of coming very close to say 'Jai Sin'. I was deeply engrossed in a paper when he suddenly arrived and jumped near me with a full throated shout of Jai Sin. I got so much unnerved that I toppled from the chair.

Simple as they were, their pronounciation in foreign language often became funny. Thus football either became 'footbor' or 'Kutbor'. Jai Hind become Jai Sin or Jai Jin.

Bangke Modi of Milang gave us lot of amusement when he mentioned "Morile Moribo—Bahile Bahibo—Simalor Parbot Ache"—May die or may survive—it is like Himalaya mountain!

During winter of 1959 we organised a village leaders camp at Milang. The purpose was to show the people through various demonstrations of improved agriculture, animal husbandry and other aspects of rural development. Dr. Raman, P.N. Nag, the Principal of the Agricultural Training Institute came from Pasighat. There were more than 400 participants representing all the villages of the sub-division.

Milang people were jubilant and went all the way to serve as host. They killed two Mithuns, a number of Pigs to feed the guests.

While on the way to Damro, Dr. Raman had a terrific cramp in his stomach after eating some wild nuts which he mistook as edible fruit. Being a doctor he immediately treated himself by purging the stomach otherwise the result would have been fatal.

In the jungle there are many varieties of fruits, berries, nuts and mushroom often these look so similar. The people however know how to distinguish an edible from non-edible variety and therefore seldom suffer a disaster.

After winding the camp I went on a month long tour to visit all the villages of the sub-division. My first visit was to Dalbuing—a village with 90 houses. Except the dialect they are indistinguishable from Padams. Below the village is the river Yamme—the maiden who seek her love—Yamne some distance away.

The river is snow fed and held plenty of fish but this had dragged Dalbuing to a perpetual conflict with Gobuk which borders the river. People of Gobuk are Shimongs—though belong to same group of Adis yet they are different from Padams in manners and temperament.

From Dalbuing to Komkar was 14 miles across a big hill—Tumrung. A virgin forest Aggen Perme teemed with animals and so far mercifully it has not been disturbed for Jhum. There were trees of several feet girth, bamboos, canes, innumerable ferns, mosses, Lichens. Inside the forest it was dark and foreboding. No wonder people believed the place is a den of dreaded spirit Yapom which live on tall trees and drag the unwary traveller deep inside to devour him.

The climb was tedious till we reached the saddle of the hill. From there again stiff descent brought us to Komkar on the bank of Siang. The scenery from the top of the hill is marvelous. Wide valley looked so beautiful—interspersed with terraced fields, villages, meandering streams.

On way I saw so many waterfalls—some falling from considerable height. Huge volume of water cascading down the rocks throwing up spray several feet either side. One day the place might attract the visitors just to show the grandeur of nature.

Divided in three parts—Rashing, Sijer and Karku—the Komkar had 81 houses. There were 12 Gams led by Alodong Boko—a fine man with a broad heart. Alodong's brother Oken was a student in Pasighat High School but he settled at

Dambuk changing his title to Lego. Oken frequently visited Damro while on vacation and stayed with me.

The visit of an Administrative Officer is a big event in the village. A hearty reception was accorded to me—a mile up from the village. A welcome arch was put up—Ponung girls dressed in their best, men, women crowded both side of the approach with shouts of Jai Hind. There were never ending handshakes—everyone came forward to introduce to Base Superintendent. Adis are notoriously hospitable. If the Officer is sympathetic and tolerant then and immediate rapport is established—the never ending invitations to houses follow the tedious routine.

Alodong became my most favourite. A tall hefty fellow Alodong had that inborn quality of leadership. He put his weight behind us as we pushed our developmental programme. He is naturally proud of his brother Oken who is in high school. The Lower Primary School which was opened in the village must grow now—could the Base Superintendent help him by deputing good teacher?

Barnard Marak—the Veterinary Assistant Surgeon arrived all of a sudden. He was on his way to Pasighat after a long tour to Upper Siang. A fine man, full of spirit and enthusiasm Marak dashed to Komkar instead of Damro on hearing our stay there.

Marak, Kharlukhi, myself—the trio decided to introduce something new. We organised the people to clean the village, construct a water point with protecting walls, washed the children with soap and water, built a village road, fenced the school campus. The people's enthusiam knew no bound when they saw we rolled our sleeves to work with them.

Next morning leaving me alone Marak and Kharlukhi left for Damro. I proceeded to Geku—7 miles from Komkar. The people known here as Pangi but language and custom, are similar to Padam and Minyong. Men and women crop their hair close from the eartip. The girls wear a red bordered white skirt. They were not so smart like Padams. The houses were rectangular but roof is thatched with palm leaves.

Pangies struck me as very simple—unconcerned to the change taking place elsewhere. At first they looked docile and

timid—quite a contrast to Padams who always vibrate with the zest of life.

To the approach of the village were stone encampment—the defence structure of the y esteryears. The two tall 'Tagat' trees stood beside the gate. A narrow path—both sides walled with stones upto 3 ft. height led to the entrance of the gate. The land sloped down straight from the outer parapet. It was impossible for the enemy to climb up unnoticed and thus spring a surprise.

Geku is a big village with 1000 pecple divided in three parts—Kumku, Ramku and Perom. This is the parent village of the Pangies who are now spread over 4 villages along. Yamne river. Many people have migrated to low land areas seeking better fortune.

Pangies are suspicious of Padams. This suspicion is rooted in the history. The bloody war between Padams and Pangies are still fresh in the mind of the older generation. This was the longest war in Adi History carried over for 7 years which ended in mid thirties after the visit of W.H. Calvert, the Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract.

The cause of the fight was interesting. One Kepsi Simat from Sitang village who was a Minyong went to Damro where he met Bapir—a rich man of the village. Bapir ridiculed him seeing his diminutive figure. But Kepsi kept cool and apparently did not exhibit anger. Instead he requested Bapir to meet him at Tumrung Pass two days later where he would give a brass metal vessel—Ranku in exchange for a Mithun. On acceptance of the offer thus made he quietly left for his village.

On the appointed day Bapir went to Ampen Notti near the pass with a Jug of Apong—Kaglak followed by his men dragging a Mithun. Kepsi true to his words was also waiting with Kaglak which he offered to Bapir. When he started drinking the beer Kepsi drew out his sword and with lightning speed beheaded him and vanished from the sight behind the screen of forest.

Immediate alarm was raised in Padam village and hundreds of people arrived at Komkar village. But Komkar refused to co-operate as they had friendly relation with Sitang

and Riga—the two Minyong villages. They then approached Pangies who obliged them and a combined column crossed Siang river to Sitang & Riga and destroyed the villages. A mysterious stone 'Erelidung' it is told was responsible for the fire. The charred area still visible. Whoever brought the piece of stone also met the same fate even Peter James—the Political Officer who disregarded the advice of the elders also could not escape. His house too was gutted by a mysterious fire.

In recognition to the service Padams gave permission to Pangies to establish a settlemement along the Yamne river. But Pangies moved further down near the confluence of Yamne and Siang river and thus found a route to Pasighat from where they could purchase salt. Padams did not like this and asked them to remove the settlement but Pangies refused. Thus a fight ensued to dislodge them. The route to Pasighat was cut off and Pangies were forced to turn to Shimongs who however readily agreed to help them in their distress.

The Komkars who were so long remained neutral sided with the Padam but Shimong fell upon them and poor Komkars had to sue for peace with enormous indemnity.

The bloody war continued year after year with casualties mounting heavily on both sides.

Adi wars had peculiarities. Parties were ambushed often and sudden raids on village made with superior strength. The enemy movement is carefully watched by Patrols known as Magro who place loops of loosely strung string across a path and anyone crossing the path surely dislodge the string thus expose his movement. Sometimes ingenious method also applied where leaves were carefully kept backward. When unwary enemy move it, brushes the branch thus leaves return to original position. The footprints were carefully followed to know the time of movement—if the edge of the print was dry and broken the pursuers knew move was old but if it was deep and unbroken then enemy only gone recently. Various kinds of signals follow—imitations of whistlings of birds, bark of a deer or any other ingenious means of communication. Patrols keep in touch by putting some sign on the path.

When an enemy has been killed in a surprise attack or

ambush, his palm is chopped off and brought to the village, struck to a 'Tagat' tree, with palm facing outward. This is done with apparent belief that dead will beacon the others to follow and fall to the trap.

When a war has been decided a fast runner is at once despatched with three things—the feather of a bird, a stone and a chilli. The feather symbolise the speed—one must go to the theatre of war as quickly as bird. The stone symbolise a stout heart and chilli—a fighting spirit. The fast runners hand over these tokens to the next village and it is obligatory on their part to despatch a runner at once to next village. With this relay system the news of any happenings anywhere in Adi country could reach the farthest corner within a very short time.

When any of the warring groups wanted peace they placed broken pieces of arrow and a sword at a place where the other party likely to come. This is then taken as gesture of peace and negotiation start through the media of a neutral village. After successful negotiation Mithuns and Pigs are sacrificed with offer of Apong.

A stone signifies the determination, a Chilli means anger, a piece of coal or burnt clay implies extreme urgency, a piece of burnt wood indicates incendiarism, a sharpened Dao reveals the intentions of the sender, a Dao with blunted edge shows the quarrel has been made up and peace restored, and an unsharpened Dao and piece of aconite carries the warning that the sender's feelings are very much upset, anything pretty such as white flower or a piece of white cotton denotes goodwill. Messages are sent in small cane baskets. If a villager should find in his field or in his house a basket containing a piece of aconite, a chilli and burnt stick, it is usually wise for him to prepare for trouble. Placing of dismembered Pig across the path by which the enemy must come to show that the invaders will be cut to pieces.

Though war has ended long back with establishment of peace, yet mutual suspicion and distrust still linger and especially with older generations who were themselves witness to the event or participated in it. In the village leaders camp at

Geku which we organised during the winter of 1960 Padam Gams preferred to stay in my camp instead of going to the village lest the Pangies poison them. Likewise Pangi Gams when visit Damro never stay in the village for the same irrational fear.

Once in my house at Damro two Pangi Gams—Lau Pangeng and Nyobung Panyang appeared when I was gossiping with Makgir Pertin of Damro. It was winter—the outside was bitter cold and so we sat near the fire place. Pangi Gams were in a jubilant mood. They had come all the way from Geku to invite me to their village to show the road works.

Makgir was quietly listening to them. Suddenly he asked their names. Both the Gams apparently felt much offended—at least he should have known who they were. After a pause they too asked his name. It was a surprise. At first I thought it must be a joke. But Makgir was looking intently on Lau Pangeng. At last a smile appeared in his face. It was an an incident during the war when he was captured by the Pangies in the Jhum field. He made a daring escape from the clutch of the man who is now facing him. After arrival at the the village he collected body of warriors and dashed to Tumrung hill but could find only a straggler and done him to death.

Hearing him, the face of the two Pangi Gams contorted, unsmiling and grim. War long over yet left the deep scar behind.

The Geku is in the valley of Siang A vast undulating land 'MONE' run parallel to the wide river. I thought how easily we could construct an airfield. We have opened a lower primary school here with jovial Sib Sharma as Teacher incharge.

There were grooves of Jackfruit and oranges in the village. With no market the fruits either just consumed or perish.

The visit of an Administrative Officer gave an opportunity for some people to queue up for favour. Many come up with petitions for redress of a grievance, or for gun licence. Adis are very much fond of hunting, but the poisoned arrows though may hit an animal it might not succumb immediately. To

trail an injured animal deep in the forest is not only difficult but often dangerous if the trailers are not careful. The gun however has advantage—if bullet hit accurately the animal die on the spot. The wild animals especially bear, wild boer, deer do considerable damage to standing crops. The issue of guns therefore become necessary to protect the crops.

However we imposed a precondition—the person must render some service to the community.

I developed friendship with Lau Pangeng—a simple but straight forward person. Bulky body and medium height Lau Pangeng would never rest—always shuttle from village to village to inspire people to developmental works. He became a rallying point behind our schemes.

In recognition for the good service a gun licence was issued to him but this brought the tragedy and I could never reconcile for the terrible loss I brought upon him. His only son while out on hunting shot a wild boer which left a deep trail of blood. Following the trail the unfortunate boy pushed forward. The injured boer lay in wait and as soon as he came near it sliced his body with the sharp teeth causing immediate death. Lau Pangeng never recovered from the shock. It was saddest moment for me some years later when I heard his death.

Yet the craze for gun never ended. In fact it became a status symbol—an influential man without gun felt almost a non-entity.

The tragedy as happened to the Lau Pangeng's son also repeated to many others. Most of the gun holders were least conscious on safety precaution. The loaded gun carried all along with safety catch on. The trigger snapped accidentally and shot went out hitting a person or the hunter himself got killed when climbing a tree and tried to lift the gun with the feet. The trigger jerked by an obstruction release the bulltet which hit him fatally.

The introduction of many guns especially in Damro resulted almost pathetic reduction of wild life. The bark of a deer already became a rare phenomenon within two years of my stay, so also the disappearance of many species of beautiful birds.

Once I was shocked to see a small doe hunted by a villager. It remained a puzzle to me why Adis inspite of so much magnanimity show no concern for the wild life.

Supsing was a small village six miles from Geku with 21 houses. It was on the foot of a big hill 'Poreng'. We paid a visit to the village before leaving for Riew.

In Siang or Yamne Valley there are table land either on the bank of the river or on a shoulder of a ridge. With so much of assured water everywhere from perennial streams irrigation is not a problem. But the introduction of permanent cultivation would naturally cause a disturbance in the traditional life of the society. Go slow might be the answer till people could adjust to changed situation.

The path across the 'Poreng' hill led to Sibum 10 miles from Supsing. The hill is a wild forested area where tigers roam freely. Tiger seldom attack man unless injured but people are dead scared so much that while crossing the hill they move very fast.

Once it happened that a man was carrying a Pig strapped to his back in a basket. The pig was squealing and the man with the blunt edge of his Dao stroked it every time it made a sound telling it—you fool hush! Do not you know tiger on prowl! It got so much of stroke every now and then that when he reached the foot hill he found to his grief that it was already dead!

On way to Riew the path followed the bank of Siang upto a distance of 7 miles. The river is no where narrow—maintained a wide expanse with an average width of 800 ft. In winter its current is subdued with crystal clear water but in summer it fumes and frets with ear splitting roar.

On the high hill in opposite bank lie the biggest Minyong village of Riga but here crossing the river was not possible as no bridge exist and no one use raft in the dangerous water.

Leaving the bank of Siang we began a gruelling climb to the village. The path zigzagged through forest and Jhum field upto 8 miles. The village was on a shoulder of a ridge commanding a fine view of Siang.

A crowd led by Besing Tabing, Political Interpreter welcomed me a mile from the village. Girls draped in colour-

ful dress staged Ponung while jugs of Apong thrust on me followed by never ending hand shake.

In every Adi village the approach is always flanked by stone encampment with two huge 'Tagat' trees standing on either side of the entrance. If there is a fear of epidemic the gates are additionally reinforced with wild fern leaves, banana, bamboo stems and shavings and a hideous image of spirit with head gear stand on the top of the arch or a big image of reptile made with bamboo laid on one side—pierced with arrows. A carcass of a dog its stomach slit open laid on the gate where empty bamboo tubes are hung which give a continuous rattling sound whenever any one pass through. The obnoxious smell of the carcass is nauseating to the new comer but for me several years now in the frontier it did not matter any more.

The graveyards of the village are near the granneries which lie on the approach road. Many of the legendery figures of yesteryears lie buried here in eternal sleep. An eerie feeling develops when walking in the night by the side of the graveyard.

I have entered Nugo Bango inhabited by Minyongs. There were seven villages—Riew, Komsing, Mopit, Beging, Pangi, Sissen, Jorsing, all near the Siang river. There is not much to distinguish them from Padam except the temperament. Minyongs are rather straight forward and do not know manoeuvring. Here too clan politics dominate the life of a village but not in aggressive form like Padams. Another difference discernible in dress and ornament—they do not drape their neck with excessive Necklace of costly beads—Tadoks. They use extravagantly bark of a tree 'Lalek' which when chewed reddened the teeth. Though dialect is the same yet Minyong accent is more rustic and syllables are distorted as 'Kape' become 'Kaye'.

Minyong houses are not roofed with Kojing—the banana fibres. They use palm leaves or fronds of Tara—a species of cane.

There are eleven clans in Riew—Tabing, Iring, Tatak, Tamuk, Talo, Muktung, Taki, Tangu, Tapak, Siram and Jamo. Many of them migrated from the parent village of Riga. The migration spread to all the areas in Lower Siang and Pasighat

but not on the left bank of Siang where Padams dominate.

Tama Tabing was the head Gam—the grand old man of the village. He told me interesting stories of Pangi Padam war, Padam raids on Minyong village of Riew and Sitang, his tour with W.H. Calvert who brought peace to the area.

Men like Tama Tabing are now legendery figure in the history, but I was lucky enough to know them personally.

One of my itinerary during the tour was to visit the School. Riew School though established some years now yet progress was tardy as enrolment never been satisfactory. On complaint of teacher I issued a warning to the guardians. A fine was imposed but strangely enough the money was quickly paid yet the children did not come. Much annoyed by the apparent affront I then imposed restriction on issue of salt—the precious commodity without which a house cannot run. But surprisingly that too had no effect—the attendance in school remained as before. Greatly exasperated I took a drastic step—seize the Dao. In Adis Dao is the most valuable tool—it serve many purposes and without which a person is really helpless.

The effect was dramatic. Soon the Daos were seized in my presence all the guardians came forward with the children. The total enrolment in the School went up to 60 in a single day of operation. After extracting solemn promise I returned the Dao one by one.

The incident generated much excitement in the area. The new B.S. meant business.

There was a parallel incident in Geku School which had a touch of comic.

Being scared of penalty for not sending the child to the School the father instead came in and sat on the bench in place of his son whom he had to engage in domestic works!

Adi families are not large. The daily routine is crowded with so much of works, that woman had little time to tend the baby. Hence a grown up child function as baby sitter or run errand for miscellaneous jobs. We however did not insist on compulsory enrolment if the parent had one child only. The problem of a teacher in the school was understandable when recording the age of a student. There had been no birth and

death record nor any one knew how to keep it. The age was judged by approximation often in reference to an important event like earthquake, Jhum cycle, flood or major calamity in the village. A keen questioner come nearer to the guess if he pursue to know the details—for example during earthquake the child hardly crawled on the ground. The earthquake occurred in 1950 and so the child would not be more than 7-8 months old. But such patient query seldom done. In one instance a student's age was recorded 5 to 6 years more than his actual age and I had to pull up the errant teacher.

The schools were housed in ordinary building of thatch and bamboo with mud floor. Split bamboo mat served as table and bench. Very seldom wooden furnitures were available. Yet with these minimum facilities teachers carried out their task relentlessly with utmost devotion to duty. The history of the frontier will be incomplete without mentioning their service.

My old friend Peter Knowles who was a Village Level Worker at Ralung, had been posted to Riew. Like Kharlukhi Peter is also a hard worker and soon gained the confidence of the people. Though he was not a Makbo—the son in law but people called him Makbo just as a fun.

Peter accompanied me to Komsing and other villages of Nugo Bango.

From Riew the track made a continuous descent to Komsing near the bank of Siang. Tatan Muze, Village Level Worker was posted at Komsing. Tatan was from Ledum—a smart handsome boy. Tatan joined us for the rest of the tour.

Komsing has been famous in the history due to massacre of Noel Williamson, the Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya Frontier tract in 1911. A marble plaque bear the inscription:

"On this spot was murdered Noel Williamson, Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, March 31st, 1911."

My friend Takut Gao—the Gam who saved my life while crossing the suspension bridge came half the way with a big

"Kaglak' of Apong. He could not pronounce B.S. so address me B.A. Migom. Some people even called Beshi Migom but no one correctly spell the name.

There were seven clans in the village—Darang, Talo, Taki, Tamuk, Gao, Siram, Tapak. The village 'Kebang' was disorganised. Head Gam Tapang Talo had a terrific row with rest of the people on distribution of water drawn by bamboo pipe. The case was referred to me for arbitration but I thought the Kebang could decide the issue in my presence. To keep them guessing on my intention I fixed the date on my return from Pongi—the farthest village.

Adi character is interesting. They are fond of collective living yet could not overcome the common human weakness—the jeolousy. They quarrel on trifling matter and 'Kebang' busied all the time just to decide the case.

From Komsing we arrived at Mopit—a small village perched on the slope of a hill. There were 4 clans—Jamo, Pajing, Ronang, Siram. Takit Ronang the head Gam was a nice little fellow—beaming with smile all the time. The village was never visited by an Administrative Officer.

A case of adultery was brought before me. One Takar Jamo had secret love with Yatam Jamo the wife of Tanyum Jamo. Such cases were quite common in Adi villages when both the partners have unsatisfactory relation. It may happen also if the woman is promiscous and run errant with other men. The affairs continue in such inconspicous places in grannery—'Kumsung' or field huts 'Poyup' but very rarely in the house. The husband follow her stealthily and observe every event if he gets a wind of the movement but never resort to violence. He summons the Kebang but surprisingly the woman confess the guilt and narrate all the sordid affairs. She however try to blame the man for enticing her.

The Kebang is a free and frank forum. It is an unique platform where freedom of expression perfectly guaranteed. While the witness narrate all the lucid details there is murmur in the audience—shame on the rascal woman who brought such a disgrace. The guilty woman then try to defend by blaming the man. The Kebang would then finally decide to impose a fine—'Yopot Ajeng'—a Pig or Mithun depending on the gravity

of the crime. The fine might be quite heavy if the woman had been pregnant or deliver a still born child. Once the Yopot Ajeng has been paid all the sins deemed to have been washed off and chapter is closed.

But Yatam Jamo's case was not so simple. No witness was available but she had secret love with Takar Jamo. On some pretext she frequently absented from works in cultivation field and did not share the same bed with her husband. This led Tanyum to strong suspicion and he referred this to Kebang.

Lot of curiosity developed as to how B.S. would decide the case. Yatam Jamo—a pretty girl—rather looked like a flirt blamed her husband for dragging her to the Kebang. He always kept her busy all the time and like a willy dog had a nagging nature. How many 'Kaglak' of Apong she had to make for him just to satisfy his insatiable thirst. He is useless—a drunkard who lazily while away time while she had to work so hard. Worst still he could not give her a child because he is impotent, fit only to share the bed with a bitch. Kebang then asked her why she had refused to sleep with him. She cried hoarse and told it would be better to sleep with a Log!

This enraged the husband so much that he spat on the ground uttering all the dirty obsence words. From the beginning Takar denied his involvement in the case. He too like Yatam Jamo abused Tanyum for falsely implicating him.

Finding no solution I used a stratagem. In full hearing of Kebang I called Takar Jamo to move with me at once to Damro where I would remand him to Assam Rifles Custody. If he was not guilty then he would be let off otherwise rest of his life he would languish in the jail.

They very mention of Quarter Guard was a dread. It brought forth shame and dishonour in the eyes of the community. I could see the uneasiness in Takar. In a false step he gave the slip and Kebang immediately caught it. Only once did he sleep with her. Subsequently it was found out not only once but several times he had enticed her.

The case was then decided at once. He was fined Rs. 150 and a Pig. The woman was abused by everyone present—some even spat on her. She screamed hysterically and ran out of sight.

There were instances when a girl of bad character run errant and disregard the warnings of the Kebang. The Kebang unable to restrain her take the drastic step—shave her hair, put thorns on her head, parade naked arround the village in most disgraceful appearance.

This supposed to instil on her considerable shame and she repents for her behaviour and promise to correct herself.

Once I witnessed an incident at Damro. A notorious girl from Milang village was dragged to a pole with hand and feet tied, hairs shaved and ash was smeared over the body. All were allowed to see her. She screamed and sobbed but no one sympathised. Society had own system of punishment and invariably this had salutary effect on the recalcitrant.

Following the Siang river we came to Beging 5 miles north of Mopit. The river here placid and calm. It half circled Beging in a wide curve. High on the hill of opposite bank is Dosing—a large Minyong village. Though the river is not so wide here yet people did not construct a suspension bridge. The communication between two villages is routed through Pangin and Komsing—the distance being 26 miles.

Near the bank a big flat land 'Birem Among' is suitable for wet paddy cultivation if water is available for irrigation. I had some funny idea about use of pump to draw water from Siang. Here in the hills gravity water is most suitable as perennial sources are available everywhere.

With wide river, sprawling valley, forested hills the entire landscape looked so beautiful. For centuries the nature has curved out a pattern for the people—they too made a harmonious living with their surroundings. One can just wish they may remain so forever but alas! the change is inevitable.

The village was small with 20 houses but there were three Gams. The head Gam Tanget Jamo however an amiable person. It was because of his leadership that Kebang was mostly united.

A case was brought to me on 'SIMA URE'. Sima Ure is the customary compensation allowed to a person who burry the dead. Taba Jamo had burried the body of Tagom Jamo of Mopit but the property was sold to another person by the dead man's brother in clear violation of the customary law. Now Taba Jamo want the compensation and share on the property.

An entire day passed in the Kebang. After hearing the arguments I decided that the property should be restored to deceased's son and compensation paid to Tabo Jamo in shape of 'Doppun Abi'—costly bead and a small mithun. This being agreed after another round of intense discussion the girls trouped in to drag me to Ponung.

Adi Kebang is interesting. So much heat is generated—abuse and counter abuse yet after the issue is decided every one find time to relax and bitterness is quickly forgotten.

From Beging we went to Pangi by passing Komsing. Pangi was 5 miles from Komsing on the bank of Siang. There were only 18 houses. The village looked dull and drab. Across the river is Yambung—the red roofed Inspection Bungalow seen on the cleft of the big rock. Far above the hill is Kebang—the famed village of 1911 episode. Kebang village grow plenty of oranges. Here in every village citrus groove is common. A day might come when horticulture will be a boon to the people.

We marched 4 miles to Sissen along the bank of Siang river. Sissen is on a lovely setting—the low hills, rolling land-scapes, the gorgeous river. Here in Sissen Doctor Gregorson of the ill-fated Komsing Column was murdered in March 1911. But there was no Memorial seen.

A diminutive person with a smiling face approached me. He is the 'Henten' Gam—Tangut Siram. In every conversation he repeated the term 'Henten' and so A.P.O. gave him the title.

Henten Gam was very jolly. Shuttling like ever busy bee he kept us company, taking us to cultivation areas, the river front and showed the place where massacre of 1911 took place.

A new disturbing trend now evident in every village where wet rice cultivation has been introduced. The temper let loose on sharing of irrigation water. The channel run along the contour and naturally nearest one get the preference. The distribution system could not be planned properly as cultivators seldom divert the excess water which run waste or overflood the terraces. Here too some quarrel cropped up and Peter went to arbitrate in the dispute.

It is interesting how the people work. This being the lean season for the cultivation yet no one idle away the time. Con-

struction materials for the house—bamboo, palm or cane leaves, posts, rafters are collected from forests and stacked in convenient places. Two long bundles are tied with bark of a tree 'Dunbo'. This tree which has an average height of 10 ft. has hairy trunk with broad leaves. The fibre is extracted by peeling off the bark. The rope is strong and durable. It serve as tying materials.

The centre portion of the rope is passed to the forehead and load is dragged down the slope of the hill by physical force. The rafters and long posts are kept near the village weighed down by stones to keep these straight. The collection of materials is very laborious job yet people never complain of fatigue. Their calf muscles are so strong that climbing a hill cause no problem. Even the women show the extraordinary power of endurance. There were many cases when woman in labour quietly delivered the child and after a few days rest rush to works again.

Pretty Sissen girls came down the slope of the hill bringing huge bundles of firewood. These are carried on the back in open mouthed long conical basket—the cane strip passed round the forehead.

They wore red and blue skirts, black velvet blouses, ornaments of beads going below the stout bossom.

The girls looked wide eyed as our visit was unannounced. They hurried to the house to get ready for the Ponung.

It was a beautiful moonlit night when the girls started the Ponung:

Kolopi Kolopi
Kolopi Kolopi

Next morning suprise writ on my face when the beautiful

girl who was the cheer leader in Ponung wore a different look. She was sad and melancholy. Would the Migom help her?

Her name was Yade, betrothed to Tabom Taki of Pangi who is much older than her age and she never liked him. The marriage was arranged by her parents.

Tabom has been giving enough dried squirrels, rats and shoulder of hunted animals and was accepted as Son-in-Law—'Makbo'—in the family but she now wants this marriage must be dissolved.

It is not easy to annul the marriage which has been arranged after prolong negotiation and Makbo has performed the duties in In-Laws house.

I did not know as to why I took interest in Yade. Perhaps her young innocent look or sincere pleading. I decided to help her in her dire distress when she told she will jump to the river if she cannot marry the boy of Komsing with whom she is in secret love.

Peter and Tatan laughed when they heard my decision. Migom must have gone crazy by taking interest on a girl. Such cases are many—will the Migom sort out every case?

I remained firm and told the Gams to take the girl to Komsing and arrange a Kebang.

The Kebang was held at Komsing during my return visit. Man from Pangi demanded huge compensation—a Mithun and a costly brass metal vessel—'Danki' alongwith beads.

The boy is a student in School hardly in his teens. Yet the Parents agreed to take her with full payment of compensation.

Later the girl visited me at Damro and presented a woven Galuk as a token of gratitude.

From Sissen we went to Ponging—marching through the beautiful terrain of undulating land along Siang river. Now and then patch of forest rolled down from the hill side to the river. The range of hill which start from here cover a great distance to the north where it attains the height of 13000 ft.

Ponging is a small village—sat in pretty surroundings. Here Yamne came down from the hills of Damro to meet Siang but its water is driven several metres inside by the strong current of Siang.

Huge mass of water of Siang jumped over a submerged rock and raised tremendous spray and whirlpool. Here the river became narrower as it passed through stiff gorge.

A tragic incident occurred in 1956 when eight people died while constructing a suspension bridge. The wires snapped all of a sudden and they were thrown to the water. Only two managed to survive by reaching the bank.

We enjoyed a raft ride in a secured pool where current of the river threw some water to form a Lagoon.

Settlers of Ponging are from the parent village of Geku. But from here some have started moving to Pasighat in search of better life inspite of humid climate, Malaria and other wasting diseases.

From Ponging I went back to Komsing to settle the case in which head Gam Tapang Talo was involved. It was a Bango Kebang where Gams from all the six villages arrived and Komsing had to feed them for two days. However, verdict of Kebang went against Tapang Talo—he was considered arrogant and proud. Fixing the water point near his house only was never liked by any one. As a compromise he had to remove the bamboo pipe. There is always clash of interest when there are too many Gams and no wonder Komsing is no exception.

From Komsing I made a daring move to cover 25 miles of wild forested area to reach Sibum on the bank of Yamne. The journey I took more as a challenge to test my stamina. It was fool hardy no doubt as the path was the worst so far I have seen. Not much used any way it remained as hunting track—so narrow and tortuous. There were never ending climbs till we were near Sibum. The exposed roots of trees, over hanging branch obstructed the movement every now and then. Here sunlight never penetrate. Deep in the forest it is all dark. There are so many different species of trees, bamboos, canes, tree ferns, wild Sago.

The thick growth of vegetation is encouraged by heavy rainfall in this area where annual average is 200 inches and wet season continues nine months in a year.

Three miles from Komsing is Jorsing—a small village on the foot of the hills. The Gam Gani Moyong was a nice man who volunteered to accompany me to Sibum.

On the spur of the hills there are little clearings where fresh air circulate. Some stone slabs are put for the wary travellers to rest a while. These are known as 'Esor Notti'— the windy place. There are no other place where we can rest comfortably—the jungle crowd everywhere. Numerous flies—Mag fly, dragon fly or tiny sand fly buzz around giving lot of irritation. There is another big fly whose bite result in a sore. On the river bank the multi-coloured butterflies stage continuous dance. The Magpie make fly past before the eyes. No wonder one must have great deal of patience and stamina while on move in the jungle.

It was already dark when we reached Sibum. I was dead tired by continuous march and somehow reached the house of Sengom Tayeng—the V.L.W. The porters arrived much later—they too required immediate rest.

Sibum is a big village with 100 houses. Rano Tarang was the head Gam—a man who yeilded enormous influence. A born leader par excellence. Heavy bead Necklace hung from his neck. Though a rich man Rano is not proud yet he could match easily with stalwarts of Damro.

A tragedy occurred in 1953—when a Teacher died of typhoid. No one came to treat him as there was none within a radius of several miles. During high fever he asked for water but no one was present to give him a drop. He developed delirium and all the students ran away thinking of spirit has claimed the body!

Sometime later he died. When Corpse gave out the nauseating smell a runner went to inform the nearest Administrative Centre at Pangin—40 miles from Sibum. It created great deal of commotion in the Government. A decision was taken that all the Schools should have two teachers and must not be too far from a health unit.

It was at Damro in 1957 when an Overseer of the Public Works Department died from typhoid. When he developed delirium people ran away afraid of the spirit which now claimed the body. Just before the end a Doctor arrived but then it was too late. At Karko—25 miles from Damro one Works Inspector died without getting any treatment.

There are so many tales of woe of Pioneers of Frontiers. But then it does not made a headline as people who suffered were not men of importance.

From Sibum I went to Jeru following the lower course of Yamne. Near Jeru there was a 50 ft. long pond 'Kalek' which formed in the depression between two hills. Plenty of fish swarmed but people had strong superstition—the place is favourite haunt of the spirit.

We saw a snake basking in sun over a big stone. No one went near—it was a 'Biking'—the King Cobra. In winter snakes are not aggressive.

Jeru with 47 houses is not far from Yamne. The scenery is beautiful—the hill on the back and river in the front.

I crossed Yamne by a log bridge. The bridge has been constructed on shallow water where river is divided in two channels.

Silli—a Padam village situated near a broken hill. Huge boulders rolled down the hill and collected just near the village that I thought one day the entire village will be burried. Yet people are not scared—no one thought of migration elsewhere.

Eight miles from Silli is Padu situated on a higher elevation. The head Gam Asang Perme was full of wits and humour. He wanted a dual with Damro for snatching his land. When I asked him how he will do it—he stroked his head and said by clever tricks!

The Primary School at Padu appeared in new look after the arrival of Jamat Bori. The school had a garden—the first thing which impress a visitor. Jamat took lot of interest. I always felt the need of selecting teachers on basis of quality that the person possess and not merely on academic qualification. Teachers like Jamat Bori are an example how education is served better by introducing the environmental aspect of it. But sadly Jamat has no prospect being an under Graduate.

Last leg of journery brought me to Adipasi. Pasis though close cousin of Padam in temperament and habit even in construction of the house with 'Kojing' yet preferred to keep their own identity.

The village is divided in three parts—Sibuk, Bine and Sikko with 11 clans—Rukbo, Apum, Moyong, Dai, Mekir,

Yompang, Taniyo, Yomso, Darin, Mengu and Yommin.

Sibuk is the parent village where a school is situated. Below Sibuk is a river Sidip which falls into Yamne—5 miles downstream.

Head Gam Nakep Moyong—a grand old man, sober and gentle is much respected in Yapsi Bango for his balanced outlook. There are other Gams who are equally good. Apin Dai, Komda Rukbo, Dabo Yamso, Nyotan Apum, Bojir Mekir, Obuk Darin, and Kobo Moyong who are matured leaders. The Kebang in Adipasi is much more united than Damro where clan interest is upper most among the leaders.

From Adipasi a wild track over the mountain 'Keyol' led to Siluk in two days march to Lower Siang Valley. The other pass 'Lidong' is not used nowadays.

On the bank of Sidip on way to Damro is a big forest which is reserved for 'Kiruk'—the community hunting. There are plenty of deers and wild boers and Kiruk is always successful. But Ratans of Damro has claimed the forest. The dispute is now several years old—could not be settled as both the parties remained adamant and would not like to yeild the position. Later we could arrive at temporary truce—each village will have 'Kiruk' in alternate year.

The 'Kiruk' is done in an organised manner. The beat is selected earlier. Young people either move in semi circle or take stand in vintage position with their weapons—bow and arrows or guns. The hunting dogs 'Kimon' are let loose which began an wild chase by continuous barking. The disturbed animals made mad rush towards escape route but fall into the trap of hunters who have already positioned themselves.

When a man hunts on his own, a portion of shoulder of the animal goes to the family of his father-in-law. The remaining portion of the shoulder and head the hunter keeps to himself and rest is distributed among clan brethren. If the animal is shot with a gun borrowed from other, the hunter gets the head and body is divided in two equal shares, one for him and other for owner of the gun.

In community hunt if more than one hunter hit the animal the one who hit first gets the right shoulder and rest is shared by others. The hind part goes to the owners of the

hunting dogs, for dogs also are considered as full members of the party and entitled to special share. Of course, their masters take the share and compensate the dogs with the entrails. The skin also go to the owners of hunting dogs. Horns and tusk are taken by the hunter who first shot the animal as a trophy to decorate his house.

After the Kiruk the party returns in triumph on successful hunt, as they approach the village announces their success in long shouts "Gog badnam". It is three times for a deer, five times for a wild boer, bear. For monkey they shout two times with a gap in between. Three loud shouts followed by a long drawn one proclaims the killing of a tiger.

The community fishing in the river is also done with elaborate preparation. The common method is 'Sibok'—diverting the flow of the stream with wood, leaves and stones. If the stream is big then a number of mouths are kept open on the bund where long conical or rectangular bamboo traps—'Poran' are placed. The fish from the upstream fall to the trap in large numbers. A long probing hook lift the trap to see the catch. In one lucky operation huge number of fish—big and small are caught.

The diversion of water to another channel leave the downstream dry and fishes are caught with bare hand.

The most determined way of catching fish is by poisoning the stream. The bark and leaves of some trees are crushed to a paste and released to the water. The black fluid asphyxiate the fish which float on the water.

The story is told of fish and why they are destined to die of poison. The fishes are born of Pedong Nane, who made them from different things. They were her favourites. She put them in the streams where they lived happily. Unfortunately while gamboling about they accidentally hit her eyes and made sore which caused excruciating pain which ultimately resulted in her death.

Before she succumbed she cursed them and shed parts of her body which later grew into poisonous trees. She told Tani—the ancestor of man to take the poison and put it in water to kill fish whenever he liked. After her death she was burried and from the head a tree Denging grew up, from waist a creeper 'Lipik', from hair 'Tenin' and from heart 'Moon' tree came out. All of which became deadly poison to fishes.

We reached Sipong Korong—a stream at the foot of Damro. Sipong was famous in a war with Peyang who are now settled in Shimong village. In the fight many people died hence the name Sipong.

The 45 minutes final climb to Damro was exhausting especially at the last stage of the march.

As we reached half the way the camp perched on the hill appeared before our eyes and we burst into a loud chorus:

Kado Kado Namoko Kado

Elo Oi

Ngolu Rabuke Moko

Kado-Oi

-Come-come all to see-We are of Rabuk.

A rumour went around that A.P.O. who has gone to Delhi to appear in I.F.A.S. interview is arriving at Mariyang by an Otter.

The field is far from complete. We immediately mobilised the people from nearby villages and started the works. Camping at Mariyang in bitter winter is far from pleasant. Cold wind blow all the time from the Kalung mountain range. During morning deep frost enveloped the ground. At night the bamboorhuts hardly promised comfort. We built up fire to keep warmt h. Chips of wood burnt but as there was no smoke outlet the smoke filled the room which brought tears to the eyes.

Yet the works continued. Boulders are removed, ground levelled and eventually a strip of land 700 ft. long cleared of obstructions.

Sometime later an Otter flew over Mariyang amidst our wild cheers but it made no attempt to land, causing us considerable disappointment.

A.P.O. arrived by land route. We had a roaring party on his appointment to I.F.A.S. and posting at Shillong.

A few days later M.L. Kampani, the Assistant Political Officer came from Pasighat. Kampani was a Major Commissioned to Madras Regiment. He could speak a few words of

Telugu with Bora Bhai. Bora Bhai was so happy that he gave full throated performance which caused so much amusement. Luckily for us there was man like Bora Bhai which enlivened the life at Damro.

We arranged a big farewell party to A.P.O. who finally left us in April, 1960. His departure was sadly felt by all of us. He was an exceptionally good hearted man with deep religious bent of mind. What struck me most was his daily ritual, reciting verses from the holy book before attending to any other works. He did not stay long at Shillong as he soon joined politics and became a Parliamentary Secretary in the Union Cabinet.

We had enjoyable company with Dr. Sanderson Sangma and Dr. Hermot Dkhar. Both came separately to stay with us for few days.

The life in the outposts provided diversion when some one narrated comic incidents.

Dwipen Hazarika, Base Superintendent had a bulky body. Once on way to Damro on a temporary posting he felt very tired in strong sun and took rest under the shade of a tree. Soon he was dozing and started snoring. The sound travelled quite far. Some women who were coming up heard the snore as if the snarl of a tiger. Fear seized them and they threw away the loads, ran fast to the village and informed the people of presence of a tiger near the cultivation field.

Soon a body of young men came around in great excitement but found to their surprise—the 'Keete' Migom dozing in the shade of a tree. Keete in Adi is bulged stomach and Dwipen Hazarika got the term from witty villagers.

Dwipen Hazarika otherwise was a nice fellow. His trouble was the bulky body and nap in the Noon.

L. Lungalang, Political Officer was a stickler to discipline. There was no lunch break during working days. But Dwipen Hazarika could not help taking a nap in Office. He quietly doze off by putting two legs on the table.

He was incharge of Innerline permits. A willy staff in a hurry put the papers on the table, thrust a pen between his fingers and took the signature.

Some days later there was a great commotion. An unwanted person got the entry in Pasighat. P.O. was furious but Dwipen Hazarika was crest fallen, could not remember when he signed the paper. Poor fellow got a shock of his life.

Once a Base Superintendent visited Dibrugarh to stay in the Circuit House where accommodation is reserved for Senior Officers. But he managed a room by presenting himself as A.P.O. Pasighat.

But to his ill-luck L.B. Thanga, A.P.O. Pasighat also arrived at Dibrugarh and rang up the Caretaker for accomodation. The Caretaker told him that the only available room has been occupied by A.P.O. Pasighat.

Greatly surprised Thanga asked him to call the Officer on the phone. The Officer did not know who was on the other end, came with a great show, took up the receiver and said in a gruff voice—'This is A.P.O. Pasighat speaking'. Prompt came the reply from the other end—"This is the genuine A.P.O. Pasighat replying!" Hearing this the poor B.S. quickly put off the receiver, packed up and left the Circuit House in a hurry.

The Officer was later posted to an Outpost and developed an aura of importance. Once returning from a visit to Shillong he told the Doctor how His Excellency the Governor invited him to Raj Bhawan and how he was lavishly entertained. It was so tight schedules in the Raj Bhawan where he had to stay that all his other programme had to be cancelled.

After he finished the talk he asked the Doctor to narrate his own experience of visit to Delhi.

Not to be outdone the witty Doctor told, soon after reaching the Delhi Railway Station a Limousine from Rashtrapati Bhawan was waiting for him as being a Medical Officer from NEFA his suite has been arranged there. He too was lavishly entertained and could not find time to attend any other works.

The bluff matched each other and both of them decided to withdraw the respective part of the story!

In an Outpost there was an Official whose knowledge of English was rather limited. He knew the word Suspension bridge but not log bridge. So when a Log bridge broken he promptly sent a message to Department that Assistant Suspension Bridge collapsed!

In another occasion his wife had bleeding from abdomen. He sought for medical help and so promptly sent the Message—My Wife bleeding from confidential point of view!

During May, 1960 I took a party of village leaders alongwith Tatan Muze, VLW to Gauhati and Shillong. None of the Gams ever been outside their district. They never saw a Bus or a Taxi. We attracted curious gathering everywhere. Once in the train a beggar boy played a tune on the double string guitar. My friends were very much pleased with the music but when he asked for money they were shocked. In their country no one demand money for the entertainment. These plainsmen are really a puzzle!

At Gauhati we showed the bridge over Brahmaputra which was under construction. When they saw the pillars driven to the water of such a wide river they immediately came with idea that width of Siang being so narrow it would be very easy to build a bridge over it.

Anything they saw was wonder. Piggery, Poultry Farm at Khanapara, the hydro electric station at Umtru, the fruit processing plant at Burnihat or Dairy farm in Upper Shillong—everything they looked with wide eyes.

At Shiliong we went to Raj Bhawan and met the Governor S.M. Srinagesh. We were entertained with tea and paused for a photograph with him.

A sad incidence happened at Damro. Yade Pertin—a girl of Keri Rasheng was drowned in Yamne. She was swept away by the strong current to deep water. The death cast a gloom on the village. The spirt Siyor was responsible for her untimely death. Her dead body was burried outside the village. No super structure erected over the grave as it was not a normal death.

The continuous yell and sob of her mother deeply moved me and I remained long time in the house to console her.

We got a new Medical Officer after several months. Dr. Sinnha an elderly person with long years of Service in the tea garden volunteered to come to the frontier. He was devoted to his work and seldom left the patients till they recover.

Due to stress and strain I developed low pressure. This prompted the good Doctor to administer a course of Liver

Extract which though effective but develop sure pain at the place of prick. After taking two painful injections I was reluctant to take any more. Immediately a cat and mouse game started. The good Doctor with his medicine bag ran after me everywhere. At last I won the battle and Doctor sadly agreed he never got such an obstinate patient!

Chandra Lahon the teacher, a sober person picked up some intimacy with a sweet little girl of Ratan clan. Aroti Ratan was a student in the primary school.

It became a delicate matter when both were emotionally involved. The Kebang took a rigid stand and withdrew the girl from the School.

I called Lahon to my residence and tried to reason. Two social systems are so different—it may not be easy for him to adjust—neither the girl may find acceptance in the Society.

My friendly advice unfortunately could not convince him—he remained adamant. Come what may he has decided to marry her.

In the frontier due to large induction of staff we are coming across such social tension. Surprisingly it is not the staff alone who make the first move. In many cases it is the girl who make determined advance inspite of stiff resistance. There is definite disturbance in the Society as people do not look kindly to such union. Most of the staff come from the tradition bound society of the plains where rigid social system even prohibit intercaste marriage. Moreover they were born and brought up in their own system where very name tribal smell barbarism. The situation would be different when one grow up in tribal background thereby imbibe more liberal attitude.

The girls prefer to get married to a staff to escape drudgery or motivated for a glamorous life. If the union is good she will lead a reasonably comfortable life as the husband would care for her but if reverse is the case her life would be extremely miserable.

The Government at first rarely looked to this marriage with favour. Apart from disturbances it might create in the tribal society the question of security of the girl became uppermost. At first Government stand was extremely rigid, an outsider falling in love with a tribal girl faced penal action, often

served with dismissal order and in some cases received jail sentences. U. Chakma—a controversial Officer behaved like an executioner. He took it as his sacred duty to punish anyone who had an affair with a girl—genuine or otherwise. But soon it was evident that his actions were superfluous. He had no deep conviction on tribal welfare.

The attitude of the Government however changed when it was evident that total prohibition will not be possible. Hence the registration in the Court became a binding condition so as to safeguard the interest of the girl. This had some effect as many willy staff backed out.

I had to make hard decision on Lahon when I found stiff resistance from the Kebang. He was transferred to Karko 25 miles further west on the other bank of Siang.

But girl ran after him inspite of enormous distance and strict vigil. She went by night all alone up and down the hill with great determination to meet Lahon. Her indomitable spirit must be reckoned as unparalleled.

When we noticed her escape we flashed the message to A.R. Post at Karko and she was brought back to the village under escort. But again she repeated the same feat with stubborn determination.

Finding no way out I had to succumb to the pressure of Damro Kebang and sent Lahon to Pasighat. There he met the Political Officer who ultimately allowed him to marry the girl. They subsequently led a happy life for long years yet did not find acceptance in the conservative Society.

Mohitlal Dey the Malaria Inspector also fell in love with a Pertin girl. Though Dey was posted out more as a punishment the girl stealthily followed him and ultimately stayed together.

An incident of much wider dimension gave a severe jolt to the Administration. Never before such a Law and Order situation developed.

The Administrative Centre at Rabuk was hardly a hundred metres away from the village. This encouraged constant movement especially of girls in any time of day or night. Assam Rifles boys were more energetic—they had good rapport with the people.

It was a festive night in June 1960. A gay Ponung was in the Perme Rasheng. Suddenly boys observed two girls were missing. They went in search but in vain—could not locate the girls.

Doubt naturally cast on the A.R. men. Some one saw two of them hobbering near the Ponung field.

A secret Kebang was immediately summoned. A plan was made to raid the A.R. Line to punish the culprits. It was noon when I arrived at my residence for Lunch. Suddenly a commotion heard very near the place. My Orderly went out to see and immediately came back with the ominous report of mass attack on A.R. Line.

The A.R. Camp was separated from my residence by 200 ft. of undulating land. A momentary panic seized me but soon I gained control of the nerves, I leaped over the high fence, rushed to the camp and shouted at the rioting people to get out of the Line. Luckily the A.R. boys maintained ccol and did not press the trigger. Seeing me in very angry mood the crowd gradually dispersed leaving only six or seven determined youth, who would not listen to me.

At first they did not mention about the girls but rather made a vague reference of a dog being killed by A.R. men and punishment to be given to guilty persons for wanton killing. I sought time to sort out and promised them stern action if the guilt is established.

To confound the matter there was no W.T. Set. Luckily a set just arrived and immediately I directed the Operator to switch on to BN HQ at Dinjan. The arrival of Set and my promise to take up the matter further mellowed the hard core who left the camp but remained sitting outside the perimeter occasionally uttering the threats.

I went to the Set and talked with the Commanding Officer by Radio Telephone. The C.O. must have guessed the cause of the trouble and asked how much money required as compensation for the girls. I got very annoyed with apparent insolent attitude and told him bluntly to come over here as the matter is serious and cannot be dealt by money alone.

A solitary NCO—a Lotha Naga was in command. JCO was withdrawn long time back. It was to the credit of the Naik.

that he did not break down under heavy pressure. My presence gave him additional strength and courage.

I informed the Advisor at Shillong and requested the BN HQ to send a JCO and an additional platoon of troops. In the confusion I totally missed to inform my immediate Boss the Political Officer.

I was on the set till midnigut—the earphone plugged for the RT talk I was having with various stations. The crowd by then dispersed. The hard core who were behind, issued another ultimatum to settle the matter within two days.

Some courage came back to me seeing the melting of the crowd. Rightly I decided not to post a guard in my residence.

Next morning I got the full details. Two girls went with the Assam Rifle boys. This naturally hurt the sentiment of young men who gathered for a festive dance.

A highly critical message came from the Political Officer. He asked my explanation at once as to why I failed to inform the incidence. Advisor has relayed the Message that annoyed the P.O. I hurriedly drafted a reply to pacify him.

Two days later a helicopter landed with Col. Yadav Commandant of the BN and M.L. Kampani, A.P.O.—I, Pasighat. The Kebang wanted punishment to guilty A.R. men but did not agree to punish the youngmen.

An enquiry was held by me with prolong examination of all the witnesses. Government however took a serious view on the incident. Three of the leaders of the organized attack were arrested and put in custody.

Three months later Brigadier Sen, Judicial Advisor to the Government, S.M. Krishnarthy, the new Political Officer who replaced L. Lungalang arrived by land route from Yingkiong where they landed by an Otter. The wife of P.O. Gita Krishnarthy also came. Brigadier Sen who dealt with 'Tilkong' case correctly guessed the situation. It was the A.R. men who provoked the people. However their action was also rash as they took law in their own hand. He however took a lenient view and released the three youth after they signed the good behaviour bond. I was also given enhanced power to deal with such situation.

After the departure of Brigadier Sen, the Political Officer

stayed for some days to observe the situation. It was agreed that the camp must be shifted to Mariyang to maintain a safe distance from the village.

In heavy down pour I went to Mariyang to survey the possible location. I returned on the same evening and submitted the report to P.O. Krishnarthy who originally belonged to Army was an unsmiling and grave person. He had been to Lhasa and Gyantse as Indian Trade Agent before joining the Frontier Service. His wife Gita Krishnarthy was just opposite of him. She was more charming with pleasant manners.

Krishnarthy and his wife shared the same bed even in presence of the guest. Once I was invited for a drink. After some time while explaining a situation I used the word bloody. The A.R. Captain who accompanied me stood up everytime I uttered the word—profusely apologising that his friend being in the Outpost forgotten the civil manners and may therefore be excused! P.O. however took this sportingly. He was not at all offended.

Departure of P.O. was followed by the arrival of Ft. Lt. Tyagi, A.P.O.—I, Roing. A proud and a vain glorious person he appeared totally misfit in the Frontier. He told me during our first meeting to take lesson from British—how they ruled with iron fist. He was like a character in the Imperial Court. He was accompanied by two Assam Rifles Officers who were however much accommodating and did not display arrogance.

I arranged a party for them in my house. The room was decorated like the scene of paradise. The walls were covered with beautiful fern leaves and orchids thrust in between. Coloured Lanterns hung from the rafters.

The dinner was served with full boiled chicken and roasted meat. But all of us were boozed with heavy doze of rum. When exasperated cooks called us it was well passed midnight. Hardly there was mood to eat the dinner.

Damro has been a problem village ever since the establishment of the Outpost. In 1956 an Administrative Officer ran away to escape from trouble. No one wanted a posting at Damro. The Mantle now fallen on me and I found the ground was slipping away fast. I too would suffer the same fate.

Then determination struck me. It is the survival for the

fittest. One must face the reality.

I was searching for a way out of the impasse. Some time back my good friend Nakep Moyong of Adipasi drove an idea to the mind—Could he not see a Jeep roll to his village before he breath his last?

Now here I found the way—we must bring the people on the road. I called a meeting with all the leading men of the village—the men who command the Kebang. I told them to give me a road and I promise them a Jeep.

The crowd burst into laughter almost hysterical. What a funny talk they were hearing from the Migom. He must have been boozed with Apong or suffering from delusion. How can a Jeep come to the village crossing the rivers, hills and forest?

Their argument carried weight. The people are born orators. It was difficult to demolish their thinking.

But Kharlukhi the ever energetic and my faithful companion remained by the side—constantly prodding me to repeat what I said—give me a road and I promise you a Jeep.

Then all of a sudden Bogir Pertin—the elder statesman got up and dramatically announced—'Damro people are no coward—a challenge must be accepted. Migom has talked something—a business deal—we must accept it.'

So it was "Operation Leap Up". We christened the term for the grandiose programme of road building on a massive scale.

All the staff were mobilized. Thus Doley, Sib Sharma, Botem Tarang, Sengam Tayeng, Orik Tyagi were on Sibum Komkar stretch, Makpak, Tado on Adipasi Damro, Tepiram Barua, Kakol on Milang Mariyang, myself, Kharlukhi divided the task from Damro to Gobuk village boundary across Lagrung.

To instil competitive spirit we divided the portions to each clan. The programme was made timebound.

All works were voluntary. There was no fund from the Government nor we promised them money.

Day after day streams of people—men, women and children marched to the alignment and began cutting the hill side. Never before in the history of Damro such a scene witnessed. There were tremendous popular upsurge. All forgot the

bitterness, quarrels, bickerings and jealousy as if by magic. The ring leaders of Perme clan who marched to Assam Rifles camp were in forefront to take up the spade and worked with great enthusiasm.

The road inched forward—a Mile then two eventually reaching the fantastic figure of 45 miles stretching from Supsing to Komkar and Gobuk to Adipasi.

The enthusiasm spread like a virus—an epidemic so it appeared. It became the concern of the village how to outdo the others.

The huge boulders on the hill side rolled down, gigantic trees uprooted and thrown down the spur—the human bull-dozer demolishing all the barriers.

We devised an ingenious way to blast the rock. Huge fire was lit below and water brought from a distance trickled on it. Soon cracks appeared and the gigantic rock gave away and pushed on the wooden rails laid on the path and rolled inch by inch till these were disgorged to the side way.

The five miles stretch of Damro Mariyang road was the best, it ran along perfect contour—avoiding all the climb.

It was the girls who provided the occasional diversion. They sung in chorus—the beautiful melodious song reverberating the air. In the fading light of the setting sun an ant line of several yards limped back to Damro singing the song:

Kado Kado Namoko Kado Elo Oi-

One day the girls of Lutem Rasheng brought another refrain from the song:

Tanku Lambe Lo

Enkito Name

Tanku Apiko

Piniyo Pakpa

Tayeng Lambe Lo

Enkito Name

Tayeng Apiko

Piniyo Pakpa.

As the feverish activity of road building continued we began to flash message for the Radio News. It was a weekly programme broadcast on Sundays from the All India Radio, Shillong.

We strained our ears near the Radio when the voice of the announcer came over the ether:

"Good evening gentlemen! This is the NEFA Newsletter the weekly Radio feature where we bring the family news from all over NEFA. At Damro the road building going ahead. 20 Miles stretch completed......"

The periodic news broadcasting the achievement added to our enthusiasm. The works picked up further momentum.

But the Political Officer was least amused. A message followed advising B.S. to be discreet in reporting.

We did not know that the Political Officer already sent informers to collect the facts. Bhandari Moyong, P.I., arrived ostensibly to investigate a case.

He was soon followed by Major LNK Dey, the new A.P.O.-I. He was fresh from Army and showed an attitude as if he was still a Company Commander. He was far from polite at our first meeting near Adipasi.

But next morning when he walked over the road he could hardly conceal his surprise. It was simply incredulous—Marvellous, excellent. How could we do that?

I told him the way we carried the task. Sheer determination and will to do channelized the peoples latent force. Damro has awakened from the slumber—the past has already gone.

We constructed temporary staging hut with banana leaves and split bamboo at Mariyang as a prelude to shifting the Administrative Centre from Damro. We frequently stayed there to participate in works. In the silence of the night I found enough time to work on the files and decoding messages received from Pasighat.

It was March, 1961. Cold wind was blowing from Kalung Mountain range. The Night was bitter with drizzles, fog and mist. The water leaked through banana leaves of the improvised hut where we three—Myself, Kharlukhi, Subedar Manao Kuki stayed for the night. In the flickering light of a lamp we found the rhymes of a song most appealing—

We are in the same boat brothers!

That night before I retired to bed I wrote the following lines in my Diary—"One day Mariyang will be big but will

then anyone remember us? I do not think so. Yet we toil day after day night after night so that one day the place may be good for others to stay and be happy."

Some lawless desperados created panic in the adjacent district. Murder followed murder and Administration was caught napping.

A wide net was cast to catch the culprits. Columns moved from all directions. A message came from the Advisar asking me to move with a platoon from Damro. It was summer time. Heavy rain swollened the rivers—the jungles inched fo ward, the leaches swarmed the path.

Yet we moved, climbed the high hills, descended down the stiff face of the cliff and swung across the turbulent rivers by make shift bridge. Olive green outfit of Assam Rifle boys wonderfully merged with the background.

Marching in single file along the ridge the men burst in chorus:

Koti Ramro Jal Buneyo Moile to Hoina Dai Makura Le.

The scenery was truely magnificient. Ridge after ridge overlapped each other and cut across the deep valley. Roaring torrents raced down the slope in a mad rush, luxuriant forest spilled over the hill in mighty waves.

Here at Namsi hill during the war two American planes on supply drop mission over the hump crashed. Neither the Plane nor the bodies of the Pilot could be retrieved. Heavy landslide after the earthquake finally obliterated all the trace of the accident.

Soon we approached a village. Only one or two long houses appeared behind the thick foliage of evergreen forest. A twisting path narrow enough for foothold led to the house of headman.

No bird whistled, not a dog barked nor a child cried—in what a strange country we had landed.

A few miles away when we approached the other village we found that all houses were deserted. The porters who came with us threw away the loads and vanished.

It was the worst situation we had to face. I gave the lead by picking up my own bed roll. The men followed at once—even the Wireless Set was strapped to the back. Cheerful as always even in gloomy and pervasive surroundings they brought out the rhymes:—

Siliguri Bato Relgari Ayo Ghumti Ma Late Bhoyo Kaha Ko Timi Kaha Ko Hami Damro Ma Bhet Bhoyo.

> Noru Noru Saili Mo Jane Bela Gehe Bhori Achuki Kina Kochai Cho.

Our vigilant eyes moved far and wide with the help of binoculars. We spotted a distant patch some miles away on a hill feature which appeared like a cultivation field of the desperados.

To reach the spot we had to climb 9000 ft. high hill, followed a trail strewn with loose boulders and over hung rocks, crossed crevices and ultimately reached the place only to find just before our arrival the man fled away.

The vintage Map only showed indistinct markings. We signalled for dropping but got no response. The Operator asked all stations to relay the message to Base. The code sign call repeated every hour parrot like fashion—Mike back Romeo, Zero over November, Bravo Whiskey Sera, Romeo Tango Alpha, Delta Mike Romeo,—this is Alpha two report signal clear.

After long hours of patience, a faint voice responded—Zero one zero one to Alpha two—say what you want. The Operator jerked in excitement—Link up Mohanbari for airdrop.

Next day to our great relief the Base confirmed the supply mission and asked us to give the co-ordinate. We immediately poured over the Map and relayed the grid reference.

The small clearing in the forest provided the DZ. We lit an enormous fire with the wet wood to give thick smoke which soon spiralled to the sky for signal. The Dakota flew in. The drone heard at first as feeble hum then came thundering over head. It flew high unable to spot us but returned soon after when we established Radio Contact.

It made several rounds jettisoning the loads but to our misfortune most of the drop missed the 'T' and fell far away.

Political officer wanted situation report every day. Once when I called him—'Papa Oscar this is Bravo Sera calling from Sugar Alpha Alpha'. Prompt came the reply—'Say Uncle not Papa'!

At the end of the operation we had two cases of extreme dehydration. A Bell Helicopter landed in a small clearing and evacuated them.

Soon after my return to Damro a W/T Message came from P.O. directing me to Pasighat to receive Governor's Award for meritorious work. At first I was reluctant to go but P.O. wanted my presence anyhow.

It was August—the Siang was in spate. We started from Damro with forty people, many of them were ALCs returning from duty.

Three days later when we reached the river bank it was almost dark. Hurriedly we pitched the camp some distance away of the water. But the mighty wave suddenly surged forward and swept away the camp before we could settle ourselves.

Next day we pitched another camp further away but that too went under water. So unpredictable is the Siang river during monsoon.

On the other bank of the river was a survey camp of Dihang Project. Our shouting did not reach the men though they crowded near the bank.

Three boatmen of Ayeng village drowsed in Opium were in a nearby shed. They however promised us to cross in next morning but their rickety figure and strong smell of Opium did not give any hope.

We have exhausted the meagre ration. The situation became grave.

In a desperate move I went to Ayeng village three miles down stream. People came out of their house hearing the news of my arrival. They donated so much of rice but by then a

runner came with a message—a boat has arrived to take me.

I returned at once to the river bank and found Lipok Irang the Political Interpreter was anxiously waiting for me. He has brought three Bihari boatmen—expert in rowing in turbulent water.

The boat was a dugout—10 ft. long and 3 ft. wide. Slowly it was taken upstream to a mile and then released to the current. Two oarsmen sitting on either side started furious paddling to steer off the course. But it flew like a bulllet. The tree line on either side appeared a continuous green wall. Below the boat there were rumbling sound—thrashing of water.

Curiously I did not feel any sensation though the other passengers were murmuring constant prayers.

The waves threw up mighty spray soaking our clothes. At least the effort of the Oarsmen paid off. The boat left the main current and came closer to the bank. It then moved forward sluggishly till we reached Pasighat.

It was already dusk when we embarked near the Inspection Bungalow. Major LNK Dey was waiting for me. I was asked to hurry up to go to Auditorium to receive the Award.

In the Auditorium a big crowd already gathered. I was ushered to the rostrum much to my embarrassment when the Political Officer introduced me as one of the finest officer. The speech was translated in Adi by Bakin Pertin—the boy from Damro.

Next day I had so much invitations beginning from Political Officer. It was really something I never dreamt of.

My health already ran down after an exhaustive tour. I badly required rest and asked for two months leave and went home.

When I returned I found P.K. Phukan took over as A.P.O. at Damro. I felt my further stay at Damro will now become unnecessary so made a polite request for a transfer to Yingkiong to which P.O. readily agreed.

Two years five months of eventful career ultimately came to an end when I finally said good bye to Damro in October, 1961.

I had never been to Yingkiong though the place is only 25 miles north west of Damro.

It was easy to march by the newly cut road to Gobuk 13 miles from Damro. Near the village was the Stone Parapet with small slits in between. Two huge Tagat trees stood like eternal Sentinel—still bearing the witness of the hoary past.

Because the Gobuk was the gateway to Shimong country it had the elaborate defence arrangement. I saw a place where stone chutes held huge collection of boulders but now only a faint trace remained.

I did not stop at the village as I wanted to reach Yingkiong the same day.

Crossing the hump of Arsing across Gobuk a valley of surpassing beauty appeared before the eyes. Lush green vegetation, meadows, streams, the magnificent Siang river—the wide canvas must have been the fulfilment of an Artist's dream.

Later when I wrote a book on the Shimongs I mentioned this in the introduction:

Luxuriant vegetation with the varied topography, the snow mountains, blooming orchids, the rich fauna, all contribute towards making the country of the Shimongs a veritable paradise which keeps the visitor spell-bound. Climbing the range of Abroka along the Sarkam above the village of Shimong one just catches the glimpse of a vast panorama of enchanting beauty and truely feels if there is a paradise on the face of the earth Oh! It must be here, Oh! It must be here,

Yingkiong in the Land of the Shimong Adis

I arrived at Yingkiong to relieve Tankeswar Deori, Base Superintendent, who on promotion as A.P.O.—II has been posted to Pasighat. He moved out of Yingkiong the day after my arrival.

Deori exhibited superfluous elegance, His speech in English had an exaggerated slant which was rather amusing. Even when he spoke in native Assamese that too carried a tinge of English accent.

'Yingkiong' meant flat expanse is on the bank of Siang. The camp with dozen houses was on the higher ground overlooking the improvised airfield and the river. The houses were all Ordinary Basha type of raised bamboo platform and palm leaves roof.

The Officials were very few—much less than Damro. Assam Rifles had a platoon with the Wireless. A Lower Primary School, Dispensary and a Co-operative Store were the other establishments. There were two shops owned by local people—Tasin Muibang and Nyolo Pertin. A meandering stream Simar marked the boundary of the Camp. Though small yet sometimes flash flood in summer spilled over the bank and temporarily dislocate the communication.

The improvised airfield provided access to Dakotas and Otter only during continuous clear weather. The place was first receed by Major Hranga during 1953 and he suggested construction of an Airfield. As the land was almost flat it did not involve heavy works like the Otter landing strip at Mariyang.

The altitude of Yingkiong was only 600 ft. but the hills nearby are much higher. The wide Siang river provided some breeze in hot summer days. The camp and the surroundings were covered with the thick sun grass harbouring snakes especially Cobras.

The rainfall was heavy-150 inches average in a year which encouraged the prolific growth of vegetation.

The Circle comprised 9-villages—Gobuk, Shimong, Gete, Puging under Mori Bango in the left bank and Karko, Gosang Ramsing, Bomdo, Janbo under Rotgo Bango in the right bank. The people were all Adis and belong to same Padam Min yong culture. The total population however did not exceed 4000. The biggest village was Shimong with 900 people. All the villages had extensive valley land for wet rice cultivation. All these except Gobuk were near the Siang river.

The 12000 ft. high mountain Peak Komdilipik which is a part of Abroka stand on the background. The snow fell on the mountain from November to April. Across the river on the other side in North West is 10000 ft. Molin Adi. To farther North is the 14000 ft. range of Pasi Dinu. The scenery all round was of magnificent beauty and splendour.

A 800 ft. Cane Suspension bridge spanned the Siang river at Nubo near Karko. The second bridge was constructed at Robok—15 miles upstream. The raft not used in the river due to strong current.

Except the people of Bomdo, Janbo all others cropped their hair round the crown from the tip of the ear. The women wear red bordered white woven skirt with no design in the centre.

They value beads much more passionately than the Padams. Tatooing in Lower chins were practised by some men and women. Mithun was the most precious possession. Pigs, dogs were the other domestic animals, but goats and cows were very few.

Bomdo, Janbo are more closely related to Ashings of Tuting area though belong to same Padam Minyong Culture. Here men and women did not crop the hair but keep this long without tussel. The women skirt is more beautiful. Maroon colour with black centre line. Their language though belong to same Padam Minyong group yet there are certain variations in pronounciation. It is more pleasant to hear.

4 ft. to 5 ft. wide Porter track ran along the banks of the river on either side. The tracks to the north went to Tuting 70 miles from Yingkiong which is close to Tibetan border. The southern track which continued from Karko went to Pangin 40 miles downstream of the river after connecting the biggest Minyong village of Riga. From Pangin the track is bifurcated—one went to Pasighat along the Siang and other to Along following the Siyom river.

The Mails were carried by Dak runners via Damro to Pasighat twice a week covering a distance of 65 miles. It took four days to reach Pasighat in normal times but in summer frequent interruptions caused considerable delay. The other channel of communication is by Assam Rifles W/T.

Air landing facilitated the movement of stores and personnel but sorties materialised only during continuous good weather—a phenomenon not so frequent. The winter though not so severe like Damro yet the proximity of snow range considerably reduce the temperature and in morning heavy fog enveloped the valley and surrounding hills. There are occasional drizzles and low clouds hung around.

The summer is humid and hot. Heavy rain beat the ground for twentyfive days in every alternate months. During sunny weather sometimes strong wind sweep the valley.

The Officials included the Medical Officer, Dr. Syamal Sarkar, Toyi Dai, the Agriculture Inspector, Bogiram Medok the Village Level Worker, S.K. Roy, the Overseer, V.J. Mamen, the Compounder, Tashi Kombo the Medical Attendant, Tepiram Barua, the Teacher of the Primary School, Mukherjee and Mazumdar, the Office Assistants, M.K.G. Nair, the Store-keeper of CPO, Guke Nopi and Apiang Jongke the Political Interpreters, Tapun Komut, Office Peon, Egom Jongkey and Akok Rinkiong, Dak Runners. There were 25 Agency Labour

Corps personnel—all of them were Adis.

At Karko we had Ram Goswami and Duarah as Teachers in Primary School and at Bomdo Kusung Tayeng, Village Level Worker.

Later on there were some changes. Toyi Dai who was groomed for I.F.A.S. went on posting as Officer on Special Duty. In his place came Okep Tayeng. My old friend at Mirem Kamleswar Rangoli arrived as Assistant Inspector of Schools. Biswas came as replacement to Bogiram Medok who was transferred to Pasighat.

At first sight I fell in love with Yingkiong—beautiful, calm and quite. A congenial place to live and work. While Damro held another fascination—life beat very fast but here people are simple, tolerant and look to the Base Superintendent as their real Saviour.

Backed by my experience in Damro I immediately drew up plan of works. All the Officials enthusiastically rallied behind. They too were excited with the new idea.

Our first priority was to strengthen the runway of the Airfield.

A call went out to the villages. Hundreds of people streamed in carrying stones and dumped near the field. Deep trenches were dug and then covered with sand and pebbles to facilitate drainage.

The runway was extended further by 200 ft. The surface layer was dug out. Boulders brought from the river to provide firm base for the strip. Soil spread over in thick mass and settled by means of 'human rollers'. Scores of people moved up and down thumping on the ground in rhythmic march. A drum filled with heavy boulders dragged over and over the field. The soft portions of the existing runway were plugged with solid earth.

A strong species of grass was them sown to bind the top layer of soil firmly. The total length of the airfield now came to 3000 ft. with an width of 150 ft.

After strengthening the airfield we called for test landing. A Dakota landed in couple of days with stores of CPO and Cooperative shop. We were jubilant when Pilot okayed the field.

On completion of first phase of the programme we went to the road. Roy our Overseer did a good job by surveying the seven miles stretch from Yingkiong to Nubo Suspension Bridge. The 12 feet wide road was to link Karko on the other bank of Siang River. Again the people moved to work site with Pick Axe, Shovels, Spades. Trace line was cut by the advance group. Huge trees, forest of bamboos and wild banana were felled to the ground by swinging machete. Enthusiasm knew no bound when competitive spirit was aroused. It was mad race against time—who will beat the other group.

We camped near a stream Tappin Korong. Kusung Tayeng, Tepiram Barua, Ram Goswami, Apiang Jongke were the leaders of the groups who shuttled like busy bee up and down. Within a month the entire portion of the beautifully aligned road was completed.

Not to be brow-beaten in the task the Karko people decided to construct a massive stone steps leading to the high pedestal of Nubo Suspension Bridge.

Huge boulders were lifted from the river bank and placed one above the other to make 20 ft. high and 15 ft wide steps. The mighty stone ladder at Nubo Suspension bridge will remind the people in all times as to what seemingly impossible task could be achieved by sheer will power.

We went to the villages with definite programme. Sweeping off the dirts, cutting of paths, construction of water point, Hawa Ghar—all became a must for the village. The euphoria was simply astounding. No village lagged behind. There was spontaneous response.

Later when I toured the villages the people knew what was wanted. Every time something will be done in the village—either renovation of water point, construction of path or a Hawa Ghar Lab and planting of trees.

My residence at Yingkiong was on an elevated ground commanding a fine view of the surrounding land. The building a ramshackle structure had to be dismantled and in its place I constructed a new house with more improvisation. On the raised platform finely woven bamboo mat was laid and doors, windows were made with rough dressed wood. No sawyers arrived at the time. People met their requirement of timber by

splitting the tree trunk with indigenous tools which consisted wooden hammer, pegs, an iron axe and Dac

The process was highly laborious as wooden pegs were driven on cracks to widen the slits. After extracting the wood these were then dressed with Dao. Inspite af heavy works involved the wooden planks were much preferred and most village houses doors and walls had wooden planks.

I had all my furnitures with rough dressed wood and even made a wash basin out of a log. The inside was scooped out and small hole was made for water outlet where a bamboo pipe fixed to the drain below. The bathroom was connected with polythene water pipe which was fitted to a drum placed a few feet above where water was stored. A small outlet with a stopper was attached to a shower which was made out of an empty tin.

The drawing room of the house was decorated with a number of curios notably of Neolithic Celts which I collected from Mariyang. There were many legends about this Celts—'Lidor',—one of which was that these were the thunderbolts thrown from the sky by the spirits.

I built up a 'Hawa Ghar'—the windy house in the compound which provided a place for me to sit and gossip with village people. They came all time bringing with them their individual tales to keep the Migom informed as to what was happening in the village! None of them knew 'Aying Agom'—the language of the plains men.

The compound and the approach to the house were lined with trees and fruit plants. These I collected from the surrounding forests and planted with great care. A pebbled path was laid with flat stones brought from the Simar Korong. Over the swinging gate I made an arch with bamboo for the climbing rose.

New ideas always haunted me. A beautiful orchid house soon came up where ultimately we collected 62 varieties of orchids from different heights some of which were of rare species. The blooming or chids during season gave an wonderful view of the orchid house.

We fitted a toy plane on the roof—the tin blades rotated with the wind and seen from far away.

Around the Orchid house we had our horticultural garden with dwarf bananas and orange plants.

My another hobby was trapping butterflies which soon earned me a name 'Popir Migom'! I took off time to run after the butterflies with a small conical net attached to a long pole. In shadowy recesses or in the river banks numerous species were seen in various colours. Some of the butterflies and moths camoufledged so perfectly with the surroundings that it required close observation to identify. Yet some were very large—the wing span spread over few inches. How the idea struck me was interesting but it became an absorbing hobby when my collection rakes filled up with new additions. In absence of preservatives I devised an ingenious way of stuffling the slit stomach with powdered salt and camphor. But moist climate soon had an affect and most of my collection subsequently deteriorated.

We had a Recreation Centre with few facilities of Indoor Games. It was Toyi Dai who suggested that we should play Table Tennis. Soon the idea caught us. We collected two huge planks from the village and dressed with an improvised adze. The surface was smoothened by rubbing with sand and paper. It was an enormous effort but eventually we succeeded to make a board. Table Tennis is an exciting game but Toyi Dai who was an avid player always scored over us.

We also played football. Once Karko boys threw a challenge to us to play with them on condition that whoever lost would feed the party.

Accepting the challenge eleven of us then marched to Karko situated at a distance of seven miles. In a highly excited game we defeated them and forced them to entertain us with lavish food.

We returned to Yingkiong triumphantly in the same evening with lighted bamboo torch.

Alongwith Games and Sports we had the Social Service—a weekly feature where we contributed our labour to the improvement of the camp. Thus we built up a circular road, a football ground, planted trees and renovated the water point. These activities helped the officials to greatly overcome the

boredom and monotony. As we had no Barber—it was interesting how soon the staff learnt the technique. One of them became an expert with scissor and comb and cut the hair and we did not have a problem.

My two Interpreters—Guke Nopi and Apiang Jongke knew only Adi. Yet they had long experience and helped me in administrative matters. Once Guke Nopi who was from Shimong involved in village politics and created some problem. In order to teach him a lesson my predecessor brandished a paper as if a W/T Message and read aloud that he is transferred with immediate effect to a post in far North. This had a desired effect. He then begged for stay order which was considered. Since then Guke Nopi never indulged in village politics.

Apiang Jongke who was from Karko was more vibrant. He moved with me on numerous tours as guardian angel and never allowed anyone to dictate the Kebang. His only alergy was Tepi Apang—the head man of Karko with whom he was at loggerhead. Tepi Apang—a simpleton however did not know discretion and offended Apiang on number of occasions.

He did not know 'Aying Agom'. One day he came running in great excitement to tell me that he has learnt the language—Engo Mane Macha and Abta Mane Shikar! I burst in laughing and Apiang beamed with all smiles in apparent satisfaction.

Balok Jongkey—the Gam of Karko once came to my house. We were sitting in the portico when a snake 'Birak' gently moved on the ground. Balok immediately jumped with his Dao and killed the snake and quietly put it in his cane bag telling how lucky he had been to get something for dinner. Though I never tasted snake meat, yet I felt it is not that bad as some people think. After all there are many in the world who are fond of snake food.

Tall sun grass harboured so much snakes at Yingkiong yet I never heard of a snake bite. Once we narrowly escaped being bitten by a Cobra. The deadly snake came near the place where we were sitting but Talong Taggu, the JCO of Assam Rifles saw it just in time and hit it with a stick but the snake

did not die so easily. It raised its hood and bit on the ground with terrific hiss.

Bojang Jopir, Gegong Apang, Oteng Jongke, Yuk Tekseng were the boys who were studying in the High School at Along and Pasighat. Bojang who married the daughter of Tepi Apang was in Class Nine but did not take much interest in study. He was rather fond of gay life.

Gegong was the best of the lot. Calm, quiet, sober in his dealings he exhibited a sense of responsibility even in the formative years. He was studying at Pasighat High School and used to come to Yingkiong to the house of Apiang Jongkey who brought him up as Gegong's father Emi Apang stayed in the village and mother Mamang was dependent on her brother. Gegong inherited some of the traits of his uncle—magnanimous character.

Gegong used to visit me frequently, We had interesting discussion on him. Out of the four boys in the High School Gegong was our favourite and so we all thought, being so sober he would definitely be best suited in the career of a Teacher! Subsequent events however proved us all wrong. Instead of teaching profession he turned as a Politician. But then in those days we never knew Parliamentary democracy will come to NEFA.

Oteng the son of Apiang was also sober. He was a fine boy and remained calm and quiet even in later years. Yuk Tekseng—the only boy from Shimong in the high school however had a sad career. He was suffering from Epikepsy and often fell into a fit. I tried my best to help him a cure by sending him to Medical College at Dibrugarh but the disease never healed. Eventually he met with sad end.

Among all the villages the Shimong was riddled with Politics. Two stalwarts Angkeng Tekseng and Yangkom Lipir led the rival groups. While on tour both the parties would receive me separately and vie for my favour. In the village there were never ending 'Dobo Tonnam'—the invitation for food. It had also a comic side. The members switch their loyalty on their leaders like freakish weather and quietly come to report of their faith on the new leader! However this helped us in our developmental programme as either party wanted to show the best thus earn a name from the Migom!

Yet the people were not skill in manoeuvring and clan interest did not dominate the scene.

They earned some bad name as proverbial thief. Theft was however limited to stealing of Tadoks—the beads or grains from the grannery. Only once did we come across pilferage—that too by one of our ALC who was from Shimong—stealing provisions from the Co-operative Store.

Shimongs go on trade for Tadoks with almost fanatical zeal. Poyop Nopi the wife of Rugli Nopi travelled far distance to Bori area with only one companion and that too an old lady to fetch valuable beads. I never saw such determination elsewhere.

There were some interesting incidence in the village. The Society might allow a person to switch over to another clan with sacrifice of a Pig. An old man of Boli who came to Peyang clan carned a great deal of displeasure from his clan. Greatly disturbed he called on Doni the Sun to bring fire on the Bolis to destroy their houses. This resulted in near hysteria. With great deal of persuasion the case was settled. The poor fellow had to pay a heavy fine.

In another time continuous Sun shine almost spoiled the standing crops in Gobuk village. A rumour went but that Shimong 'Miris' stopped the rain bearing clouds to approach the village! I had to exercise my all wits to pacify the mood of the people.

While in the village many news whispered in my ears. As there was no language barrier it helped me to come very close to the people—old and young alike. Most of the time I preferred to stay in their houses and go on for endless chatting. The food never bothered me. It was interesting how they responded to behaviour. Being keen observer they knew a person by the way he deals with them and repose their trust on him. When I gained their confidence I was told in all earnestness every secret of their life. It was amusing how the people thought of me as Messiah who could solve all their worries and the anxieties!

Shimong once a populated village recorded a sharp decline in subsequent years. The birth rate fell alarmingly. In other villages too growth was also slow. There were many

childless couple which created a piquant situation. A woman might have an affair with another person and got pregnant. When she delivered the child the husband naturally became the father but the person who impregnated her never left the claim. Tatin Jamo, the Political Interpreter had an affair with the wife of Yangkom Lipir. When she delivered a male child Yangkom was very happy but his happiness did not last long. The child when hardly three years old Tatin secretly came and took away the child. Inspite of terrific din in endless Kebang the child was never restored. Yangkom since then remained a sad person.

It happened also in case of Akkong Apang of Karko who had an affair with Keyong, the daughter of Guke Nopi our Political Interpreter. She was married to Jobo Lipir but male child which was born subsequently was claimed by Akkong. Knowing the motive of Akkong the child was guarded day and night but one day a slip was given when no one was near. Akkong stealthily came and took away the child. A grave situation developed when entire Shimong Village rose up for retaliation. There were even preparation for a raid on Karko.

I immediately moved in. Issuing stern warnings and threatening punitive action I positioned Assam Riflesmen at different locations. At the same time I directed Akkong to handover the child or face arrest. At last good sense prevailed on Akkong. He was sober person with a mild temperament. But possession of a child overwhelmed him and he took the deliberate step. In early morning by the streak of dawn Akkong crossed the bridge near Gete and handed over the child to me. With great relief parents received the child and the entire episode died down.

However the child died after a year and poor woman could not conceive any more.

Across the Siang river was the village Karko—7 miles from Yingkiong. The people are a shade different from Shimong—they did not bear the reputation as thieves. An Assam Rifles Post was opened here in 1944 to restore order in the area which was periodically threatened by war.

A high wall of stones ran around the Camp—the remains of which was still visible. The stones were brought from the

river by free labour of the people—hundreds of them worked laboriously for months in obedience to the command. Refusal to participate was a serious matter and dealt with severe punishment. Once nine Shimong men were chained in Quarter Guard for six months.

With the arrival of an Officer with a platoon in the Command Post all the people of surrounding villages were called and a spectacular demonstration organised where Rifles and Light Machine Guns spitted fire non-stop for several minutes. This unnerved the people so much that they made quick submission to the Officer with lavish presentation. Leaders were then called inside the perimeter and issued with Rum, Tobacco and even Opium. They were appointed as Gams—the headman and given a red Coat as a symbol of authority.

Peter James was however a different man. He had some desire to help the people to improve their condition. Once on a visit to Karko the witty James called all the people and declared an award to Karko for being the dirtiest village in the area! This shamed the people so much that next time when they appeared before him they did not carry the dirts in their person.

There was a small lake 'Pegu Siyeng' near the abandoned Post of Assam Rifles which bore the legend of hoary past. Here on the bank of the lake had a flourishing colony of the 'Mishings' who were driven out by the powerful invaders and forced to retreat from the hills to the bank of Brahmaputra where they assimilated much of the custom and religious belief of their neighbours.

In 1944 a bloody fight between the clans resulted many deaths in Karko, Ramsing and Gosang Villages. This was the famous 'Chutum Piyang'. Chutum the son of Basung Apang amassed great wealth by fair and foul means and thus earned the wrath of the people. He had three brothers—Sushik, Sunki and Susup and together they consisted of eighty members. The rest of the villagers then gathered in a Kebang and drove the Chutum family from the village and destroyed their houses and belongings.

After being driven out the family went to Shimong, Bomdo and Riga villages and held Kebang to get their support to fight out the clans in Karko, Gosang and Ramsing who

were responsible for their plight. Pangkang—a Minyong village situated near Karko was first selected as a strategic base to launch an assault. But Pangkang villagers refused to help considering their own safety. Being refused the Chutum aligned with the Shimongs and came to Bomdo village and made their base there, attacked Ramsing village and killed two men. That signalled the war and bloody fight involved half a dozen villages and resulted in heavy casualties. When war was gaining momentum the Chutums felt that the allies—Shimongs, Bomdos and Riga might resort to treachery by taking over the land, so secretly went to Pasighat and pleaded before Peter James the A.P.O. to help to fight out the rivals or establish peace by arriving at a compromise.

Peter James then came to Karko, stopped the fight, restored the land to Chutum and settled the family in the village.

At Karko I witnessed a festival 'Roja Ganam' where a hefty bull Mithun was suffocated to death. A long rope was tied on the neck. Both ends of the rope were then pulled by dozens of young men. The hefty beast jumped up and down and fought a desperate battle for full 30 minutes till it collapsed to the ground. The scene was macabre yet no one showed any emotion.

The Adis have their own ways of ceremonial killing of animals. For a Mithun a wooden structure in the shape of an inverted 'V', with horizontal bars tied in the fashion of the rungs of a ladder is erected. The victim is tied to it with a long strong rope round its neck. The free end of the rope is passed over the structure to the other side and a large number of men pull it from the end and Mithun is also pulled up the structure till throttled to death. This method of killing by strangulation is peculiar to the Adis and is said to be better than butchering because the blood is not wasted in this.

The festival is observed by rich people who has wealth to spare. It supposed to bring more wealth to him and earn a name. The legend on Roja Ganam is interesting.

Sitking Ane—the Mother gave birth to Sitking Kiro Roja. Roja grew up and Gumin Botte—the teacher taught him all the customs and manners of his people. Gumin Botte one day said

to him—you are now grown up and you know many things, but can you do everything you like?

Roja replied that he could go out and hunt animals without the help of anyone. So saying, he left for Doyi Dongor the country in the sky. There, a great spirit Doying Botte, felt an attraction for him and invited him to his home. Another spirit, Doying Ingeng Guneko, then gave him a new name, Doying Ingeng Roja. These spirits gave Roja a great many things—spear, sword, a garment made of the bark of certain trees, a shrub called Taruk, a basket made of the horn of the giant Mithun—Polu Sobo, a fishing net made of the fibre of the Sumki Shrub and an Iyik or weeder made of bamboo, both of which grew out of the drops of blood from the Mithun's wound.

Taking these gifts with him, Roja proudly left for Tani's country. When Tani saw him he took him for a very rich man and in his honour celebrated the Doyi Poling festival, killing many fowls for the purpose. He later renamed the festival after Roja. Roja was so pleased that he gave to Tani—the ancestor of all men, the gifts that he obtained from the spirits. He also gave to Tani a knife called 'Yokshik' and an iron strike called 'Samak' both of which Gumin Soi had made from the unbilical cord 'Kiniyo' which Tani had dropped soon after his birth. All these gifts are of great use of men to this day.

Farthest village of the Circle was Janbo from where one can feel the mountain air. Reging, Mirding, Ngargong—the high mountains remain covered with snow during winter.

Below Janbo is Marmong—a vast flat land on the bank of Angong river a tributary of Siang which rises from 10000 ft. Molin hills. The area teems with games, the rivers full of fish. The soil however is porous with high percentage of lime for which cultivation has never been successful.

I camped at Marmong several times—so beautiful a place for retreat. The place initially belonged to Jano—a lost tribe now who were defeated in a war with Janbos. The war started on a small incident. A Jano girl Ginda Sisak came on a visit to Janbos. Atem Sirin—a blind man was asked by his parents to keep a watch on the paddy being dried on a mat. At the time Ginda Sisak came near but Atem Sirin not knowing her presence lifted her skirt with a stick thinking that a dog or

the insolent behaviour and beat the blind man which resulted fracture of the limb. His father now demanded adequate compensation and a Kebang was called at a place 'Samme Nottik'. Jano people brought a stone from Angong river—'Sito Lipun' and put it over a fire and asked the blind man to hold the stone in his hand to prove his innocence in lifting the skirt. While he touched the stone he heard the sound of swords being sharpened and so immediately threw the stone and fled toward his village. Janos followed him at once. But when he reached a place Mudduk Gidang where there were many stones precariously held on a cliff the Jano pursuers dislodged the stones which fell on them, badly injuring their bodies. That gave time to the blind man to reach the village safely.

When the report reached the Janbos they prepared for war. Janos came in a body to face them but had to retreat. One of their man fell to a ditch with his sword near a place Jan Bonige. While all of them got down to the ditch to lift him up the Janbo pursuers caught them and killed all of them. The place where the incidence happened is still seen as a tunnel and bear the legend of Jano massacre.

There was a heavy landslide at Kerak near Bomdo. village. The entire hill was torn apart and boulders continuously rolled from the mountain side to the Siang river. A stream jumped over the precipice in mighty spray of water. A narrow track crossed the landslide—too dangerous to negotiate yet movement seldom ceased. One must be agile and active in the mountain and I learnt from experience as to how to cross the landslide.

Each time I crossed the Kerak I looked in wonder at the awesome beauty. The mighty spray of the falls cascading down the precipice hundreds of feet below to Siang river. In sheer ecstasy I composed a song in Adi which amused the audience in the villages:

Dingo Ani Dingo Asi Kampo Tokdung— -- Waterfalls—waterfalls—how beautifully it cascade down. Lulut Medo of Bomdo—an expert in Adi lore became my friend and guide. My note books filled with the stories he told me which subsequently found a mention in my book on 'Myths of the Shimongs of the Upper Siang.' Lulut's lilting voice kept the audience spellbound when he narrated the myths of creation:—

Sedi Minmi Besung Gename
Gite Minmi Besu Mindoku
Helo Minmi Reto Gename
Kone Mirimo Reto Mindoku
Delo Rongem Hedi Apuge
Mibo Banji Jimu Banji Liyir Telo
Wiyu Lingu Pumu Lingu Bentu Telo
Jebo Bopik Lengi Geto
Jebo Borang Apuk Borang Lengo Toname
Neyi Belunge Esi Belunge Garji Bidoku
Todi Eneko Diye Eneko Ene Belangem—
Dungar Bidoku—

I had a wonderful team while on tour. I seldom took an official apart from Apiang Jongkey. Domir Jongkey of Karko, Oni Sibo of Puging, Takir Kambo of Shimong, Mikkit Takuk of Janbo surrounded me like bodyguards. Their constant concern was how to keep me happy and comfortable. Domir became so attached to me that he seldom left me alone. My house at Yingkiong became his second home.

Yet it was interesting none of them asked anything in return. There were times when dozens of Gams in their flowing red robes followed me. In every village a dispute lingered either on land or share of water, divorce or adultery. Adi Kebang never end till the last man speak. Often the rivalries among the personalities generated much heat. Village politics everywhere are the same—jealousy being the major cause of friction.

The Kebang start with a whimper and both sides prepare the salvos. After the initial rhetoric was over I quietly retreat to a corner with a book. It matters little whether I was listening to the talk but my presence must be felt.

I was then inveterate smoker. It happened so during the summer of 1962 that heavy rains dislocated the communication

for three months and my stock of tobacco was completely exhausted. For long two months I had nothing to smoke but this had been a blessing in disguise. I left smoking ever since and never touched a Cigarette.

The Marathon speech in Kebang finally come to an end. Judgement then pronounced. All the Gams receive a fee. But it might happen that some one left out when share fall short but never mind—next time Migom would be visiting the other village and share then would be restored!

At Beyrung near Gete village we decided to construct a 700 ft. all Cane Suspension bridge over the Siang river to provide a route to Ramsing village on the opposite bank. It was a tremendous job but hundreds of people voluntarily came forward to help. We selected large trees of wide girth capable of carrying heavy weight. Strong, matured canes were hauled from the hills and were fastened to the trees. Loose end then tied with several long canes, floated down the river and pushed up to other bank. It was not possible to float the canes to other side in one attempt but repeated trial ultimately succeeded and brought up and then tied to the trees.

Three dozens cane were then crossed over by pulley system and tightly fastened to the trees. When all the canes have been secured on both the banks these were then pulled from either sides. Between canes eliptical coils also of canes were tied at an interval of 15 ft. Split bamboos were placed at the foot rest and fastened to the ropes. More canes were put for extra strength and also to serve as hand rest. The entire structure was then woven with cane strips. Two canes from high pedestals on the bank anchorages tied to the centre of the bridge to keep its balance and to control swing and sway of the bridge while traffic was loaded.

It took us a week to complete the construction. We then celebrated the occasion with a grand feast. The distance between Ramsing and Yingkiong was reduced by ten miles and for nearly a year we maintained the traffic till the canes were loose and the huge bridge collapsed to the river. If we could have procured the wire ropes the bridge would have longer life.

Mithuns and Tadok, are the two passionate possessions

of the Adis. Together to these Brass metal vessel—'Arem' and 'Danki' are also added.

The person who owns dozens of Mithun is definitely a rich man. Mithun being semi wild its supervision nonetheless become difficult for the owner and so he entrust this to others in exchange of a fce. For the identification, the ears of the animals are notched with each clan and individual mark and everyone knew as to whom these belong.

Though Mithun strayed in the jungle yet often it used to come to the village where owner give it salt smeared on the stone or wood. But in the hills there are many salt licks 'SOYIT' where Mithuns wallow frequently and so it is not difficult to locate the animal whenever required.

Prior to the coming of the Administration Mithun was one of the major causes of bloody war. A straying animal seized all of a sudden when it trespassed on someone's land and heavy indemnity demanded and if not paid a fight immediately ensued with considerable loss to life and property on both sides.

Legend about Mithun and why it became a valuable possession has been told in a tale:—

Dine the son of Pedong Nane—the mythical mother, died at a very early age. Soon after his death Koli and Kotan? came and cut his body and took out the 'Arkap' or the gland near the pelvis. They made seed out of this Arkap and put in the soil. After five nights the seeds germinated and grew into a gourd plant called 'Epum'. A very large fruit it bore in course of time. One day 'Takit' an insect entered the fruit to eat it. Hearing a sound Koli and Kotang came to see what happened and on opening the fruit they found Takit contentedly eating the fruit. They caught it and decided to make a Mithun out of it. They gave it legs from a tree called 'Raksek' and from 'Tase' a tree fern, intestines from 'Tari'—a creeper, ears from the leaves of 'Tappi' shrubs, eyes from 'Ngarkam'the morning dew, the nose from another shrub called 'Tatar Tara' and leaves from 'Taba' a tree similar to the tree fern and finally fixed horns from bamboo. For the colours they went to Lada Layo who lived in the Siang river and he gave them 'Totok'-sesamum. They made a fine powder out of it and

applied it to the body of the animal. For the flesh they brought honey from 'Tangut'—the bee. But even after giving it all the limbs and organs the animal did not show any sign of life. In those days, however, even stones could utter a sound and whistle in a shrill tone. It was therefore only after hearing the stone's whistle that the Mithun suddenly stirred and produced exactly the same sound.

Koli had Kotang were very happy at seeing life enter the animal. They gave it regular food and looked after it properly. But by living in comfort, the Mithun soon became very lazy and while it did nothing it consumed much food every day.

Finally the patience of Koli and Kotang reached the limit. They could no longer afford to provide so much food every day and so they drove the animal away to roam in the jungle. Entering the jungle one day, Tani saw the Mithun eating leaves and grass and decided to take the animal but 'Nite' and 'Epom'—the spirits had also seen it and laid a claim to it. However neither of them could catch the Mithun without a rope. Tani then planted bamboo to get the material for 'Sotkyap'—rope with which to tie the Mithun. White Nite and Epom planted cane, but the bampoo grew up earlier than the cane and Tani made a Sotkyap and was able to take it away.

The Mithun became a pride to him and he decided to visit all lands to show the strange animal to everyone.

One day he left with the Mithun and after a long journey he came to a river bank. The Mithun stopped to drink water and in doing so it fell in to the water and disappeared. Tani felt very sad but although he made a frantic search he could not find it. He asked Sigo Pereng—the bird whether it had seen the Mithun. Although Sigo Pereng knew where it actually gone it did not tell him the truth and Tani in anger spat on its body and the portion touched by the spittle turned white. That colour is still seen on the body of the Sigo Pereng. It had to bear the mark for the mischief done to Tani.

Tani then called Siram from the water. But Siram also did not tell the truth. Angrily, Tani spat on its neck which became white and remained so till this day.

Bitterly disappointed, Tani came to 'Sitking Kedeng Among'—the inner country, and found that Sitkom—the son of

Sitking had seized the Mithun when it strayed to his country after it had fallen into the river. He had been giving the animal salt and food and told Tani that he would retain the animal. He was supported in his claim by his father. Tani cleverly induced them to let it go on the pretext that he wanted to take the animal only to show it to everybody and that afterwards he would return it to them. They agreed and allowed Tani to go with the animal.

Dragging the long rope Tani brought the Mithun to the country of the Nipong—the spirit. Nipong who was fascinated by the strange animal, wanted it but Tani got out of the embarrassing situation by a similar promise and managed to get away from his house.

Tani with the Mithun then crossed the Siang river in a bamboo raft and arrived at Aka Selek and from there he went to Rebong Yorbe. He tied the Mithun to a large tree called Gumsirine and slept near it. The Mithun began to eat the leaves of the tree and while it was pulling a branch, the branch broke and fell down on its head. Now Gumsirine was a Ladok or bead tree and on its branches there were clusters of costly beads hanging like fruits. In hitting the Mithun the soul of the Tadok entered the animal and from that day Mithuns have become very costly and one can only get the animal in exchange of Tadoks, the price of which is always high.

Tani then came to Nite's place. Nite also wanted to take the Mithun but Tani again made the same promise and managed to get away. From Nite he arrived at Epom's place. Epom also wanted to take the animal but Tani managed to get off with the same trick.

From Epom's country Tani came to Gone Lipik, a place with a bad reputation because whosoever went there would always be involved in serious disputes. As soon as Tani took the Mithun there, it became a source of conflict and Tani with difficulty escaped from Gone Lipik and finally arrived at 'Teyong Among' the upland. In Teyong Among he found only the Jonge trees where he could tie the Mithun. From that day, the Jonge tree has assumed a special importance in every village of Tani's descendants. People plant this tree around their

village to secure the Mithun there, whenever the animals are brought to the village.

Demir Apang of Ramsing and Liten Jijong of Gete were the two who possessed large herd and so they were called 'Mirem'—the rich after their name. Unfortunately in a devastating epidemic Demir lost most of his Mithuns. When the epidemic spread, passion of the people rose to such an extent that they blamed Tepi Apang of Karko for the spread of the disease and about to raid his house. A serious situation also developed at Gete village when Liten Jijong was accused of similar crime. People even talked of dragging him to the high cliffs and throwing him down to the river—a capital punishment awarded in a serious crime in former days. Luckily nothing like that happened as I moved swiftly and took stern action against the rumour mongers.

Tall trees in solitary places or in the forest are the abode of dreaded spirit—'Epom', responsible for untimely death. Arrows are shot at random on the trees to frighten the spirit. In some tribes the death of a child is taken as wrath of spirit residing on tall trees and these are then mercilessly cut down. But the Adis do not resort to felling of trees rather no one would touch if this is known as abode of the spirit.

A panther was prowling in Gete village lifting Mithuns at will. An alarm was raised and men went to hunt down the beast. Panther is too dangerous as it can climb the tree or jump like a flash on unwary hunter.

Kangom Ipir—a hefty fellow just became a victim when the huge animal fell on him. But he too was a giant. With both hands he caught hold of the throat and wringing the last energy of the body he throttled the animal to death.

It was a pathetic sight. The blood oozed out from his body from dozens of lacerated wounds as he lay prostrated on the ground writhing in pain.

Dr. Syamal Sarkar, myself and Compounder Mamen rushed to the scene. With great care the doctor treated the wound and ultimately succeeded in curing him. It was a miraculous escape from the jaws of death.

During a night when I was asleep I woke up hearing a

whisper near the window, 'Migom-No Ibdudi Dardudi'—Are you in sleep or awake.

At first I froze in fear—it sounded like ghost. But when the whisper persisted I cautiously lifted the shutter of the window and saw a woman standing.

She had come from Shimong to convey the distressing news of theft of her valuable bead—a Doppun Abi and now Migom must do something to restore this to her. She was Peyang Ejo—passed middle age, rather jolly who invited me several times to her house for 'Dobo Tonnam'.

It was a raid on the village next morning when I moved with my Interpreters and dozens of others and searched every conceivable place. A word was circulated that I would not move out of the village till the Tadok is recovered.

It had the desired effect. Next morning to our surprise we found the valuable bead in one of the grannery. The thief quietly left this fearing his ultimate exposure.

It was October 1962 when Shimong prepared for 'Disang'—an expedition to the mountain for collection of aconite. I decided to go along with them.

Before the streak of dawn, a long line of determined men moved out of the village with bamboo torch. Along with the party followed the women with Jugs full of Apong. They came only upto a short distance—since women cannot go to the mountain.

I was in a high spirit. Strapping the rucksack on the back I marched with them in great expectation of reaching the snow mountain.

The range known as Abroka which rises to 12000 ft. and remain snow bound in winter. Every alternate year Shimongs go there for the collection of aconite which grow in the sn6wy range. The ownership of the mountain is divided among villages which border their area. Shimong has large share and do not allow other villages to trespass on their rights. Disputes were common especially with Gete who had a small share.

The mountain is the possession of dreaded spirit 'Jimu Tayang' whose sacred abode is on the 14000 ft. high crest—

'Eko Dumbin' from where the Adis believe all the hills have descended.

Jimu Tayang is extremely jealous of any intrusion into his domain. He is hard and cruel and whenever a chance come he inflicts terrible punishment from which the victim seldom recover. He raises violent storms which shakes the ground and breaks the sky to deluge the land with torrential rain all of a sudden or clouds the vision with thick fog screen and covers up the path under a deep layer of snow which treachrously hides holes and crevices and man already blinded by the fog screen falls into these and never get out again. Jimu Tayang commands his Lieutenant—the all powerful Poli Adi who resorts to savage cruelty and pulls out the eyes from their sockets, draws blood from their nose and ears, twists the genital organs or throws the body down a precipice or may lure the victim with objects of beauty in nature—beautiful landscape, the white snows, still water of a lake, animals and birds and then drag him to the water from where he can never escape again.

Those who cannot help entering his realm must not raise their voice above a whisper nor roast chilli in the fire lest it alerts and irritate Jimu Tayang. If the Chilli is burnt Jimu Tayang would cast shadows in the eyes of the culprit and the poor fellow looses his sight and never again finds his way back home. As a precaution against this and other troubles, an intruder always hastily retrieves his steps to place high hills between himself and peevish God as quickly as possible.

The story is told in a fascinating tale as to how Jimu Tayang possessed the high mountains:—

Pedong Nane—the mother of all beings had four sons— Jimu Tayang, Tani, Epom and Lada Layo.

Soon after his birth Lada Layo slipped into Siang river where he made his home permanently. During winter when the water level goes down and food becomes scarce Lada Layo depends on Jimu Tayang who gives him food from the high mountains and Lada Layo helps him in turn during the summer months when Jimu Tayang does not have sufficient food.

While Jimu Tayang went to stay in the high hills, Tani and Epom set out separately to select their own dwellings.

Epom thought it would be good for him to make his house in the tall trees and so he selected trees in the jungle. Tani found the open land near Siang river more convenient and there he made his home.

Tani and Epom did not like each other. Tani put Ekkam leaf before his eyes while Epom did the same with a net. The Ekkam leaf obstructed the vision of Tani and he could not therefore see Epom, but Epom, through the meshes of the net, could see all that Tani did. That is why men who are Tani's descendents do not see Epom while Epom can see every one at anytime, day or night.

Tani and Epom decided to share the animals between themelves and so laid traps. Tani laid his trap in the trees while Epom laid his trap on the ground. A bird fell in the trap placed by Tani and a deer got caught in the trap laid by Epom. Tani cunningly substituted the traps, placing the trap with the deer on the tree and the one with the bird on the ground. Epom did not know of the change and remained contended with the bird while Tani took the animal with him.

Tani had five sons. The eldest of the five one day decided to go out hunting but did not return in the evening. To find him, the second son went out. He also disappeared. And so, one by one they went out but no one returned. Tani was heart broken at the loss of his sons. He sat in his house alone, weeping day after day and watching the way all the time for their return but none came back. Hearing the weeping, Sigo Pereng, a bird came and asked him the cause of his sorrow. When Tani told him, Sigo Pereng said, 'Do not cry; I know where your sons are and I shall lead you there'. Sigo Pereng then asked him to follow him and flew off. He had kept powdered rice in his wings and little by little this fell to the ground below along the line of his flight and Tani had no difficulty in following He crossed many a river and stream, up and down hills, through deep forests and high and rugged mountains until Sigo Pereng stopped flying and showed him the place—Jimu Tayang's abode on the snow crest of a tall mountain. There Tani saw with bitter sorrow the remains of his five sons reduced to bones. Tani flew into a violent rage and demanded that Jimu Tayang should pay the 'Midum'—the death price of his sons. Jimu

Tayang wanted to avoid paying but Tani fell upon him in fury. Jimu Tayang at last agreed to pay the 'Midum' and gave Tani all his possessions in the high mountains—Siben—the Takin, Siku the musk deer, Siyar the mountain goat, Tanang the small diameter bamboo, Emo the aconite, Talap the wild garlic. Tani accepted them and both of them sat down to drink Apong to seal the agreement. Jimu Tayang had put aconite poison in Tani's cup but Tani had seen this and deftly changed the cups with the result that after drinking, Jimu Tayang collapsed in acute pain.

Tani brought down all his new found possessions to his land. But niether the animals nor the plants could survive in the hot humid country. Tani had no alternative but return these to Jimu Tayang.

Takin and Mithun used to move in the jungle. Tani grew bamboo and made a Sotkyap or rope with which he could tie the Mithun. Jimu Tayang on the other hand, could find nothing with which to make Sotkyap and tried to tie the Takin by its tail but Takin struggled hard. Its tail torn off and it fled away. That is why the Siben has small tail today. It also roams in the mountain while Mithun can be secured with a Sotkyap.

Jimu Tayang did not forgive Tani for getting the better of him and schemed to kill him. He could not however prevent him from claiming the possessions already given as 'Midum' but he devised other means of catching him in a trap should he come to obtain these from the high hills. The wrath of Jimu Tayang still overshadows Tani's descendents to this day. With extreme cruelty he destroys them whenever opportunity comes to him or at least inflict severe injuries.

An hour later we began to climb following a narrow hunting path. As we went up, the broad leaves tree, Canna, wild banana, bamboo forest retreated behind yeilding the place to 'Tanang' bushes—a hard but small diameter bamboo and Rhododendrons. Blood red flowers of Rhododendrons burst out only during July-August. At that time forest appear as if in a flame. I came to the mountain much later therefore missed the opportunity to see the beautiful scenario.

During the night we pitched our camp in an large opening

at 9000 ft. height. A high mountain covered in all white stood by the side like a giant.

Latum Osik—the Joker took my binocular and looked through it in the darkness. He shouted excitedly—See a Tiger sitting near a bush!

I could not help laughing but Latum never mind—thoroughly convinced having seen the Tiger!

It was passed midnight when I suddenly woke up to see dozens of fire balls burst in the sky. It was a wonderful scene. The man already got up and marched ahead when I was sleeping. They have carried the bamboo torch.

At once I ran after them. Cutting a path through thick Tanang bush I began to climb the stiff incline to reach the saddle of the hill. Cold breeze was blowing from the snowy range which touched the marrow of the bones. The white mountain appeared like a ghost. An eerie silence descended on the vast expanse.

I dashed ahead madly in all four with my only companion Latum Osik. Others were far ahead. There was no sound—as if all frozen in eternal silence.

Streak of dawn greeted us just below the saddle. Suddenly I saw before me, at hardly a few feet distance, perched on low branches flocks of green Imperial pheasants.

For how long I gazed at them yet not a one moved. They too looked at me in curious eyes. Here as hunters arrow do not fly—fear never gripped them. Men hurriedly retrieve their steps for fear of Jimu Tayang.

At last we were on top of the ridge—scattered snow fell on the earth which was littered with huge boulders. Now and then stunted Junipers and Ceders desperately clung to the ground.

A stream flowed with crystal clear water. The sun was up and I thought of taking a plunge. It was a foolish attempt as icy cold water immediately greeted me with a terrific bite on the limb and I was momentarily paralysed.

It was Latum who dragged me up and massaged the bare limbs. Though I was accustomed to cold bath but here in the mountain it was an experience indeed. One must condition the body before exposure.

We dugged up aconite tubers from the dried plants. The plants with small stock looked like Cotton or Linseed. During summer the entire landscape burst out in myriad of colours—flowers bloom all around giving an impression of a tended garden. These are the preserve of Jimu Tayang.

As the darkness fell on the mountain side we hurriedly returned to a huge stone shelter at Komdi Lipik. Tanangs burnt furiously yet cold seeped through marrow giving me a most uncomfortable night.

Long before the dawn we finished our meal and moved out of the shelter for journey back home. The move was very fast. A rain shield of wild Sago plant cut into pieces and scattered on the ground. This was done to way lay Jimu Tayang who was sure to follow the party. He would see these pieces and stop to count to know the number of intruders. This give the chance for all to flee to safety.

After arrival at some distance we took rest. Men poured out their baskets on the ground. The tubers were then distributed equally to all. Three continuous shouts given out which echoed through the hills. This is supposed to turn the tubers in deadly poison.

As soon we reached the familiar forest all burst into tumultuous joy—singing delong, the song of joy.

The entire village spilled over to Sarkam to greet us. There was endless Ponung, bouts of Apong and never ending Dobo Tonnam. To them this was a memorable event—Migom has come from Disang.

The baskets of aconite kept in a corner of the Mosup. It required three days to develop toxicity. The tubers are then crushed on a flat stone and smeared with saliva. The juice then applied on the shaft of an arrow below the tip of triangular iron head.

Rumbling in the frontier became louder and louder. Overhead sorties ferried supplies with increasing regularity to far flung borders. As troops moved to difficult mountain pass I had to mobilise hundred of porters to carry the provisions to far North.

A message came from the Political Officer directing me to collect donation for the defence fund. Some of my over zealot colleagues floated all sorts of promises and collected sizeable amount which earned for them high praise. Political Officer even mentioned this in one of his despatch which was a mild censor on my alleged inactivity.

I had to move out for the drive. At Shimong I gave a most thrilling talk surcharged with emotion. Nation demand sacrifice and Shimong with a proud tradition should not lag behind.

The talk had immediate response. In a single drive Rs. 7000/- were collected but I asked them to keep the money till my return from last village.

At Gosang I had a most successful programme. When all were in gay mood a message brought by a runner directing me to return immediately as situation turned grim.

I hurried at once. While on approach to Suspension Bridge at Nubo a Plane flew to Yingkiong. By the time I came half the way the plane took off and a runner arrived with the ominous news of evacuation of families.

The Pilot waited for a hour for me to convey an important message.

It was evening—the sun already sunk in the horizon. Hardly I sat in the Hawaghar when a CRP Officer thrust a message to my hand which read that the unit must close to the base by shortest route and to inform the Administrative Officer to follow suit. Desperately I asked him to keep the W/T Set open but before I could assess the situation the entire unit line turned into an inferno. Huge flames rose several hundred metres to the sky when stock of Petrol and Kerosene burnt furiously the thatched buildings.

Momentary panic siezed me seeing the chaos all round. Officials came running with tears in their eyes—what fate now wait for them.

I gathered some strength and asked my Assistants to sort out the files and papers. The stores arranged for disposal. A message arrived from Political Officer directing me to evacuate.

The rumours buzzed like humming bees. Someone came running having seen movement of unknown people on the Sarkam—hill over Shimong.

As the darkness fell the sky was overcast with heavy

clouds. Suddenly we heard the booming sound in the far west as like bursting of Mortar shells.

We decided to move out next morning. It is too dangerous to stay any more. Summons issued to the Gete and Shimong villages to provide the necessary porters.

There was no sleep for me whole night. An overwhelming emotion suddenly seized. Tears rolled down the cheeks—no longer this land will be mine.

As the morning advanced a long caravan got ready. But suddenly from nowhere Peyang Ejo came running and held my hand in a tight grip—crying hoarsely as to why I am leaving the place—why why.

There was no immediate answer but as if from a command I cried out—No—I will not go.

It was an unprecedented scene. At once the long line turned back. A cheer rant the sky—the crowd burst into spontaneous joy.

It was a cold November day. Two men in tattered cloth approached the camp. Someone came running to inform the arrival of the strangers.

I went out to see but the moment I was near both the men fell on me in an embrace telling hoarsely that God has answered their prayer—at last they would be saved.

I looked to them in surprise. Dr. Zaman, Medical Officer, Tuting and Uma Gogoi—Base Superintendent, Gelling, have been marching for 4 days over 70 miles of rough terrain with very little food. On the way they heard the rumour of evacuation of Yingkiong which gave a shattering blow to their last hope.

I brought them to my house, provided a cosy bed and meal near a fire. They looked at me in deep gratitude—at least I have saved their life.

Fortunately we did not destroy our stores. My energetic Assistant M.K.G. Nair stacked these in the barrack.

Soon after the arrival of Uma Gogoi and Dr. Zaman endless caravan poured in. Men, women in tattered clothes, Officials in glum face—all escapees from the frontier.

It was a nightmare. How am I to find food and shelter to hundreds of destitutes crowded all of a sudden in the camp?

My staff rallied behind me. We pulled our resources—food, clothing and constructed a number of temporary thatched huts to accommodate the families.

There was no W/T and all communication snapped. We managed anyhow to send a message to Pasighat asking for supplies.

The Dakotas began to arrive. In all we got 62 Landing Sorties in a single month. The daring Kalinga Pilots even flew in twilight flashing the spotlights. The improvised runway could hardly manage heavy landings. After each operation our men ran with shovels and spade to plug the furrow dugged by the wheels of the aircraft. It was a tremendous job accomplished by us. The strain on the poor Nair, our Storekeeper could be gauzed when Sorties disgorged stores leaving no time for verification. Nair was an indomitable character, never bent down with fatigue.

We heard later the aweful drama at Pasighat where panic seized everybody. As priority given to evacuation of women and children one official quietly sneaked inside the sari of his wife! Another one dangled a Stethoscope in the neck proclaiming himself as a Doctor detailed for relief works at Dibrugarh! Pilots nerves were at receiving end. They kicked the adamant passengers rushing to the Plane. Some times the plane overloaded with more than fifty people.

Confusion in such a situation was quite predictable. Yet one of the Officer lost his balance and behaved in a childish manner by believing all sorts of wild rumours.

The district administration almost collapsed. There were none within 40 miles radius. To add to my predicament hundreds of headmen from distant villages began to crowd at Yingkiong where Base Superinten dent kept the Flag flying.

I got the alarming news of Army falling back. Immediately I rushed my runners to the villages to put baskets of oranges and food on the road side to keep them away in search of food. There were rumours of looting on the way and I had to save my people from harassment.

Luckily the Army did nothing of the sort. I made makeshift arrangement for their stay as the entire battalion of 2nd Madras arrived in tattered cloth. During the night a few of them in search of food entered my Orchid house and the garden and took away the bananas. The beautiful orchid house was spoiled by Mithuns which found the way through the open gate. It was really a great loss to me.

For two days I looked after the troops—emptying the stock of ration from the Store.

Ft. Lt. Yadav with his band of staff became my guests. Yadav an Airforce Officer joined the IFAS hardly a year. A Dakota flew in from the North. Captain Namboodiri—the daring Pilot of Kalinga Airlines hobbered over Tuting and saw Assam Rifles stragglers near the airfield. He conveyed the news to Yadav who at once decided to go and sought permission from Government. But Col. Luthra the Additional Advisor based at Tezpur did not approve. It was Namboodiri who prevailed upon Yadav and took him to Tuting. The situation was normal at Tuting as Chinese stopped their advance at Bone—7 miles short of Tuting. Yadav frequently visited Tuting but seldom stayed for the night. Being an Ex-Airforce Officer the Pilots flew him in and out whenever he required. Once he even took me to Tuting just to show the place.

He was however awarded Padmashree for display of extraordinary courage.

It was 19 December. A month already passed since the border clash. Someone conveyed a Message of the visit of N.K. Rustomji, Advisor to the Governor of Assam.

We arranged an impromptu reception in the airfield. Ponung girls gathered, school children lined up, two hundred gams in flowing red robes crowded the reception area. All the staff were in full strength.

Soon the Advisor came out of the Plane lusty cheers greeted him. Ponung girls started their song and dance.

He was clearly taken aback. Nowhere he had witnessed such a spectacular scene. Everywhere he had to face the angry crowd.

Addressing me by first name he asked whether we stayed all along during the crisis. It was a surprise to him to know that even School was functioning.

He talked to the people which was translated by me in Adi.

Later the Advisor sent a message from Shillong and asked me to tune to the radio to hear his talk. Unfortunately the Message did not reach in time. His radio talk appeared in 'Hindustan Times' in its issue of 26 December, 1962 where he made a reference on me in following words:—

"Along, I was sorry to find, presented rather a cheerless appearance, in contrast with Yingkiong, where Tarun Bhattacharjee with his band of Officers stepped forward cheerfully on our arrival, all smiles, while a long line of red coats greeted us with a lusty 'Jai Hind'. Here at Yingkiong, I found the spirit of North East Frontier Agency alive and astir. And one of the reasons for this very well be that Tarun Bhattacharjee speaks Adi like an Adi and has won the confidence and affection of the people among whom he serves."

Advisor also kept a note in the file where he recorded a very fine impression on me. Unfortuately I did not have any more chance to meet him.

Nari Rustomji appeared to us a man of conviction and understanding. He had intellectual fervour, refined manners and did not suffer from a complex despite the occupation of highest Office. What appealed to us most was his genuine sympathy and concern for the Lower rung of Officers—a sad contrast with the behaviour of later days Officials.

My favourite Assam Rifles returned back to Yingkiong. I insisted their retention on the wake of the crisis of 1962. All of us who were with Assam Rifles developed almost a pathological attachment and never could visualize change would overtake. So when CRPF came in I was naive enough to suggest their withdrawal but got a prompt rebuke from the Government to abide by the Policy decision.

The A.R. Men who arrived from the front line were yet to overcome the trauma of the battlefield.

One evening I heard sound of boots outside the door. A NCO in a highly agitated mood dragged a young boy whom he thought as spy hobbering near the camp in suspicious manner. He was blinking the flash light apparently passing the code messages! All of them were boozed and worst still carried the full gear along with Carbines and Light Machine Guns.

The young boy was from Shimong and he burst into a cry in Adi telling that he was in search of Jungle fowl with his torch and AR Men dragged him inside their camp.

Luckily my relation with AR was always happy. The reason being the language and also helpful attitude which I maintained.

I asked the NCO to handover the boy to me to met out the proper justice. With much pursuasion the boy was ultimately released.

A CRP Platoon came to relieve the A.R. Post. Men however could not move out as Sortie did not come.

I was having a nap during noon. Suddenly the NCO of AR Platoon, Havildar Durga Bahadur Rai came in an agitated mood. Giving a smart salute he conveyed the ominous news that today he must teach a lesson to CRPF who have falsely alleged that the water line to the camp had been blocked by his men.

Durga Singh would not listen to any of my pleadings. His prestige had been shaken and he must redeem the honour.

I knew his weaknesses. He was very proud of his exploits in world war and receipt of numerous gallantry awards. Many evenings he passed with me to tell his stories.

I told him how excellent grading he received all along and even C.O. mentioned this in one of his despatch. Now his promotion is due any day and why for a small matter he should spoil his career.

For a moment he wavered. I took the chance and orderred tea and snacks. When his temper sufficiently cooled down I gave my solemn words to look into the matter.

Lucki ly a Plane arrived on the same day and the entire platoon was evacuated much to my relief.

During summer of 1963, a severe day spell threatened the crops in the Jhum. In such a situation the people observe 'Pedo Mogunam'—propitiation for rain. All the people go to some water falls away from the village and poison the water with 'Lipek' creepers. If this fails to bring the rain, costly beads along with a Necklace of 'Tabiyap' is placed at the foot of the

falls. If this too fails then a 'Taba' plant is uprooted by a young man, carried on the head of the falls and thrown down with a thud. If this too prove ineffective, a Mithun's horn is planted within the pool of water under the falls and covered with mud. It is believed this is infallible and as long as the horn remains rain will sure to come.

The dry spell however continued for a month and much of the paddy in Jhum wilted. But as varieties of other crops were also grown the total loss did not occur.

Continued rain also might threaten the crops. Hence a rite 'Doni Bonam' is performed as a protection against the long spell of wet weather.

A big tree is climbed by ladders known as Lamsalam. On the top a small platform is built and on this are fixed two bamboo tops crossing one another—one pointing to east and the other to west. To each of these are tied four 'Belong' branches. After this, a young man of the viilage goes to the jungle and collect 'Tapi' leaves. A conical basket is woven, a big white cock or hen is put. A young man than dress like a woman with white bodies and black skirt known as 'Gayin Gabin'.

The body is decorated with the beads of Tadoks contributed by each family of the villege. He then lie on the back and the basket with the fowl is finally tied on his belly. He is then carried with the chanting 'Donie Kalangke'—Oh! Sun See! All the villagers, men, women follow him r epeating the word—Oh! Sun! What we have done to you? Be pleased and look up!

The boy is taken to the tree and hauled up the platform in the same position and people gather under the tree, look up and clap their hands and shout—Donie Kalangke.

On reaching the platform the boy detaches the basket and place it on the 'Tali' leaves with which it is cushion ed. This is as well a small shed are meant to keep the fowl dry.

The boy then come down the tree. On the top of the tree if it is a cock it will crow or if hen it will crackle and it is believed that Sun cannot refuse their call. The people then all gather in Mosup—drink, sing and dance. During the time, strict restriction—'Nyonam' follows. No one is allowed to fetch water after the fowl has been lifted to the platform.

Breach of this taboo otherwise makes anyone liable to a fine in shape of fowl of same size and colour as offered to the Sun.

In Adi villages this 'Nyonam' or taboo—abstention from works is frequently observed. Surrounded by malevolent spirits it is natural that people should be cautious not to offend the spirits.

I witnessed a few ceremonies and wondered as to how the prayers invariably have been answered.

My book on "Myths of the Shimongs of the Upper Siang" was almost ready. I therefore took few days leave and went to Shillong to get a foreword from Dr. Verrier Elwin, the Advisor to the Tribal Affairs. Officers of the Research Department rendered help in editing the manuscript.

I had good rapports with B.B. Das Shastri, the Director of Research, and Dr. I.M. Simon, Philologist. Shastri and Simon were erudite Scholars and possessed a deep understanding of the Tribal problem. They worked as a team under the able guidance of Dr. Verrier Elwin.

Though sick from ill health Dr. Elwin was kind enough to give me time to meet him in his residence.

He was in his study in a spacious room stuffed with books and exhibits. He was wearing an Apatani Sleeveless Shirt, a cheroot hanging from his mouth, the eyes sparkled behind the rim of glass.

I felt very small before the giant of a man—a world renowned scholar the man who has written dozens of books and lectured throughout the world.

Peevishly I asked for a word for my book. B.B. Shastri already talked to him about me and showed the typed manuscript.

I listened while he talked—slow but steady words, full of intellectual fervour. He expressed his genuine concern on the present transition in NEFA—whether we the Administrators would understand the problem in real perspective.

What he told me the oft-repeated words—Look to the Tribal through the Tribal eyes. Genuine desire for a change is inherent in every society but change should be gradual and we should be careful not to impose our own thought, culture and tradition on the simple people. We must not do anything

by which their proud bearing is affected, self reliance is lost and a dependent mentality develop. What he told me more has been pertinent—a person who come to serve in tribal area must be dedicated, be one with them and act as "guide, friend and philosopher".

Later my book carried his fine words—where he commended my writing being accurate and told I know more about the Shimongs than he does.

Dr. Elwin's talk was ringing in my ears when rapid transition overtook the frontier. Need for accelerated development on the wake of the war created a picquant situation. Large number of officials took up the job—all of them not necessarily imbibed with same spirit. Many had no idea of tribal life.

I felt deeply disturbed when someone commented on the religion—why not bring them to mainstream. Other aspect was also no less disturbing. Abundant benevolence resulted in a dependent mentality.

Dr. Elwin's "A Philosophy for NEFA" elaborated many thoughts. Some of his ideas were given shape during his time when we saw School boys and girls proudly draped in traditional shirts and skirts, the hostel had resemblance to their own dwelling huts, publicity posters had bearing on tribal life. Even in hospitals, a shaman had access to the patient alongside the Doctor to provide a pscyhological impact.

It is relevant what Charles Bell wrote seventy years back on the Administration of the Frontier. "Tact and sympathy and a capacity for getting on well are the prime requisite of an Officer serving the 'People of the Frontier'.

On my way back from Shillong I came to Pasighat and borrowed a Jeep from the Political Officer for a visit to my old place Mirem. What I saw was really incredible. Within a few years a big change had overtaken the area. Tin roofed buildings came up, sprawling cultivation field replaced the forest land, road widened and gravelled long distance. Slowly but steadily the pattern of life has been changing under the impact of development.

But Loinong Iring remained simple as before—Not having picked up the 'Aying Agom'. But he had purchased a Bullock

cart, much widened his fishery pond and extended the wet rice field to many acres.

While returning from Mirem it was dark. My driver who slipped off unnoticed gulped lot of Apong. While driving on the road to Ralung—the Jeep lost balance and overturned on the slope. Only I escaped unhurt. My Interpreter Kakol Ayum fractured his limb, the driver got bruises. Luckily for us Ralung was near and people came rushing and put the Jeep on the road. Fortunately the Jeep was alright and slowly driven to Pasighat. I admitted Kakol in the hospital where poor fellow had to stay for some months.

Almost a similar situation arose while I was posted at Haflong in North Cachar Hills. I had gone to Laisong village—a Naga settlement to trail the path of Miss Ursula Graham who in her book 'The Naga Path' mentioned about the Zeliang tribe.

The driver unnoticed by me took drink and had a severe cramp on the way. It was night—the vehicle only ran few miles and Haflong lay far away. There were reports of Elephants prowling in the area.

I took the steering and drove the vehicle over the rough road and somehow deposited the driver to hospital.

At Pasighat I stayed with T. Morrison. Bernard Marak already left for his native district of Garo Hills.

A graduate in Agriculture Morrison was a new arrival in the frontier service. We soon found our common interest and struck a deep friendship. Morrison left the Frontieras he got a job in his native place at Shillong.

H.S. Dubey the new Development Commissioner made a programme of visit to Yingkiong. I dashed to Yingkiong in an Otter which was lifting some Stores.

The single engined plane was piloted by Ft. Lt. Khanna. I sat in the Cockpit beside him.

The plane flew very low following the course of Siang river. It tilted every now and then as Pilot negogiated the curve. Otter is a light plane capable of carrying only 8 persons.

When I reached Yingkiong the Message came of the cancellation of visit of the Development Commissioner. Rumour was already in the air of my promotion to a higher post. In July Bob Khathing, the newly appioned Security Commissioner along with W. Shaiza, the Political Officer arrived on a short visit. I was offered an assignment in a Special Organisation.

As selection was already made I accepted the offer. The posting was however deferred till arrival of a reliever and I was asked to carryout the dual function.

Bob Khathing—a Thangkul Naga of Manipur hills saw active service during world war. He received the much coveted Military Cross for the daring raid behind the Japanese line. Subsequently he joined the Frontier Service and earned a very high distinction as an able Administrator.

I again went to Pasighat to receive the detail instructions on new assignment. I found many of my colleagues also joined the Service. Chinmoy Ghose—the Base Superintendent, Damro, was one of them. Ghose was an upright person, very meticulous in his work and seldom budged from his principle. A pipe always dangled from the corner of his mouth, a sola hat on the head, a baggy pant, he was never in a hurry and moved in slow steps.

While returning from Pasighat I was stuck up at Mohanbari as weather became very bad and no Sortie flown out. It was most irritating to wait near the air base passing the time in agonizing monotony. The plane is often grounded for days together when weather remained bad.

But I was lucky when suddenly a message arrived from Yingkiong informing fair weather with clear approach. I rushed to air despatch with a copy of the Message. Airline Pilot, Captain Krishnan looked at it with disbelief as Mohanbari was lashed by heavy rain. Yet he agreed to fly and plane took off.

On approach to hills across the Brahmaputra the thick cloud greeted us. But the Pilot maintained a steady course till we reached Yingkiong.

It was raining heavily. Clearly someone played a joke. The Captain however manoeuvred the Craft and lowered the wheels for a landing. It splashed the ankle deep water in the runway—throwing spray to hundred feet. Soon it screeched

to a stop the Captain jumped out of the Cockpit and barked on the poor Store Keeper and A.R. Men, pouring out all the venoms.

I was also annoyed and apologized to the Captain and assured him strong action for wilful despatch of the message.

This episode resulted suspension of traffic for a month forcing us to near starvation.

Yingkiong assumed further importance with the posting of a Company of 5 G.R. The troops moved out to the surrounding hills.

Lt. Gen Manekshaw, the new Corps Commander arrived on a visit. No one was allowed a Porter—Everyone had to carry the kits on his back.

Airforce Dakotas unloaded heavy machineries for the work in the airfield. Men from Corps of Engineers came under the Command of Major Fernandez. The entire runway dugged up and heavy boulder pitching undertaken. We mobilised the villages to supply labour.

The task was completed on an war footing before December, 1963. Major Fernandez was in a hurry to go home for the Christmas. But destiny proved otherwise. In a similar assignment to Anini in Dibang Valley his helicopter crashed while negotiating a high hill.

We felt very sad on his untimely death. He was a nice soul and deeply religious. He struck a very good rapport with all of us.

I did not know that I would be visiting the very place where the Helicopter crashed. Years later when I was posted to Anini the memory of Major Fernandez came to my mind. He read Bible and quoted often "from the dust one come to the dust one will return".

It was January, 1964. A cryptic Message arrived conveying the news of my posting to Tuting—further north near the border. Matin Tangu would come to relieve me.

The Airforce Dakota landed at late noon. I was the sole passenger in the Cabin. The plane was under the command of Ft. Lt. Ganguli. It soon took off for Dinjan in Upper Assam.

It was a nightmare journey. Six of the Airforce

Officers cramped in the Cockpit by shutting the door behind them.

For few minutes I did not feel anything. Then the plane lost height as if fallen in a vacuum.

Now and then it yawned, heaved, banked perilously, dived low to the tree top, levelled and soared again to the height to repeat the acrobatics performance.

Suddenly I saw the vast expanse of surging Siang river when plane levelled over the sheet of water and flew parallel to the deep forest.

For how long I lost count such manoeuvre continued. My heart beat very fast as I became sanguine of imminent crash in the wilderness.

Captain Namboodiri, the ace Pilot of Kalinga Airlines while returning from a Supply drop mission to Mechuka met with tragic death in this forest. The long parachute cord stuck to the rudder and plane at once lost control. The base directed him to empty the petrol and belly land at Mohanbari. His young Bengali wife with a child and scores of people waited anxiously at the aerodrome but hardly 20 miles short of Mohanbari suddenly the cord flew out with the fins and at once the plane dropped like a stone to forest below and engulfed in a huge fire.

It was twilight. I could see the indistinct mark of the tree line when plane zoomed up, levelled and flew in a steady course to Dinjan airfield. Its spot light flashed over the runway and I said a silent prayer for the deliverance.

Unlocking the door the young Ft. Lt. asked shame-facedly how I enjoyed the trip. They were only looking for the elephant herd!

I thought what a mighty experiment had been made on me like a guinea pig.

They were however courteous enough to take me to their Mess and gave a transport to the railway station.

I boarded a Dakota at Mohanbari airfield for a flight to Tuting. The plane was loaded with assorted stores varying from food stuff to Agricultural stores. A huge crate with two Yorkshire pigs also found a place. There were two cages of

chickens. Combined with sweat and heat, the smell emanating from the Cabin was nauseating.

A long coir rope tied to the hook held the loads from falling apart. The door of the plane was removed to facilitate ejection of cargos.

The few passengers who were Government officials sat on the bare steel benches hinged to the wall.

The Plane just returned from a dropping mission and got readied again for another sortie. There were hurried check of the Engine and tanker pulled up for refuelling the tanks in the wings.

The versatile Dakota was a second world war product. Kalinga Airlines—a private company of Biju Patnaik of Orissa entered into an agreement with the NEFA Administration to undertake the air supply mission. The Pilots were veterans of many Civil & Military Service.

The base hum with activities as Cargos brought from supply depot readied for despatch. The Pilots were impatient with the delays as they wanted to complete their scheduled commitment and earn a rest in far away Calcutta where company provided them with all perks. Sometimes the weather play havoc—a sortie turned back abortive. If it has been a landing sortie the passengers woes knew no bound. Luggages are unloaded at once. No assurance given when the next flight will commence. Or it might happen weather held out some hope—all are asked to report to base. The agonising wait go on for the whole day, no one give an idea when the plane will take off. The uncertainties persist with monotonous regularity during monsoon. Sometimes sudden mechanical fault might render whole operation being called off.

Pilot's manner also like the freakish weather. Their irritation however is understandable. Once a Pilot barked at the truck driver for the delay in loading the plane. The driver also must have been under great strain. He too replied in equal invective--"what made you to shout at me? You are also a driver and I am also a driver. Only difference is that you drive in the air and I drive on the ground!"

No one who had undergone the agonising waiting at Mohanbari Airbase would understand the mental and physical

tension. From early morning till evening anxious waiting tear off the nerves. If anyone is lucky he goes off to the destination almost immediately—otherwise ordeal may be complete. The bill of the hotel mounts and he may have to borrow a huge sum to pay off. Yet there were times when a sortic returned abortive, the poor fellow may not get any accommodation in the hotel or rest house at all.

At the Air landing stations the situation only a shade better. The drone of the airplane may be quite deceptive—it may be a dropping sortic going to some other place. Every one strains their ears to pick up sound. By the time a Landing Sortic actually arrive, the wheels already lowered on the perforated steel plates on the runway—a marathon run ensues to reach the airfield in time otherwise Pilot may not wait for any one. At Tuting the Membas always busy with their prayer wheels—its cling cling sound vibrate the air and appear like a drone of an airplane. Or rushing water of Siang river emanate the sound which can be also deceptive. Base would seldom confirm the despatch of a Sortic hence the uncertainty persist.

When the weather remain dull we walk over the runway. Someone bring out a theory as why a Plane does not come. The cumulous cloud discharge electricity and it is too dangerous for a plane to come. Hence possibly we cannot blame any one but curse only our luck!

In the frontier where one has to depend on air traffic the experience is quite traumatic. We had flown by assorted planes ranging from Small Piper aircraft to Twin Engined Commando. In later days I had to fly several times by helicopters as long runway was not available.

The hills rise abruptly soaring to great height and criss-cross each other. Between the folds of the green hills runs a valley deep and awesome. Through the narrow corridor the agile Pilot must find a way—steering the aircraft with great precision. Sometimes wings appear as if touching the wall of the hill.

Once on a flight the plane entered the deep cloud—dark and threatening. It hobbered far distance—soaring to several thousand feet height to locate a hole in the cloud. I saw to my horror the massive snow range yet the Pilot flew one and half

hours manoeuvring dexteritly till could locate the muddy water of Siang and levelled off to our destination Tuting.

In another time our Plane ran into rough weather. In solid air pockets the aircraft bumped frequently giving a sudden feeling of emptyness in the stomach. The fellow companion—an officer not accustomed with this phenomenon shifted his position near the door telling that in case the plane crash he would jump at once to the trees below and be saved!

There were a few crash—the plane on a supply drop mission never returned. The crash seldom leave behind survivor. Yet when we board a plane, a feeling never develop as how a perilous journey being undertaken.

Once at the base we were waiting for a Sortie for Tuting. The young Airforce Officer flying a Caribou asked us to wait till he return from a dropping mission to Limeking in Upper Subansiri. But he did not return. While on the dropping zone the Pilot pressed the button to open the rear door for a drop, the lock jammed yet he tried again and again but then plane nose dived and crushed in great flame. I could never forget the young Sikh Ft. Lt. He was so good to us but destiny put an end to a bright career.

In another time I narrowly escaped being swallowed by fire. A Dakota landed with crates of livestock and caught fire immediately on landing at Tuting. I jumped from the Cabin just in time.

Before boarding the plane every passenger had to sign an Indemnity Form to free the Government from any liability:

"In consideration of my being carried at my request as Passenger in an Aircraft which is the property of the Government of India/or incharge of any Officer or Airmen of the IAF, I undertake and agree that neither I nor my executors nor Administrators will make any claim against the Government of India in respect of any loss or any injury to property or person (including resulting death) which I may suffer while or in consequence of my being carried and I understand that No (rpt) No compensation will be paid by the Government of India or by

any Officer or Airmen of I.A.F. in respect of any such loss, injury and I agree so as to bind myself, my executors and Administrators to indemnify the Government of India and any Officer or Airmen of IAF and any person in the service of the Government of India against any claim which may be made by the third party during or connection with the said flight."

At Tuting—Farther up in the Frontier

Tuting is in the valley of Siang—hardly at a 2000 ft. height. The awesome river with its muddy water enters the territory near a mountain pass 'Kepangla' in a loop and flows southward. The upper portion is known as Tsangpo. Till the beginning of present century there were doubts on the origin of Brahmaputra. Some thought Dibang or Lohit might be the source. Many expeditions were undertaken to Tibet notably by Brian, Hodgson, Major Jenkins, Sarat Chandra Das, Lama Ugyen Gyatso, Rinzin Namgyal and Kintup—all from Survey of India. It was Kintup who reached near Tsetang situated at a height of 10000 ft. where Tsangpo flows through the mountain pass and floated number of marked logs to the river.

There were rumours of massive waterfalls where the river drops to considerable height through series of rapids and finally reach the plains where height is only 500 ft. Yet Kintup did not succeed as Logs could not be retrieved at the down stream. It was a long time since then when Col. F. M. Bailey in early present century, in a daring move finally confirmed that the Brahmaputra is the Tsangpo which originated from Manas Swarover in Western Tibet.

The width of Siang near Tuting is 700 ft. In winter the river can be crossed by a raft. In summer the rise in the level of water may be as much as 60 ft.

A long runway was on the bank of the river. Here too Major Hranga left behind his mark. He was the officer who had established the camp and constructed the airfield in 1953.

The main camp was situated a Kilometre up the Airfield. Being the seat of an Assistant Political Officer—I, there were many Officials in different establishment.

A number of buildings including the Inspection Bungalow were tin roofed with wooden platform, glazed doors and windows. The hospital had two doctors and indoor beds.

An Agricultural Farm which had fruit plants was in the Centre of the town. There were also a Middle English School, a Craft Centre where students were taught Carpet making and wood carving. Co-operative Store, a small Dairy Farm, a Company of CRPF and Assam Rifies and a Telegraph Office. The town had other civic amenities like water supply but electricity came much later. A jeep and a tractor also ran on the road.

There was no motorable link with outside. Everything depended on air transport. It took 45 minutes flight from Mohanbari Air base. Nearest Administrative Centre towards South was Yingkiong—70 miles distance covered in 5 days foot march. The Sub-Division had two other Administrative Centres—Gelling at 18 miles and Singa at 50 miles.

The people are divided in three groups. Adis who are majority included Shimongs, Ashings, Tangams, Memba. Khamba and Idus were the two other groups.

Ashings are spread over 5 villages on the right bank of Siang—Tuting, Ninging, Pango, Migging and Mosing. Their kinsmen are found in Bomdo and Janbo villages of Yingkiong Circle. Shimongs are settled in Ngaming, Jido, Anging, Singing Palin and Likor on the left bank of the Siang river. Tangams are in Mayum, Kuging and Nyereng in Siang and Nigong valley. Membas are in Gelling, Bishing, Kopu, Bone villages near the border. Khambas are in Nyokkong, Mankota; Yortung and Tasigong villages in Nigong valley. Idus have settled in 5 villages in Nigong valley.

Memba and Khamba are Buddhist, followers of Tibetan

Lamaism. While Membas spoke in a dialect of Bhutan where from originally they came, the Khambas has resemblance to the speech of Kham area of Tibet.

Their houses are not of Adi pattern—but distinguished by better craftsmanship. Wood and stones are used though roof is thatched with grass or palm leaves. In few houses roofs are also of planks put one over the other and pressed down by stones. The platform is by wooden planks. There is a separate inner room in their houses where guests may find shelter and where images of Buddha also kept.

In every Memba, Khamba village there is a Gompa which dominates the life of the people. There are regular obeisance and special prayers. The Lamas guide the people in normal religious function and attend to various propitiations, even some times offer medicines and talisman.

Their cultivation however still followed on the traditional pattern of Jhum—the shifting method of cultivation. Permanent cultivation slowly developed and many have taken up wet rice cultivation near the villages.

The Ashings, Shimongs, Tangams who are Adis belong to same Padam Minyong culture with minor variation. villages are smaller than the other Adi villages. Most of these are on the higher ground notably Migging and Palin which are at 5000 ft. height. Idus are in a farthest corner of the subdivision who are distinctly different from their neighbours. They have thin population spread over five villages on the bank of Nigong or Yangsangchu river which rose from Abroka The Idu houses are long, raised on bamboo platform with a corridor passing from end to end. They do not allow their pigs to roam about like Adi village but keep these below the platform of the house. Idus are strongly individualistic and do not have a well knit organisation like Kebang of the Adis. Neither the Idu nor the Adis are influenced by Buddhist teachings. Tangams have borrowed some practice because of their long association with Memba, Khamba.

Except some river valleys the terrain in Tuting area is rough. There are heavy climbs to reach most of the villages. The climb to Migging or Palin take 2-1/2 hours. There are three major tributaries of Siang. On the east Nigong or

Yangsangchu river which rose from the Abroka range. The valley of Yangsangchu is very beautiful. On the west is Ringong and Sigong both rose from the snow ranges near the border. All these rivers are perennial and carry heavy discharge of water.

High ranges are very close. The highest is 14600 ft. Doni Lipik in North east of Tuting. Still higher are the passes in the North Western borders—where average height is 16000 ft. Towering over Tuting is 10000 ft. Dipun which is covered by snow from November to April.

Though summer is hot and humid in Tuting, but in winter, cold wave sweep the valley. Because of proximity of snow range often the cold is severe. The rainfall is heavy—150 to 200 inches in a year which swells the many torrents which burst through the bank during summer. Huge waterfalls rush down the slope of the mountain side throwing an immense volume of water. The highest—the Sibi Dingo near Bishing village falls from a height of 1000 ft. Its mighty roar is heard from far distance as if trumpet of hundreds of elephants.

Clothed in evergreen forest the country side presents an awe-inspiring beauty. River teem with fish, forest full of games, myriad birds whistle and chirps, insects play the orchestra.

Viewed from the height of a hill it is truely magnificent. Mighty river zigzagged the course through the folds of the hills, mountains soaring to the sky—its snowy apex dazling in the sunlight, clouds roll in waves, villages perched on the slopes—what an enviable scenario unfolds before the traveller.

I had been lucky with the special assignment. To move at will anywhere imbibed in me a spirit of adventure. I scaled the mountains and the hills with an insatiable desire to know the unknown.

Once on a visit to Nyokkong in Yangsangchu valley I had a sudden desire to visit the mountain. Dorjee the headman presented a basket of Takin's meat fresh from the high mountain brought by his brother Rinjin Happily we sat near a fire waiting for the roasted meat and soon entered into gossip. Rinjin was narrating his interesting encounter with a bull Takin which almost pinned him down a precipice but fate saved him from a sure death. Bull Takin is dangerous when alone

and Rinjin by lucky chance came back to the village unhurt. I straightened my ears as he went on telling the name of places never heard before—Kine Podung, Lai Garung, Namcho Troma, Pao Lipik.

Suddenly I found myself in the midst of Takins—the endless procession of a migrating herd, the ever beautiful white snow and felt the thrill of an adventure up the Doni Lipik to mysterious lakes of Tsongo Phukpha.

To my surprise many volunteered to accompany including Rinjin who forgot the fatigue and recent gruesome experience. Immediately we sat down with a plan. A party of eleven—all veterans of mountain and myself would move out early next morning. Hurriedly I packed my sleeping bag, knotted a small dagger to my waist belt, borrowed some ration, thrust a medicine box in the rucksack and I was ready.

It was October—the snow yet to fall on the mountain.

One by one we went out. Ahead of us gathered a small crowd—Men, women and children. In bitter cold they came to bid farewell. The high Rimpoche of Yortung sent his blessings and Lamas brought the ceremonial scarf.

An old woman ran up, brought a lump of butter. She muttered some prayer which I could not understand but surely a prayer for safe journey to the abode of God.

We marched on the narrow lane, passed the wooden houses, crowd and Gompa and out to the jungle. The path went straight up as if to end in sky. Slowly the mist evaporated and down below the valley of Yangsangchu spread out in magnificent beauty. The river itself, seen in a thin line of white ribbon, zigzagged the course and then lost in the horizon. The village we left only few hours back appeared as tiny hamlets clustered together.

Suddenly our favourite tree line faded, yeilding place to stately conifer. There was no broad leaf tree, no banana, nor even cane anywhere. At 9000 ft. subtropical forest vanished and along with it our hated companion the Leech.

After 12 hours strenous march we came to halt at Kine Podung. I loosened the straps of heavily ladden pack and sat on the ground for rest.

My companions doffed their hats and after a silent prayer

to the spirit of the mountain 'Dosemphodo' threw a stone on Cairn as an offering. Overhanging the Cairns tied to a cord between two poles are prayer flags. The flags are fitted with miniature prints of prayer "Om Mane Pema Hum" which are continuously swayed by wind to spread the message to far distance. Then one by one they tied a piece of cloth on flag pole to leave it there on the wind swept height.

The night was a bitter experience. No one had thought of a chilly wind would suddenly come. Everyone began to chant, "Om Mane Pema Hum"—an endless prayer to please the God. Someone brought a prayer wheel, its clink clink sound after every rotation completed a cycle of 108 prayers to Lord Buddha.

Next morning we got up early and then planned the journey to Namcho Troma. The second stage would be short and we wanted to take some rest at Laigarung—a solid 5000 ft. descent from Kine Podung.

Though less than two miles yet it took more than two hours—as the path went straight down and any false step would bave been fatal—it would spin the body thousand feet down to the gorge. To move down the slope is a perilous exercise—it require concentration of all senses. With my heavy pack on the back I had to be doubly cautious. I clung to the roots, held my grip on overhead branches, swung like a bat or crawl like a monkey. In both sides the gorge laid a death trap. One who had not trailed the unbeaten track in the mountain will never know the peril of the journey.

Everyone of us had to be cautious. Pema our guide shouted now and then—watch your step, move slowly. I found sweat pouring due to tensed muscles—every bit of strength put to maintain the tight grip.

At last we came down to the moist forest.

After a brief rest we began to climb again. Somewhere the loads were unpacked, a hot meal was cooked by the side of a stream and to give rest to the body I dozed off on a make-shift bed for three hours.

It was well passed noon when we started the climb again through the coniferous forest. Huge Cedar trees rose to an enormous height, path slippery on the fallen leaves. Tanang bushes scattered everywhere fortunately held the grip. By now I found five species of bamboos—all growing at different heights. At varying altitudes bamboos also have own habitat. I saw a species—it had sharp prickles. Injury from its scratch result in deep sore not easily healed.

We moved through the forest of Cedar, Birch, Junipers, Oaks and Rhodendrons. Juniper leaves burn with splitting sound giving out a sweet aroma. Small bushy Junipers are planted near Gompa where leaves are used as incense.

We reached 11000 ft. and found a level ground in thick Tanang jungle where we unpacked our loads for night rest. A huge mountain clothed in white stood on a side. Down its slope roared a river "Zayingchu" which empties its water in Yangsangchu near Tasigong village after 20 miles of journey.

Scattered in shadowy recess were the Coptis Tita—a fern like small plants used as medicine. The root of this plant is cleaned and boiled in water. The decoction is bitter in taste but cure all sorts of stomach troubles. Sores and inflamation of the eye are also treated with the juice of the root.

Gombu narrated the story of Ngarba, the deadly Viper which coil in Tanang bush. But in winter the snake do not appear.

Ngarba or Russel's Viper is found here over 6000 ft. height. It had two long fangs and anyone bitten would not expect to survive. Shimongs eat the snake when it is caught in Eda—a stone trap. Khambas believe that some people who indulge in black magic and sorcery extract the poison from the fangs of Ngarba and mix with rotten eggs. These are hidden in the long nail and poured to the glass of would be victim. If a victim swallows the poison he or she would die in slow death and sorcerer would get wealth. The belief is very deep rooted. But if the people suspect anyone then banish the person from the village. Adis have an interesting story as to why some snakes have poison.

The snakes are the offspring of Pedong Nane. In the beginning they all had poison fangs. The Bine, Birak and Biye were the most aggressive and venomous and became a nuisance. The others though poisonous were not harmful. Bisi Ada, the great vulcan got annoyed with the misdeeds of the Bine, Birak and Biye and removed their fangs. But soon after they lost

their fangs, the others left with theirs, grew aggressive and started biting men and animals.

Here on the great height the sleep for me was impossible. An eerie silence descended as night advanced. Twigs burnt for some time but no one kindled the fire. Everyone was dead asleep. As the day broke we hurried for the last climb to Pao Lipik.

Tanang bushes now retreated behind. Over 12000 ft. it does not grow. The trees also shortened the height. From an enormous height of 150 ft. it came down to hardly 30 ft.

We passed through the carpet of moss—thick and dry which threw out white dust. Walking over it I felt a peculiar sensation as if I was walking over sponge.

I saw a medicinal plant, the Khambas call this as Jaja. It has large deep pink colour leaves and grow in between the boulders. The leaves are gathered and dried in the sun. The liquor obtained by boiling it in water, is taken as a brew with or without sugar to purify the blood.

There is another medicinal plant—'Kote'—looked like wild garlic which cures the stomach trouble. Kote is taken raw. Another species 'Derat' also look like garlic and used for stomach cure. This is taken boiled with meat or vegetables.

I collected samples of all the species and subsequently sent to the University for identification.

We have climbed over 13000 ft. and reached Pao Lipik—a wind swept plateau. There my companions again threw the stones on the Cairn, tied the prayer flags, muttered continuously 'Om Mane Pema Hum'. Some Juniper branches were pulled out and burnt on the cairn which gave out a most pleasant aroma.

I saw the stunted growth of trees. The stately Cedar now just reduced to 5 ft. height. Junipers hung on the hard ground so strong its grip on the soil that I exercised my full strength but could not uproot a small tree.

The boulder strewn plateau extended to far distance. Suddenly I heard a distinct shot and found in surprise Pema running with his gun after a huge black bear which galloped full length over the boulders for cover. We got down in excitement. It must have been a sure hit but vanished between the

huge boulders. Pema was sure to get the bile of the bear which fetch good money.

We dragged the tired feet again to thousand feet from where a path led us towards a stone shelter. Scattered snow fell on the ground. Soon I was on the crest—a magnificent view was unfurled before the eyes. Mountains after mountains dressed in eternal snow hurled against each other and there before me appeared the 24200, ft. Namche Barowa.

Like ghost from nowhere a patrol of 5 G.R. sprang up with barrel pointed towards us. They saw the Kambas first and got suspicious but when I appeared they lowered their barrel. Hearing the shot they took up position for an ambush. I had to explain to cool down their temper.

Gombu who went to explore the landscape returned excitedly. We followed his signal, moved cautiously over the ground to a small ridge and saw in great amazement a herd of Takins 40 or 50 in numbers led by a mighty bull passing down the ridge with casual indifference. The herd was migrating to lower altitude for winter retreat.

I rubbed my eyes again and again as if to convince what I witnessed was not a dream but a fantastic reality.

Takin or budocras is a hefty animal with semi circular horn protruding from its forehead. It has dark chocolate colour coat. It moves before the snow. During winter when snow cover the higher range the herd migrate to lower height where grass still grow but in summer it climb up again to great height where snow melts away.

In surprising agility Takin move down the slope, negotiate deep precipice and gallop with speed when encountering danger. The bull Takins are very dangerous when alone—it can charge an enemy and if caught no one can escape from thrashing. Even Tigers which move on the mountain ridge to spring a surprise to unwary herd may suddenly find a formidable rival in bull Takins. In a flash a bull will catch the tiger by its sharp horn and throw it in the air to be caught by another bull and this go on for some time till it is dead. But even then the revenge is not fulfilled. The dead beast is taken to a tree stump or boulder and thrashed repeatedly till it is reduced to pulp.

When a hunter aim the gun at a Takin he must do so from a height when the herd is moving down hill. Sudden gun fire is likely to scatter the animals who run to safety but on the favourable ground the animal might charge the hunter and then there can not be any escape.

We went to a huge stone shelter with an overhanging canopy. Juniper twigs collected in heaps and soon a roaring fire heated inside. But on 13,500 ft. the food could not be cooked properly.

From the roof of the shelter dropped ice cold water. Pema meticulously collected this in a bottle. This is supposed to be purifying medicine.

Someone complained of headache. My small medicine box now proved quite handy. As soon I doled out an APC tablet all others complained of headache—a sympathetic reaction. I had vitamin tablets and so issued them freely. Soon all complaint vanished! Faith not medicine which had an effect.

It was bitter cold. The chilly wind was blowing from the snowy range. Despite the fire we had no comfort. My sleeping bag proved quite useless. But I was lucky. The JCO of 5 G.R. called me to his shelter and offered Rum. I gulped the full tot and entered into gossip before a fire. The rum had an affect. When I retired to my own shelter I did not remember how the night passed!

Morning come to the mountain only too early. We soon packed off for the journey to 14,500 ft. height Doni Lipik—8 miles from Pao Lipik. Hardly I came a few pace, suddenly I heard overhead sash sash sound. A flock of snow eagles with huge spanned wings flying to the south for the winter retreat. It was an wonderful scene—in all six birds flew in perfect formation. Gombu told me hundreds of birds migrate from the north during winter to the bank of Siang. Many fall to the trap of the hunter. Gombu though not aversed to hunting yet do not kill for killing sake. He said as a Buddhist he does not like taking a life except when it is necessary.

The path now winded along the ridge over the boulders. Soon a surprise was waiting me. Before my path appeared a lake, full to the brim with crystal clear water, surrounding

its rim snow clung to the stones. Then again we crossed another lake slightly bigger and on to the highest point, 14,600 ft. Lungong Phukpha. From the southern end appeared 'Riew Talong'. Hardly a day we saw it almost barren but now deep snow already settled. Riew Talong resembled a huge stone as if grafted on the crest by an unknown hand. No wonder people who have deep faith on supernatural believe that Riew Talong as the abode of God.

Doni Lipik came to full view soon. We crossed eight Lakes—large and deep. The terrain became more rugged and barren except a few patches of grass—all dried as if badly burnt. An early snow swept the green from the body.

There in the snowy expanse I saw something ran with the speed of an arrow. A musk deer galloped full length to vanish in the snow.

The musk deers are hunted for its valuable pods which grow in navel of the male species. Since hunting with gun is impossible it is caught by snare kept on its track. Once it fall into the trap it is impossible to break through. The hunter lay the snare long before but retrieve the dead animal several days later. Musk deer never come down from the snow which is its habitat.

We arrived at Doni Lipik at long last and saw the stone cave over the ridge. Many decades ago Tangam explorer Doni in a solitary trek to Chindruk found the cave and left his name immortal to be remembered for ever down the ages.

In otherside, solid hill of ,Titapori' stood up in all white. As we hurried further up to Tsongo Phukpha a chilly and cold wind blast suddenly swept us. No trees anywhere, only the stones and snow spread over the ground.

Crossing the barren ridge, suddenly before my eyes a panorama of unparalleled beauty unfurled. There were in a row five big lakes down a huge mountain of eternal snow. On the bank coniferous trees lined to cast shadows over the placid water—the depth of which no one would ever know. For long I sat on the rolling grassy land with an awed look and I felt, if there is a paradise on the face of the earth it must be here, Oh! it must be here!

My thought was broken by Gombu's long steps. He

beckoned me for moving back to Pao Lipik. I dragged the reluctant feet over to Doni Lipik and soon got lost in heavy cloud which came from no where and along with it drops of ice cold water began to beat on the face. No time to loose now—hurry the steps. Tumbling over the boulders, slipping on the snow, we ran blindly following Pema who led us towards Pao Lipik. No one said anything, not paused for a question like the famous cavalry riders who marched to the vailey of death:

Theirs not to reason why Theirs but to do or die Into the valley of death

Rode the six hundred.

We did not stop at Pao Lipik but moved further down to Kanebingo in thick Tanang bush. The hours closed rapidly and before night fall a shelter must be found. Hurried hands pulled out Tanang and soon a comfortable shed stood up. We cooked the meal and ate it heartily. The night descended and soon we dozed off to bed.

Suddenly from nowhere big drops of ice cold water leaked through the roof. We woke up as if from a nightmare. Our cosy bed soaked with water and we desperately hung the polythene sheet over head. The rest of the night passed without a wink. At 12,000 ft. soaking in rain was no pleasure.

Next morning we decided to go fast to cover the entire stretch of twenty miles to Kuging village. We moved down the steep slope, passed the coniferous belt, Tanang bushes and back to moist forest. The path ran straight down, slippery and slushy with mud. So quick was the move that I could not keep the balance and in a spin dropped the body to several feet on the edge of a dangerous precipice but luckily stuck by a solitary tree and escaped death by hair breadth.

We arrived at Kuging village just before the light faded out. Ten hours of weary march brought us from a height of 12000 ft. to 3000 ft. People came out from the houses with a wide look of surprise. No one believed we have come from Doni Lipik till they saw the aconite which only grow in the high range.

When the morning came I looked in awe—the entire

mountain side far below the Kanebingo shrouded in white as if some one brushed it overnight.

Poor Pema had to bear all the brunt. Everyone blamed him for the gun fire which must have irritated 'Jibda'—the God of the mountain.

Once when I was camping in the Nigong valley Danbo Pinsan and Yombo Tamut of Kuging village took me to a wild forest across the Arpong river. In the midst of forest there were bamboo and citrus grooves, sago plants—a trace of long abandoned habitation. This was the largest Tangam Adi settlement of Kindo which was destroyed by the Shimongs in a devastating war which almost succeeded to wipe them out but by sheer luck they survived though population reduced from 2000 to bare 200 in all. They are now spread over in three villages—Kuging, Mayum and Nyereng. In the past they flourished all along the Siang and Yangsangchu valley in fifty settlement.

An unhappy and thoughtless incident caused the war which was the ruin of Tangams for all time to come.

Pasu Chuchik, a dwarf from Karko from other bank of the Siang opposite the village of Shimong, was seized with a thirst for travel. He followed the course of the Siang and came to the village of Rigu Rirang. There was a place 'Yaro bongo' near the village from where he got a grand view of the broad valley of Nigong and decided to go there. The villagers told him that the land was unknown and no body knew the tracks. and so he should not undertake the risk of going there. But he persisted in his desire, crossed the Siang by the cane suspension bridge 'Ladum' and came to the first Tangam village of Jido. The people received him well and treated him to good cheer and drink. This reception encouraged him to proceed further and he came to Kindo where also he was received kindly and well. A Kebang was called in the Byango in his honour and villagers gathered there to hear from him about his land and people. Unfortunately some wags in the gathering were amused with his small size and thought of playing practical jokes with him. First they lifted him up and put him on the 'Kumbang' below the ceiling.

Next they took him down and tossed him from shoulder

to shoulder. This amused the gathering and all laughed merrily.

Pasu Chuchik felt insulted and flushed with anger leapt down from Byango platform and walked away in a huff. elders realized at once that the joke had gone too far and set after him. They caught up with him, begged him not to take any offence and to forget about it, and presented him with a felling axe as a sign of their friendship. Pasu accepted the felling axe but did not forgive the wrong. He said nothing and went back to Shimong by a different route to throw the Tangam out of scent. He had Kebang called in the village and addressed the gathering, "Oh my Shimong brothers, if there be big trees in the field left standing they cast their shadows on the growing crops and do not let them grow. You have to cut the trees if you want the crops grow. But this simple thing I find you neglect. In your fields I found many of such obstructive trees. I call your attention to this and it is your concern whether you would have Kebang be strong and resolute enough to remove these trees. For me I now go to my own village to warn them of the same negligence". So saying Pasu Chuchik left for Karko.

The Tangams heard of this and they sensed danger. A deputation of their leaders went to Likor, one of the big settlements of the Shimongs. The people there assured them not to worry as they would blunt their spears on stones and break their arrows even if others decided on war. In return for their neutrality, however, they demanded a 'danki' and the Tangams got one from Ato Doniyong of the Jodo clan who was one of the richest man of the time and gave it to the Likor people. The latter, however did not keep it to themselves but passed it on to the Shimong village, probably to intimate that the Tangams had bought peace. From Shimong danki found its way to Karko and fell in Pasu Chuchik's hand. He planned to use this symbol of peace for his own purpose. He strapped the danki on the back, fastened the axe to his side and went to a Memba village on the bank of Siang. There he told the Membas that the Tangams had given him the vessel and the felling axe and had commissioned him to chop off the heads of all the Membas with the axe and cook them in the pot. Naturally this

enraged the Membas and they decided to punish the Tangams for their audacity. The news of this development reached the Tangams too late for negotiation and they prepared for defence. They cut the suspension bridge over the Siang to disrupt the line of communication of the Membas.

Pasu Chuchik was not idle all this time. He once again went to the village of Shimong and repeated the false story there. As he was thought to have come straight from the Tangam country his story was believed. There was great anger and a big Kebang was called at Likor. The meeting however, was divided in opinion till an old man respected for his wisdom supported war to drive away the Tangams from the Nigong valley. Immediately preparations were set foot but with such secrecy as no news of it leaked to the Tangams.

On the appointed day a strong Shimong detachment marched against Jido at the confluence of the Nigong and the Siang. The movement was swift and efficiently executed and the Tangams were absolutely in the dark about it.

The Bomdos, however, on the other bank of the Siang were on friendly terms with the Tangams. When they saw the Shimong warriors marching they wanted to help the Tangams and came upto Rigu Rirang. This village unfortunately was in good terms with the other Shimongs and stopped the Bomdos from further progress by cutting down the bridge near their village. The Bomdos waited for five days on the bank and shouted to the Tangams on the other bank to alert them of the danger and to make rafts for them to cross.

But as providence would have it, the Tangams did not hear the call for a long time and when they did and understood the message and set to make rafts hurriedly it was too late. The Shimongs had already crossed the Nigong. They had sent a detachment by another route which came down from the Abroka via the Dadogong hill near the present day Tasigong village in Nigong valley and caught Jido in a pincer drive. There was hardly any opposition and all were massacred. The invaders advanced, attacking and taking village after village burning them and killing men, women, children without mercy. A few miserable survivors managed with great difficulty to escape by different routes to Pemako across mountains and

went as far as Rashing in Eastern Tibet. Shimongs too followed them and came to Po which was then governed by Taro Deba Jipon Demen Wang. He had taken the Tangams under his protection. The Deba told the Shimongs to go back but Shimongs insisted on the surrender of their victims. The Deba thereupon thought of a plan to impress the Shimongs with his prowess. He had three long stout bamboos placed side by side and invited someone from the Shimongs to cut the three with a single stroke of the Dao. If any one could do it he would let them to do whatever they like with the Tangams. Many a Shimongs tried but no one could do it. After the Shimongs gave up, the Deba drew out his own big sword and accomplished the feat with great ease. He next had an egg placed on the head of one of his men and from a distance shot at it and hit it without as much as touching a hair of the head. The Shimongs were fully demoralised with these two demonstrations of strength and skill and so when he ordered them to go back and threatened them with dire consequence if they dare molest the Tangams now in his protection they left quietly without any protest. Back in their country they held a Kebang and the Kebang agreed that the war was a great mistake on their part. It had done them no good but on the contrary had made them kill their own kith and kin. It was decided to send emissaries to Po to persuade the Tangams to come back. At first a few of the Tangams could be induced to return and live in Shimong village. They too found the life of refugees depending on charity very unpleasant. They had no right of their own on the land and the rivers and had to depend solely on what their hosts gave them out of pity. So they decided to go back to their own land at Kuging and Nyereng in Nigong valley. Some of the Shimongs had settled in these places soon after the flight of the Tangams but they had to come back out of the fear of Idas who had occupied the Upper Nigong valley deserted after the war.

The idea of Tangams settling in that unsafe region which would serve as buffer between them and Idu appealed to the Shimongs and they willingly allowed the Tangams to resettle in their village. Thus Kuging, Nyereng and Mayum were resettled by the Tangams.

A legend later grew up among the Tangams introducing supernatural element as the cause of the war. A big 'Bine' snake used to come to the 'byango' of Kindo every day and lie on the main beam below the ceiling with its tail hanging down. The children of the village once saw it and started playing with the tail pulling it from one corner of the byango to the other. The snake liked it. So taken up with the game were the children that they forgot to go home for lunch. The elders did not know of this absence at meal times because they were out in the fields in the day. When, however, they came to know it. they were very much intrigued with the strange behaviour of the They asked them why they did not come home for food. The children told them of the game with the snake. The parents did not believe the story and while going to the fields next day asked one of the old man to stay back in the village and look into it. The man went to byango and saw the snake glide up the beam and children catching hold of its tail and playing with it. He ran to the fields and told to the people of what he had seen. They did not believe him and wanted to check up the story. Next day they did not go to the fields and waited for the snake to come. But it did not come that day. They thought that the snake perhaps had come to know of their presence and so did not turn up. They, therefore, secretly left the warriors behind when they went to the fields next day. These warriors hid in the jungle near the byango They saw the snake come and sprang at it from and waited. their hiding place with bows, arrows, Daos to kill it. But to their surprise the snake just vanished and nowhere to be seen.

It is only after a few days of this incident that the Shimongs attacked and the war started. The Tangams believe that the snake was a Wiyu—the spirit of the Shimongs and it set Shimong to punish them for their unprovoked attack on it.

When I saw the remains of Kindo in the wilderness I evinced an interest to know more about the tribe who once dominated the vast areas of Nigong Valley.

I began to visit their villages to develop understanding. Danbo Pinsan, Binbo Pinsan, Bompak Daji, Yombo Tamut, Aku Durin, Baniyok Daji, Dabo Yaro, Kakir Mayum, Tapo Moyum—the stalwarts of the clan became my personal friends.

As I could speak their language there was immediate rapport They willingly told me many of the myths and legends of the tribe, allowed me to study their life, took me to all places hallowed by the memories of their forefathers.

When on visit to the village I preferred to stay in their little cosy house. Sitting near a fire, sipping sweet 'Apong', I listened to their talks and filled my note books.

The task of writing was very laborious as informations had to be systematically analysed, sorted and properly documented. After initial draft was made these were to be checked up again in the field through the help of various informants and personnel observation to leave little chance of error.

I was lucky as I had no initial hurdles. The language was known and I was not a stranger in their midst. Many a time I went with them either in fishing or hunting expeditions or in the cultivation fields and it was really amazing to see how they accepted me as one of them.

Tangams retained many of their original social system. Sandwiched between two powerful groups—Membas and Shimongs it is however uncertain how long they would be able to maintain their distinct identity.

I was fortunate to witness a beautiful Solo performance by a woman during the 'Payin' festival. She was praising the guardian spirit 'Gumin Soyin' and asked him to bestow all his love on the people so that all become happy. To please him she has composed the song which she hoped he would be gracious enough to hear:

Ama Chacha

Amang Chacha
Nokene Taming Nine Kiding
Ama Chacha
Siyum Uiyum Demi Sime
Kineke Uiyum Demi Sime
Kiton Yomang Rajang Sime
Ngoru Tabe Beman Laju
Soman Tabe Beman Laju
Ngoru Meyo Duten Dahi
Todi Meyo Dute Dahi

Ngoru Tabe Beman Laju Soman Tabe Beman Laju—

The study on Tangams opened an another interesting aspect to trace the origin of the Adis. I began to weave the thread from various legends and myths and came to the conclusion that their original home must have been in the triangle of Burma where numerous Mongoloid tribes had the settlement but dispersed to regions of South East Asia due to various factors.

I based my theory on the fact that their material culture may be said to be based on bamboo, they lived in bamboo houses and most of their household articles and implements are made of bamboo. They practice shifting method of cultivation and their staple food is rice, maize and Yam. They drink fermented millet and rice beer and the process of brewing is the same. Distillation is unknown. A kind of crude tobacco grown in their fields is smoked through long bamboo pipes. Their dress is scanty, the barest minimum. They also show marked preference for large navigable rivers and temperate hilly tracts for habitation. The rivers draining this area pass through rugged hills answering the description and differing from bleak Tibetan land in climate, flora and fauna. Mild and moist, it is rich in bamboo and cane which is ultimutely woven into the fabric of life material, cultural and religious. fauna familiar with them in their present life and in their ancient tradition are the tiger, boar, snake, rat, squirrel etc; as well insects of various types that are natives to this type of land and climate. The traits, that have been stamped in their culture by these ecological factors must be very old, imprinted in an early formative period. It is only after these traits had crystallized that they moved out of the land of their original formation. Hence it is that though scattered widely over an area of difficult communication forcing segregation from one another, all of them retain the basic features to which of course, were added others derived from this effort to adjust to new environ-This later accretions give rise to an impression of diversity which bewilders the first and casual observers. closer scrutiny reveals the underlying bonds of homogenity

which in many cases are anomalous to the present pattern of life of the people.

The great importance of shells, for instance, in the life of the Dayaks of Borneo and the Nagas is one of such traits. The trace of this may also be found in many other tribes, those of NEFA, the hill districts of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, the Miaos of Yunan, Taos of Vietnam. Similarities in styles, dress and hair, rituals such as invoking spirits with rice grains, in reading omen in egg, in domestication of animals such as Pigs, fowls, dogs and mithuns underline the variations caused by different ecological settings and cultural contacts in the course of migration.

The dispersal of these people from their common home of origin might have been caused by some or all of the following factors—pressure exerted by population explosion and consequent movement of the tribes, one pushing the other out from their habitats, intertribal feuds, natural calamities and quest for better land, following change in subsistence occupations such as from food gathering to agriculture.

Natural calamities, internal feuds and congestions are known to have caused dislodgement of section and clans of Adis. Huddling together or co-existence is a thing which has no appeal to the tribe, their method of cultivation and domestication of animals and socio religious importance of hunting, fishing make extensive cultivable lands and forests with considerable stretch of rivers and streams essential for their existence.

As population in particular settlement increased, land, forest, and river or stream belonging to it become inadequate and emigrants move out in search of new lands and forests. Thus Damro started Dambuk and other colonies which in time grew into independent settlements. People in any village in Adi area can recount how their forefathers have come to the present place of habitation after a long journey from a distant dimly remembered place. There definite knowledge goes back not to a very distant past but their migration from their original home in the triangle of Burma may be traced with the help of fragments of tradition now so opaque as to be totally obscure to the people themselves.

The lines of their movement can be reconstructed from

the scraps of such traditions as still linger in the memory of the people.

They followed one of the tributaries of Salwin and Irrawady towards Rima. From there they pushed on and followed the course of a river which they called Nyulum Siang which is likely one of the branches of the Lohit. This river now-adays known as Zayul. Here they stayed for some time. This is the region where the blue and green beads so highly prized by the Adis are reported to have been found in plenty. Beads or Tadoks find copious and prominent mention in the traditional literature of the Adis which vouchsafe a very old association which was formed or developed in this region. The present Adi name Nimat for Tibetans referred to the Khampas of eastern Tibet as may be seen in folk tales of Shimongs.

After Sojourn in Zayul they started on a track along the Chindruk. The river led them to the high pass of Dasing La in Tibetan and Dajing Ego in Adi. They crossed it and came upon the Po Tsangpo which they called Namgong Siang. Most probably an adaptation of the Khampa name Langongchu. This is a large tributary of the Tsangpo and flows through the area known to the Adis as the country of the Taros. The Taros are frequently mentioned in Adi legends as a very cunning people with evil powers. Once Tani—the ancestor of Adis was thrown into Taro Siang by Taro tied within a hollowed log but he managed to come off unhurt.

This seems to indicate a conflct between the two peoples, the Tanis (Adi) and the Taros, for at the end the descendents of Tani had to part with the Taros and leave the country. The Taro area may be taken to be the country around Showa Monastery in North Eastern Tibet where Tsangpo girdles the Namche Barowa range. They might have taken a direct route to Pemako or followed the course of the river. They had to cross another high pass 13000 ft Sila La in Tibetan or Sila Ego in Adi and reached the Tsangpo called by them Ane Siang. Adi legend claims it to be the biggest river in the world.

Pemako they found more congenial to their habits for it resembled in climate, flora and fauna of their origin home in

Salween Mekong basin. Here they appear to have remained for a long time. Their original Solung Abang which they carried with them and enlarged upon and altered as they moved, received its final form here. New stories and myths were also composed. In short it was a period of of prosperity, contentment and literary activities.

The population must have grown rapidly and soon shortage of land was felt. Internecine conflicts started and colonizers began to move southwards. Natural calamities might have also precipitated the exodus. The Adi traditions mention a very big flood known as Pumu which covered the whole land. All efforts to drain out the water failed till the mythical Mithun, Polu Sobo dug outlet through the surrounding hills though his horn broken at Dembi La or Dembi Ego, a pass near the upper reaches of Nuggong river.

My studies on Tangams was completed sometimes in 1968. It took more than four years to prepare the manuscript. The book was published by the Government in 1975. It received a wide coverage as favourable Press review appeared in Newspapers. Some years later as I moved to a new area I brought cut another book, "The Idus of Mathun and Dri Valley". As the copy right for all the three books was reserved by the Government I was not paid any money nor did I receive any appreciation though the works have been praised outside in intellectual circles.

I never witnessed earlier a tiger hunt. Unless forced the people would not go for a 'Kiruk'—the community hunt. The tiger is a dangerous animal, it can turn into man eater and then its movement become evasive.

It was at Jido where a tiger began to lift Mithuns. Greatly exasperated with this menace people decided for a Kiruk in the thick jungle bordering Siang river. I went to see the grand operation from a safe distance.

Tiger hunt is attended with special taboos. Eating of banana before and after the hunt is specially forbidden. Banana neutralized the poison of the arrow and the tiger even if shot may come back to life. After the hunt the entire village observes taboo for two days. He who shot the tiger stays in the byango for five days with branches of the Lipek creeper tied round the

head, his sister's beads round the neck and her skirt around the waist. He should not sleep with his wife. If he eats a rat he he should throw away the head and if eats other animal, the bones.

He gets the skin and the head of the tiger. If two persons kill it together, he who shot first gets the head with the skin and the second only the teeth. The meat is not generally taken but given to the dogs and in the night they sing a song with the refrain, "Dali dali—e dalo rego aye—e" which tells the origin of the tiger and why it has to be killed.

Tiger was an off spring of Pedong Nane. He along with her other numerous children was brought up with care and taught what to do and what not to do, what was right and what was wrong. But he was somewhat of a wild nature and revelled in wickedness and mischief. Pedong Nane lost her patience with this incorrigible child and beat him with a burning brand. The marks it left can still be seen in the stripes on its skin. But instead of correcting himself the tiger ran away into jungle to lead a life his own liking. Since he had not learnt to grow his own food, he has to come out of the jungle to lift Mithuns and Pigs from the villages whenever he feels hungry. Men get angry with him for dama ging their property and so kill him. The song ends with a moral advise to the tiger. It tells him, "you have been killed because you were bad and have done wrong to us and so you should not take it ill. Now go back to your home in the jungle and try to live a good life. Do not harm anybody and no one will harm you".

It was a macabre scene hardly a few feet away from my 'safe' place. I was sitting on a high ground. The tiger supposed to be far away in the jungle. Suddenly from nowhere a huge beast appeared. Its menacing move ran a shiver down my spine. Headman of Jido, Appun Tekseng was with me. His second son—a sturdy young man took an aim with the gun but the tiger in a mighty leap flew over him, smashing the skull. The blood poured out in torrents. We ran to the unfortunate boy writhing in pain on the ground. He died a few hours later.

Entire Jido village rose for revenge. A wide area was cordoned off. In two days they located the tiger and shot it dead.

Once on a visit to Likor village—a Shimong Adi settlement I had an idea to climb a hill to see the Russel's Viper in its own habitat. I have heard several stories of this beautiful yet dangerous snake. It has lacerated triangular hood, the body faint yellow, lie coiled on the branches of the tree.

The hill 'Neji Etpang' is 8000 ft. through which a shortcut route led to Singing and Anging village on the bank of Siang. But the climb was tedious. I always carried my own pack and never engaged a porter. This practice followed to keep the body fit for tough outdoor works.

People were afraid to cross Neji Etpang for fear of spirit. The hill was densely wooded, and a natural den of tigers. When we were climbing the hill from the Likor village we cracked jokes just to forget the strain of the journey. But soon we were nearer to the top every sound seized—no one talked as dreaded spirit might be disturbed or tiger might be lying in wait. It was raining and so I was unlucky not to come across the snake as it had slipped off to a hole.

At Anging village I stayed in the house of Gungkeng Sitek—the headman of the village. When I was taking a rest Gungkeng unloaded his pack and there appeared a headless body af Russel's viper. He has caught the snake in an 'Eda'—a stone trap. He was very happy as something is available for the dinner. Snake flesh is very tasty as it is like the chicken meat or of soft taste like fish.

An old man in Singing village Yarin Sibo became deeply attached to me. He had lot of property yet no son who could inherit. I might be able to help him so he believed, to bring Toni Sibo of Puging village to be his adopted son. Toni was very close to me and Yarin knew it. But Toni had own problem and wanted to settle these first.

Yarin's house was little far from the main village across a depression where no one venture alone during the night as the place was haunted. Many times Yarin himself saw the spirit followed him but he never looked back. Laning Boli and Mikkeng Tekseng, my faithful companions warned me several times not to follow Yarin Sibo.

Yet I liked Yarin. He seldom meddled in other man's

affair and remained occupied with his own works. I was highly impressed with his nice paddy field on built up terraces.

In Singing I witnessed an aweful scene. Hundreds and thousands rodents bulldozed the crops in the Jhum field. The rodents appeared when bamboos flowered. Every day people trapped dozens of rats, their haversack full with the rats yet prolific growth never ceased. I saw a huge flock jumped to the Siang river in a bid to cross but swept away by the strong current. There was no damage on the other side of the river.

I rushed with a body of youngmen to cut the bridge over Nigong river. The rats followed like invincible armada. We removed a portion of the bridge so that rats might not be able to cross over. Because of our prompt action we saved the crops in Jido and Ngaming villages.

All the standing crops in Anging and Singing villages were lost. Yet famine did not occur as lush green vegetation was a vast store house of varieties of food ranging from edible leaves to mush-room. Rainfall as high as 150 inches provide the soil with adequate moisture throughout the year, resulting in growth of innumerable species of plants—from tiny lichens to gigantic trees.

Streams, rivers swarm with fish, the jungle pulsate with animal life, Beetles, Lizards, reptiles, rodents, birds and four footed animals provide seemingly inexhaustible source of protien food. No wonder, therefore, famine and pestilence which affect the people elsewhere never could cast a shadow here.

Relief poured in much later. Special sorties brought rice for distribution to villagers. I never had an idea that with the flowering of bamboo million of rats come up all of a sudden and devastate the entire area.

Bani Dangen, an orphan boy from Palin village was student in the high school at Along. One day he approached me for a job as he had to leave the study as no one was there to support him. Seeing his melancholy face I decided to help him. I went to all the Shimong villages and made an impassioned appeal to people to help a poor boy to continue his studies. The drive resulted in collection of Rupees Eight hundred

-quite a substantial sum at that time, which I handed over to Bani and directed him to go to Along to prosecute his studies.

Later he completed his Degree course and became the first graduate of Tuting. He could have made a fine career in Government Service but instead Politics lured him where he did not succeed.

Amidst quiet surroundings was the Dawa Kota Gompa where Yangsangchu river girdles it in three sides. To approach the Gompa the river had to be crossed by a make-shift bridge which was covered by flags filled with miniature prints—Om Mane Pema Hum—the jewel in the Lotus, which were continuously swayed by the breeze.

Huge poles with prayer flags were driven to the ground near the Gompa and to the approach of the village. Prayers were also carved on stone slabs in every conceivable places.

Near the Gompa was a 'Mane' wall plastered with yellow clay. Stones carved with prayers were also laid over the wall.

There was a small Pagoda like structure 'Tsorten' which is a symbol of four basic elements which according to Buddh ist theory make up our world. The part of Tsorten at ground level symbolizes earth, middle portion where religious relics are deposited stands for water, cylindrical neck is fire and top in form of Sun inside a crescent represent ether and air.

During summer the Dawa Kota Gompa remain cut off due to flood in the river. At the time the venerable Lama the Rimpoche of Yortung shuts him up from contact from outside world and remain immersed in prayer and meditation.

The venerable Lama of Yortung was a disciple of Dinjong Rimpoche who is now in Kalimpong.

Tamdring our Political Interpreter accompained me when I sought an interview with the Lama. Tamdring knew Khampa dialect and so our conversation went on smoothly.

The Lama robed in maroon cloth sat crossed leg on a cushion. I was impressed by the glistening face and his confident attitude. He was a celibate—a Gelugpa, who do not marry and shun the company of women.

I asked Lama how one could be happy. His answer was to overcome temptation and do not succumb to the greed.

One's salvation lie with the self and therefore follow the righteous path.

What he told me at that time was relevant. We become restless due to disturbed mind which are caused by anger, ignorance, pride, doubt and holding to contrary views.

Khambas of Yangsangchu valley are expert wood carvers. They made beautifully carved masks and images with clay or wood. They also know how to make paper, gum, ink from indigenous materials. To make paper they bring inner pith of a tree 'Soksing' from the high hill. The pith is dried and cut in small pieces. Ash is added to this and boiled in water. When this condenses then it is churned in a bamboo tube. This is then shaked in the water where a fine cloth is spread. Over this cloth sheets of paper come out which are then dried and ready for use.

For the gum they first clean the Mithun hide after burning off the hairs. The cleaned hide then boiled in the water which turn into sticky paste fit for the use as Gum. Pine smoke soot then mixed with it to give a permanent colour. It is also used as black print for the paper.

Gum can be made from Maize. The grains are fried for long time and mixed with small quantity of water and beaten to fineness. A sticky mass appear which then used as gum.

Nubo Dingo was a village of witches—a reputation which had been carried by the few inhabitants who once lived in Khamba village of Tashigong. They were driven out by the people on strong suspicion of witch craft though no one had seen any one of them doing so.

Nubo Dingo was five miles from Mankota—across the Yangsangchu river. There were three houses with thirty people. No one visit them for fear of 'Bilum', the witch craft. Poison is specially made by mixing rotten egg, snake venom and secretly thrown in the cup of drink or food. The village had earned such a worst reputation that no officials went there since the time of Major Hranga in 1954. He had toured the area and left a note on it.

Soon I expressed my desire to go, there was near consternation. Jyamtso Khamba, Gombu Dorjee, Tsom Chompi the leaders of Mankota and Yortung tried to dissuade me yet I

remained firm. The riddle of 'Bilum' must be solved. As expected no one volunteered to accompany except a young school student—Rinchemo who belong to Nubo Dingo. I carried a sleeping bag, a few essential articles in rucksack and marched off.

There was breath-taking beauty all round. Lush green vegetation, forest, mountain, meandering river Yangsangchu captivate the mind. The sky was mercifully clear and took a few snaps with my Camera.

It took $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours to reach the village. Rinchemo ran ahead to inform the people. He was full of enthusiasm. At once all houses were emptied, even a child was not left behind. I was given a rousing reception with traditional scarf. Rinchemo's uncle Pema Rinchen was not a 'Bilum' but he had married a girl from the village and so had to live here.

In the evening there was a grand party. They fed me so much with milk, butter, eggs and chickens. Till late night boys and girls danced the typical Khamba dance—full of rhythm:—

Chiring Chomo Lecho Lecho Le

Lecho Mala Lecho Ma Jao e Dung Jao e Cho Lomo Ro Ross.

Next morning when I set foot for Mankota all the people marched in procession singing and dancing. They came almost half way. An old woman who was believed to be the leader of 'Bilum' also followed the party. I looked at her closely but did not find any sign of mischief.

When I narrated my experience to the people of Mankota they took my words in utter disbelief. To them 'Bilum' remains forever, the craft travel from generation to generation. The secret is passed from mother to the daughter. It supposed to bestow wealth. Anyone who has been accepted in Bilum family can not escape from the circle.

I was told that perhaps it was unauspicious to try their craft on me—an outsider and so nothing might happen.

But whether it is a fact or fiction, the cases are heard about persons dying from unknown disease and doctors inability to diagnose the cause. So legend will remain.

Mosses Roy Lyndem, the energetic village level worker

of Nyokkong took me to Singa in the land of the Idus. Mosses
—a Khasi from Shillong was full of enthusiasm. He built up a
nice little garden where he had planted all seasonal vegetables.
He worked like a machine, never get tired. I was wondering as
to where from he got so much of energy.

Perhaps Mosses found a like minded fellow in me. So long I was touring in Yangsangchu valley he did not leave my company.

Ajoy Kumar Das, the Base Superintendent was posted at Singa. The place was at a hieght 5000 ft. and commanded a fine view of high range of Abroka. In winter it is bitter cold as snow come down to the camp.

Das had stamina. Anyone else would have broken down by sheer weight of boredom. There was none with whom he could strike friendship. The few police personnel were from far distance Rajasthan, his two Office clerks remain within their own orbit, the villagers shut themselves at the night fall for fear of 'Khinu'—the spirits whose journey commence just at that time. An eerie silence descend on the entire camp. Singa was too far from Tuting. Except the Mail runners he seldom had a visitor. His radio was off air when Jawaharlal Nehru died. For seven days he had no news.

Yet Das servived the long three years in a desolate place like Singa. He developed interest in some outdoor works, brought books for study. It is true that, "unless one had some interest—language, ornithology, ethnology, photography, painting, history, cooking, writing memoirs, anything—life could be confining."

Yet loneliness could be unbearable. It happened to Nashina, the Checkpost Officer whose camp was away from the route. So irresistible was the desire to see a visitor, he would sit for hours on the track till some one come on the way whom he would drag to his camp.

Once on my journey to the mountain I arrived at Ogong situated far from Tuting. It was surrounded by lofty hills, deep and impenetrable forest. A roaring river drowned all other noise. The jungle full of poisonous snakes, mosquitoes hum day and night. In the narrow river valley was the post with three officials—a Wireless Operator, Compounder and ithe

Checkpost Officer. A Dakota drop the ration on high DZ marked on the slope of the hill but half of the stores go down to the river or stuck on the tall trees.

Day after day, month after month three of them lived a life of exiled. A time came when they fell apart. Each one of them began to despise the other. They were not even in talking term.

I had no plan to stop at Ogong. We were in a hurry to go to the mountain.

But Dixon, the checkpost officer held me in a t'ght grip. His eyes were bulging in curious excitement. He dragged me to his room. What I saw was surprising. More than 200 family photographs spread over the cot and he was shuffling these again and again. His words were incoherant—telling me all the time of his home and near and dear ones.

A few days later we heard that he sent a Message to his Headquarter,—"Kill me with three not three but not without rice. Revert me to the post of constable but physically take me out of this place."

Dil Mohammed, the simpleton was the contingency staff who provided lot of fun. He lived in his own make believe world and all the time busy moving around. He was sure that a girl from Singing had been engaged to him. Every now and then girls trouped to his house and Dil Mohammed's ration stock devoured in no time!

Once he was on duty. Some one told him,—"Oh Dil Mohammed! What a shame. Your mother-in-law came to your house and you are here."

Dil Mohammed then dashed to his house at once but found no one. He was told that the old lady had left the place in a huff.

Dil Mohammed became so sad. All the time he repeated why no one had told him of her arrival!

Sometimes life at Tuting was enlivened with the arrival of visitors. LNK Dey—the new Political Officer, Along, came with one day programme but had to stay for nine days due to bad weather when no sortie flew into Tuting.

LNK Dey was an ex-Assam Regiment Officer and was full

of wits and humour. We burst in chorus with him on famous regimental mess song:

Bodlu Ram ki Bodon
Jomin ka Niche Hai
Ar Ham Uska Ration Khata Hai
Ha La Loo Loo Loo Iya
Ar Ham Uska Ration Khata Hai.

Rifleman Bodluram died and his body is in the grave. Yet the name has not been struck off from the roll and so ration issue continued which was shared by all!

On way to Bone the Siang passed through a gorge. The span of the river was hardly 50 ft. On the other bank a solid rock rose to several feet high. Every time when a shout was made it echoed from the rock. We had lot of fun. We hurled abuses and the same words came back to us! While Membas did not feel much of it but Adis bad a fear. They thought a spirit reside there and answer the call.

Near Bone lived a tribe who long since vanished. Seeing the appearance of full moon over the hill they thought how easy it could be to reach and so began to construct a mighty ladder. But when the ladder reached several feet high, the weight suddenly crushed on them and many of them died. The place still borne the legend.

Once a woman on a visit to a place saw the beautiful moon and exclaimed, "Look! It is just like the moon which appeared in our village!"

At Korbo near the border a Dakota arrived on a dropping mission. Seeing the arrival of the Plane an Officer said, "Oh! Look! This is the same Plane I boarded at Mohanbari. I know the Pilot so well. He would be happy to see me here." So saying, he went near the D.Z., took out his handkerchief, began to waive at the Plane. A heavy load crushed inches from him and he miraculously escaped sure death. The poor fellow got shock of his life.

I found a friend in Dr. Golok Nath Gogoi and B.K. Sangma, the Base Superintedent, Tuting.

Dr. Gogoi was an avid reader of books on various subjects. Many evenings we passed together. He told me on Science and Philosophy and I was no less influenced by his thought. He was simple in his habit and never bothered on food or dress. He was a graduate in Anthropology but stumbled by accident to become a student of Medicine. After passing out from the Medical college he joined the Frontier Service and was posted at Tuting. He later married a Tangam girl from Mayum village.

He had some interesting observation. Once he told me how Pigs in search of food indirectly help the farmer by digging up the soil. If hundreds of Pigs are let loose in the field during off season there will be no need of tillage operation!

His one drawback however was that he could not break away from the traditional society. He held great faith on charms and astrology. A number of rings decorated his fingers—each one supposed to have special sphere of influence.

He was also an inveterate smoker. The brand was Charminar. Once he caused me great deal of amusement. Just before the morning local news he dashed to my room in a hurry and asked to tune the radio. In the news, weather bulletin will be read—if weather is good the plane will come, if plane come then surely Charminar Cigarette will arrive!

Bentick Sangma was not an outdoor type. Simple and unassuming he loved to live with his family.

He had been a teacher in the Garo Hills but came to the frontier in search of better prospect.

He had rigid faith in whatever told in Bible. There was interesting dialogue between him and Dr. Gogoi who belonged to another school of thought—Hinduism. Sangma was convinced that day of judgement has come very near and all must prepare for it. To Dr. Gogoi one's destiny is linked with 'Karma' and cannot get out of it.

Sangma found a sympathetic cord in me though I did not adhere to many of his orthodox belief. My own family members are Christians and I have studied in Mission Colleges yet I was guided by my own rational thinking.

Much of Sangma's talks were however true. It was due to the Missionaries his people have been emancipated. Defying the innumerable hurdles—absence of roads, incongenial climate, hostile people, Malaria and like other diseases, the Missionaries opened the Schools, Hospitals in remote interiors, given them a script and a proud bearing.

It was Robins Burling who gave them a grammer and raised the status of their language. Robins Burling is a legendery name in Garo Hills. When he first came he did not know the language but meticulously studied it before he started his field work.

How many of us I wondered followed the example of Robins Burling.

Dr. Tikedar of Zoological Survey of India who is an international authority on spider, requested me to locate a rare species supposed to be in the area. He gave me box with preservatives and bottles. To keep my promise I ran after the spider in jungles and collected dozens of species. Soon I earned the name from the witty villagers as Tarum Migom! Tarum in Adi is spider.

However I did not hear from Dr. Tikedar whether he could find the rare species from the collection which I sent to him.

Summer of 1968 brought the news of my transfer. Four years and six months of eventful career in Tuting thus came to an end. I moved out to another hill on an assignment quite different from the one which I had so far. Seven years later when I came back to the Frontier, the name of the Territory changed to Arunachal—the land of the dawn lit sun.

A twin engined commando took off from Tuting. I was the sole passenger in the special sortie. The pilot was kind enough to call me to the cockpit as he flew low over the river valley.

There over Yingkiong I saw my Bahunias proudly stood and nodding in the breeze as if to say 'Adieu'.

Further down I saw ant like figures digging the way on what is known as 'Goremonying'—a sheer clift, hundreds of feet over the Siang river. No one, not even a deer could pass through the cliff—so stiff is the face. Yet I saw those figures walking. How strange it appeared.

The road snaking its way up and down the hills. In the distant horizon did I see cotton balls—some white, some dark building up in profusion? Was this nimbus or cumulas? A wind is gathering and storm is brewing—a change of far reaching dimension already appeared in the scene.