



***Gurkha war memorial Chushul***

EX-TRESATH TREK CHUSHUL



JUNE 2000

TO COMMEMORATE ACTION OF  
3 TP BSN AT CHUSHUL  
AUG 1962 TO FEB 1963

AND ALSO  
SUPREME SACRIFICE OF  
LATE SWR MANGAL CHAND

*Army post near Rezang La*



- *The Rezing La (c.5000m) is a Pass on an isolated Ridge, about eleven km south of the Spangur Gap and it dominated the life line of the Chushul Garrison and the road link to Leh via Dungti, and thus had to be protected.*
- *The nearest Indian post to its south was at the Tsaka La. Since there was only one battery of 13 Jat located at the Spangur Gap, the Rezing La Company was without Artillery support.*
- *The Chinese attacked Rezing La with Battalion strengths at the crack of dawn, but the quixotic soldiers of the Charle Company, 13 Kumaon repelled wave after wave of Chinese attack.*

***The silent audience of the high altitude  
battle fields of 62'***



- *Of the thousand mortar bombs with the defenders all but seven had been fired and the rest were ready to be fired when they were overrun.*
- *Major Shaitan Singh of the 13 Kumaon was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra for inspiring his men at the Rezang La to fight beyond expectation in spite of being grievously wounded, as he hobbled from one trench to the other.*
- *This amazing battle is often compared by military historians to that of the famous Thermopylae Pass battle, where outnumbered Greeks led by King Leonides of Sparta died fighting the Persian King Xerxes' Army.*



**REZANG LA MEMORIAL**

**13 KUMAON**



- *The going for the invading Chinese was even tougher at Gurung Hill which they had attacked simultaneous to their assault of the Rezang La. At the crack of dawn, they began intense bombardment of the Gurung Hill, Spangur Gap and Magar Hill Indian posts.*
- *The invading Chinese soldiers were however surprised by the accuracy of the gunners on Gurung Hill.*
- *Second Lieutenant S.B. Goswami (Artillery Observation Officer) did an incredible job of directing accurate artillery fire at the PLA soldiers, causing heavy toll on the PLA.*
- *Chinese soldiers approaching close to the Gurung Hill were further surprised by the heroics of Platoon Commander Tej Bahadur Gurung who motivated his men to attack the Chinese with their Gurkha Khukris.*
- *The Chinese fell back due to this fierce Gurkha onslaught. The brave Gurkhas eventually perished, with all members of the platoon laying down their lives defending Gurung Hill.*



- *As Indian troops were asked to withdraw back, S.B. Goswami continued directing accurate Artillery fire and kept the Chinese at bay to enable the withdrawing troops move back unhindered*
- *In due course of time, the Indian Guns became silent and the Chinese gained Gurung Hill. Goswami was severely wounded and given up for dead*
- *However, in the middle of the night of the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, the intense and bone chilling cold stopped his bleeding and he crawled all the way back to the Indian positions, such was his will to live! Ironically, the next day or so, the Chinese declared a cease fire*
- *When the smoke cleared, the Chinese were sitting pretty on their claim line and the Indians in a state of befuddlement.*



*It was almost fifty years since the 'Last Stand' of our fearless soldiers, yet all that we are left with today are these war memorials standing like totem poles in one desolate corner of Ladakh. These are symbols of extreme courage against overwhelming odds', lest we forget. Do we ever stop to ponder and appreciate the selfless sacrifices made by the unsung Indian soldier in the Ladakh front of '62? The Rezang La War memorial records for our introspection:*

*'How can a Man die Better than facing Fearful Odds,  
For the Ashes of His Fathers and the Temples of His  
Gods,  
To the sacred memory of the Heroes of Rezang La,  
114 Martyrs of 13 Kumaon who fought to the Last  
Man,  
Last Round, Against Hordes of Chinese on 18  
November 1962.  
Built by All Ranks 13th Battalion, The Kumaon  
Regiment.'*

- *The whole Company however was almost wiped away in their valiant defiance that was sustained by them till late evening.*
- *They lost the battle but not their honour and they inflicted heavy casualty amongst the Chinese troops who had attacked them from all sides, before being overrun.*
- *When Rezang La was later revisited, dead Indian soldiers were found in the trenches still holding on to their weapons.*
- *Almost every single man of this company was found dead in his trench with several bullet or splinter wounds.*
- *The 2-inch mortar man died with a bomb still in his hand.*
- *The medical orderly had a syringe and bandage in his hands when the Chinese bullet hit him.*





**AT THE TSAGA LA 4635m**

- *We soon rose to the 4635m Tsaka La from where the route leads down to the outpost and village of Loma. The Tsaka La post in 1962 had been the grim witnesses to the Rezang La battle.*
- *Throughout this stretch we espied innumerable Army Posts atop the border ridges and also sensed being watched through powerful binoculars.*
- *As we descended towards more level terrain, the wonderful sight of the meandering Indus flowing past stretches of green meadows in the backdrop of scarlet coloured rocky outcrops was truly inspiring*
- *. We reached metalled roads once again and were now deeply entrenched in Changpa country, the land of the pastoral nomads and their herds of Pashmina goat.*
- *Brightly dressed in colourful clothing and bedecked with exquisite stones, they live in quaint little tents called Rebos and followed rather unusual and nomadic life styles*



***SURAJIT BISWAS, PRATIK MUKHERJEE AND SELF AT THE TSAGA LA***



***Our skilled driver Wangchuk , Pratik Mukherjee and the driver's young assistant***



***Changpa Rebo***



***Friendly Marmot***

**PURE PASHMINA!**



- *They sport long hair that perhaps do not acquaint with brushes for years. The hair is tied up in a pig tail over rather unwashed faces, but one that is well accustomed to the smoky Rebo fires.*
- *They do strike rather unusual appearances and speak in a Tibetan dialect called Changkyet.*
- *Their religious origins can perhaps be traced back to the animistic religion called Bon.*
- *Equally unkempt and unwashed Tibetan Mastiff dogs (who guard their animals) hung around outside the tents, eyeing us with intense displeasure.*

- *We passed inquisitive Marmots peeping from their sandy burrows and crossed several Kiangs gamboling across the country, nonchalantly ignoring our intrusion.*
- *The Changthang Highland is riddled with pristine lakes of all forms and shapes. The Pashmina goats scramble up the steep mountain ridges around these Lakes like Everest veterans. Smoke emerges from the top of the Rebos as the mid day meals are cooked adjacent to gurgling little brooks and streams.*
- *The landscape is expansive and barren, with touches of green along the edges of the lakes and the banks of the rivulets. There was a great deal of tranquility all around. Even the wind was calm and sedate. This was summer in its most comfortable disposition. In contrast, the long winter months are usually harsh on man and beast with sub zero temperatures and biting wind from the North, being the natural order.*
- *Loma led to Nyoma, a sub divisional headquarter that teemed with an abundance of colourfully bedecked Ladakhis, since a renowned Rimpoche from India was holding religious prayers there.*



***Advanced air landing ground (ALG) near Nyoma***

- *For the Ladhakis, religion seems to be their strongest bond and central to their existence.*
- *We could not find any room for ourselves in this overflowing hamlet till our music addict driver Wangchuk and his fresh faced 'Lama in the making' brother (who was also part of our entourage) had to request their father Thuptan Zangpo (who worked in the local WWF office), to allow us to pitch a tent in the back yard of the WWF office.*
- *Thuptan readily agreed and even asked his sons to muster some food for us without any charge. The pure air of Ladakh and the Buddhist way of life, perhaps suppresses pecuniary instincts!*
- *On the way to Nyoma we had passed the new Advance Landing Ground (ALG) of the IAF.*
- *With the Chushul Airstrip remaining defunct since the '62 skirmishes, such ALG's would have an important role to play in the eventuality of future border disputes in Ladakh.*

*Wild Kiang of the  
Changthang*





**ITBP**  
**CHECK POST**  
**LOMA**  
**HEIGHT - 13861 FEETS**



***Our travel hardened Jeep that did ot let us down even once***



# Kiagar Tso (4845m)



## Natural climbers!



## *Meandering Indus near Loma*



*The next day we travelled through extremely picturesque country towards the Tso Moriri (4650m), crossing the surreal Kiagar Tso (4845m), that had snow clad peaks framed in its back drop.*

*The terrain around Mahe, Sumdo and the Namshank La was full of Changpas tending to their livestock and absorbing the short summer warmth.*

*Karzog (4527m), where we spent the night, is located on the banks of the exotic Tso Moriri Lake and over looks the Chhamser Kangri (6622m) and Lungser Kangri (6666m) peaks, across the Lake.*

*The Mata peaks (also referred to as Mentok by some) are located above and behind the Karzog Monastery.*

*In the distance rose the snowy peaks of the Himachal.*

*Trekking trails abounded around us over innumerable passes and ridges.*

**Tso Moriri from above Karzok**



- *The Tso Moriri Lake and its marshy hinterland being protected territory for wildlife, was home to innumerable birds of all colour, shapes and sizes*
- *They chirped merrily in gay abandon on the lake's edges.*
- *The high mountain lakes of Ladakh are the only breeding grounds of the exotic Bar headed Geese and the Bar necked crane, outside China and Sikkim.*
- *We were fortunate in that we were able to peruse them in large numbers.*
- *On our last leg, we crossed the intensely briny Tso Kar (4535m) whose banks were plastered with thick and white salt deposits.*
- *We then travelled over a dusty road toward the Tanglang La (5250m) and thence to Leh, to complete our memorable circuit of the Changthang Highlands.*

Section of briny Tso Kar



- *In retrospect, the Changthang mystique had enamoured us three oxygen starved idiots totally for we were already planning our next trip into the Changthang Highlands even before we returned back to Leh!*
- *On this trip we had missed out on the last frontier town of Demachok, the Astronomical Observatory at Hanle or perhaps the rough safari along the banks of the Tso Moriri towards the wilderness of Chumur, and thus we wanted to go back again.*
- *The ghosts of Chushul and the lure of the Changthang mystique have now become irrevocably ingrained within us.*
- *We have learnt to appreciate the value of free air, the sacrifices and the toil that our faceless soldiers undertake on our frozen borders.*
- *In restless dreams, we relive the highland battles and the 'Last Stand' of our brave warriors of '62.*
- *Murmurs of discord keep surfacing from time to time at locations like Demchok and Chumur. But, perhaps we have now matured in the subtleties of Oropolitics for a wiser tomorrow.*





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