

The Tawang Trip

The plan

We i.e Chawre, Bond, Sarje and me had already planned of going to Tawang last sem. We tried to go there after endsems at start of December but due to assam disturbance were not able to execute it. So when we came back this sem, we had this plan at back of our mind and with the Bihu holidays on way, we had to work fast. So planning started a week before and seeing our plan some of our friends started teasing us saying – ‘ ja tawang .. agle buddh ko yahaan dikhna nahi chahiye’. So one day sarje and Bandar went to city to inquire about sumo. It was costly. So after lot of discussions we decided to go to Tezpur by bus and plan the road ahead from there. The approx budget Rs 2K.

Our planning was marred with lot of people joining us and leaving us within hours and again rejoining us. Finally had to take some hard decisions to drop jassi, raak, dheeru, pandy, at the penultimate night of our start of trip as it was practically not economic to take them along.

So after all the hoch poch we left our hostels at 900 hrs bus to city.

1st day

Reaching city I went out to look out for bus while chawre and fucku went on for permits to visit AP. Some came a hour late. Bought some medicines and food items and had some snacks. All well and Bon Voyage.

At noon the bus started. Phadu bus tha. It felt like plane with overhead luggage compartments and plush seats. I was tired and went to sleep. Woke up somewhere near Nagaon. Had tea and snacks. Thereafter reached Tezpur. Hurriedly we went into our old hotel Royal. Then formed 2 groups and started looking for Sumo. The kutiya group got one for 4.5K and we for 4.6K. After discussions settled for the 4.5 one on Dharampal (a good decision which helped us greatly in our future leg of trip). Got the news that sudhir's bro is getting married. So after our dinner at Punjab hotel, sudhir bought beer. I didn't have it. Slept thereafter dreaming about our trip with Farhan on the same bed.

2nd day

Was to wake up at 4 but woke up at 5. Got ready fast and asked other to do so. Went to the travel's office only to know that sumo mein koi panga ho gaya hai.. it will be ready soon else another sumo will be provided to us. So had our breakfast of idli but still sumo was not there. So finally 3 of us went and we were provided a sumo which was not in best of its condition. Its pinion shaft was not working properly. So after boarding, stopped at Balipara where we lost about an hour in repairs. There was a slight drizzle and the sumo was not repaired fully .. just kaam chalau. Chalo jo hoga dekha jayega. Reached Bhalukpong in an hours time. Saw again the beautiful views of the Kameng river though this time didn't go down to the beach. Had photos from the road only. Crossed Tippi and along the unwinding road of the hills started gaining height. It was cloudy with some fog on the roads too but was a pleasant journey. Enjoyed the fresh breeze coming in as I was seated near the window on front seat. Then reached the waterfall .. a nice one. Had some masti there. Chota Bandar started feeling unwell and had vomited. In between one of the tyres got punctured too. So when we stopped to replace it.. chota bandar was given

pudin hara magar uska haal bura tha. Moved on and crossed nag mandir. Stopped there for lunch. Before that went down to the river stream and enjoyed. Bond gira tha aek baar magar bach gaya. Chalo had a wonderful lunch .. truly speaking mast waali sabzi thi .. much better than out mess and that too at cheap rates. Moved on crossed sessa and other small villages. Bomdila was also crossed without stopping and moved over to Dirang where we heard no sumo has come from that side. Some sumos had left from this side but whether they reached Tawang or not was not known. A police ambulance had returned back. Dharampal said ki agar nikal gaye to bhi aapko bahut kast hoga aur agar phaanse to bahut kast hoga. But we were in form and with our adventure spirit getting over our logic, we decided to move forward .. jo hoga dekha jayega – agar phanse to sumo mein hi ruk lenge (what a wrong approximation of the situation out there) . so moved ahead and layers of snow started. It was already dark by now and we followed the road which was initially marked by 2 black lines which gradually changed to 2 marks of ice in neighboring snow. We moved on and reached Sela with only one mistake on path where subhash was driving and the sumo slipped to the edge of the road towards the khai. Thereafter the whole driving to tawang was done by Dharampal. Till Sela ice was less but after we crossed it grew thicker. The first sight of a sumo surrounded by thick layers of ice was the first shock. Followed it was a maruti car and more sumos some on the side . some on the road. Subhash went out to find what can be done. Some of us went to piss but were soon inside due to the intense cold conditions outside (temp around -15 to -20). There a red sumo carrying lamas which was on road. I along with subhash pushed it till a turn to right so that our sumo can pass. While pushing it I was knee deep in snow and with only a thin cotton pant to protect me – the only layer of clothing between the ice at -15 and my skin at +37. It felt like my leg will freeze but after it was pushed away .. there was another sumo at the turn .. which again was pushed slightly to give our sumo some way out. In the while inside chota bandar was almost out. Our diesel was freezing and we needed to get out of it fast. On way out we saw more sumos .. a bus.. and 2 trucks(but they were not in snow). Gradually we reached RA3.. the life saver for the night for many. An aunty returning from Tawang to Itanagar was there. I will say the people of AP are very good. The lady owning the shop quickly brought angithi for us which was surrounded by all except me in no time. We had some tea and took some liquid diesel as we were running out of diesel (as it was freezing + all the way sumo went of gear 1/2 which ate more diesel than needed). We had left the engine running .. and soon left the place. Some 10-15 kms still remained in those cold conditions. We moved on slowly and on occasions our sumo stopped due to frozen diesel but as it was downhill now it moved on .. only on one occasion we had to get down and push it. We passed the danger/cold area surrounded by bamboo without much trouble and saw the first lights of tawang. We reached jang where I got my first chance to warm my frozen feet.. got some hot tea and beer too. Along with dharampal lit up firewood under the diesel tank to melt it. Still after 15-20 .. the whole ice cover over it was not gone!! We moved ahead knowing that the danger zone is now over. It was already past midnight. We reached tawang where at the base of the hill dharampal got down for his home. Subhash put us up the Tourist Lodge. After some problems of getting our confirmed reservation we took 4 rooms .. put our luggage there and some of us went out at 0230 hrs to tawang market to take some photos. Temp was sub zero as the water in small potholes in the road was frozen .. Returned and after some bakchodi went to sleep at around 4

3rd day

Woke up at around 10 and woke other up. No water. Water is frozen and it will start melting was the reply. In that frozen water I brushed and got ready. Subhash came on time and with some time discussion on money, by 12 we were ready to go. We went to PTSO. Subhash was not ready to take us to the lake up but stopped near a small lake down. We needed to take permit as it was defence area near China-Bhutan border. On reaching the small lake sudhir started moving towards it. I cautioned him 3 times not to move inside as its not frozen but he did – chppppaaakk.. and he is all wet .. but enjoyed a lot there with snow balls.. breathtaking views of sela ridge and other peaks. After masti there we thought of hiking up on our feet. Kutiya was having severe headache so he remained in sumo. After some hike bandar was out too. I and bhabhi continued ahead. Soon we were close to F and bond. I asked them to come along but with no encouraging response we decided to move ahead. We hiked a lot. I don't know how much but around 30 mins of steep climb.. sometimes on road sometimes on the rough mountainside. Army trucks and a sumo passed us on the way. Took lot of photos and finally ended our hike at a mandir. With no lake at sight we started our climb down. On way we got the other 6 too. And on way down went inside army bunkers and all . Then returned to tawang market where we had hot soup which infused life into our dead bandar. People started feeling well and returned to our lodge although F who didn't have his lunch was now turned to subject. After some time he asked for food. I was ready to go to market for food but no one else .. then came bhabhi thanx to him who accompanied me . Bought food for him and talked of sumos too on the way . Returned. After Farhan too felt well and we had our mast wala dinner with pel ke chicken. Talked to the attendant there about liquor and (bandi ???). Magar na who daru laya na hum bandi ki baat kar sake .. In between dharampal ko phone nahi lag pa raha tha due to some problem so couldn't confirm the return trip to him.. Went to sleep.

4th day

Woke up at 8 by sudhir. He was enquiring about the plan today and talk to dharampal .. it was nice to see people taking some sort of responsibility. Usne phone lagaya and luckily unke ghar lag gaya.. unki bibi se baat hui. Kuch der baad unka phone bhi aaya .and the plan was confirmed. But again here no water but by luck geyser was working but no water. Water supply came after some time. Although some people got ready with cold water .. some were waiting for hot water which turned out to be the bone of contention for some. But luckily the sumo came much late so it was not turned to an issue. Had our breakfast of dosa and went to the 400 yr tawang monastery. Had some time there and lot of photos and then on course to Bomdila (our planned halt to stay at night). Then crossed tawang to way down to the waterfall (also hydel power project). Had some good time there to jang where we had our lunch. And I forgot to mention that we had a puppy now to accompany us – a nice cute one – the beloved of sarje – and daughter of roxy. Moved on and stopped at yaswantgarh. Got to know that yaswant baba was seen just a few hours before. Moved on till sela. Took some photos there too . The best thing to happen to us was just after we crossed sela. The breathtaking view of cloud filled valley – we were over clouds and clouds filling it up like a cloud fall over a distant ridge – with mountain peaks looking like islands in the sea of clouds – and due to sunset the sky turned from blue to orange to red at the edges. We moved down and were covered by clouds/fog. The

same thing happened as when we were going .. ice was depositing on the front glass. The only way out was to use our hot hand (was it hot??) to melt it and wipe it . The result my hand turned white frozen and I and dharampal continued doing so till we reached down. We planned to go on till we can go but before dirang at padma hotel got the news of landslide blocking the road 5 kms before bomdila. So we had to stay over there for the night. There we met Greg (consultant from US) who had stayed at the room next to ours in the lodge at tawang. Talked to him. In the meantime bandar was suffering from severe stomachache which was getting worse with time. It was time for some medical help . Talked to dharampal about the scope of help we can provide. He told us all to go to dirang and find out what to do. I thought of some going with him and some staying back so that more people don't turn to subjects. We decided on the latter and finally 5 went and 5 including me stayed. I really felt left out at that point of time but wished for their safe return as we had problems of fuel. Then talked to dharampal and others on lot of topics and waited for their return . They returned in some 1.5-2 hours. It went all right .. they got a good attendant and a good doctor who gave him a painkiller injection and he was alright when he returned – a sigh of relief. Finally people went to sleep 7 on the bed made by tables . bhabhi on one bench and I and bond on 2 benches. But people were coming and going which kept me awake. After some time kutiya woke me up as he was unable to sleep. Remembering that he can turn into a subject a next day if he does not get a warm sleep (that was what he told 2 days before) .. so gave my bench to him and I went to the chair with all my warm clothes over me. Just sat there .. In between one of the girls there asked about me .. I said I was alright.. then sudhir woke up and I got his company. Had a walk and lots of talk. Then bond then DJ .

5th day

At around 5-515 went to sleep only to be woken up after half an hour. Brushed my teeth and went on a solo walk . Near the river with its noise of water crashing on rocks and the reverberations (echo) from the mountain walls gave me a lot of peace. Went to padmasana for some time and felt peace and happiness at heart. Returned and found others too. Had some tea and biscuits. Bade goodbye to Greg and others and moved ahead on our journey. Crossed dirang only to get stuck in the landslide. Met with Greg there again. All of us were fine there. Had maggi .. and took photos of the landslide. It was cleared after noon at around 2. We moved ahead and had our lunch at nag mandir. On way to bhalukpong had the best part of travel with lot of songs in chorus and no danger. Only problem arose when we were near sessa of lack of fuel and brake oil (in downhill that's not a good sign) .but reached bhalukpong well. Had fuel there and reached tezpur. Booked our seats for Guwahati and some of us went to Tezpur mela. Lot of maals and some good food too. Enjoyed and ended it with that something like phaanoosh made of sugar. Really liked it having it after such a long time. Boarded the bus to ghy. On way always felt like I was moving down the hills taking alternate left and rights. Reached ghy at 430 and by sumo to IITG.

That ended one memorable adventurous learning and of course dangerous trips in my life.