

World Carnivorous Plant Day

World Carnivorous Plant Day honours the remarkable plants that thrive by trapping and digesting insects and small organisms. From Venus flytraps to pitcher plants and sundews, these species evolved unique survival strategies in nutrient-poor environments. The day raises awareness about their ecological importance, conservation needs and the delicate habitats they depend on. It also inspires curiosity about biodiversity and plant science, reminding us that nature's ingenuity extends far beyond what we see every day.



#BLOWN

The Seven Sutherland Sisters

These Victorian Icons let Fame slip through their Fingers



In the late 19th century, the world was captivated by a group of siblings whose extraordinary hair became their ticket to fame and fortune. The Seven Sutherland Sisters, originally from Scotland, were Victorian celebrities known far and wide for their incredibly long, flowing locks. With a combined hair length totalling an astonishing 11 meters (over 36 feet), these sisters embodied the era's ideals of femininity and beauty, captivating audiences and redefining celebrity culture.

From Humble Beginnings to Global Fame

The sisters, Sarah, Victoria, Isabella, Grace, Ruth, Mary, and Dora, moved to the United States, where they quickly became a sensation. Their hair was so long and lustrous that it became their trademark, propelling them into vaudeville shows, advertisements, and stage performances. They toured the country, showcasing their hair as both a natural wonder and a symbol of feminine allure. Their presence was so magnetic that they were regularly featured in magazines and newspapers, inspiring countless women to grow and care for their own hair.

The Hair Care Empire

Recognizing the commercial potential of their signature asset, the sisters launched a line of hair care products, including oils, brushes, and soaps, claiming that their secret to hair health could be shared. Their business boomed, with products flying off shelves across America. For a time, the Seven Sutherland Sisters were not just entertainers; they were also pioneering entrepreneurs in the burgeoning beauty industry.

The Critical Mistake That Changed Everything

But despite their early success, the sisters made a critical mistake that would eventually contribute to their downfall, one that continues to be made by many today: they failed to innovate and adapt. As the 20th century



approached, new competitors entered the hair care market, offering scientific formulations and modern marketing techniques. The Sutherland Sisters clung to their old-fashioned remedies and vaudeville performances, refusing to modernize their brand or product line. Meanwhile, the public's fascination with their hair began to wane, replaced by new beauty ideals and emerging celebrities.

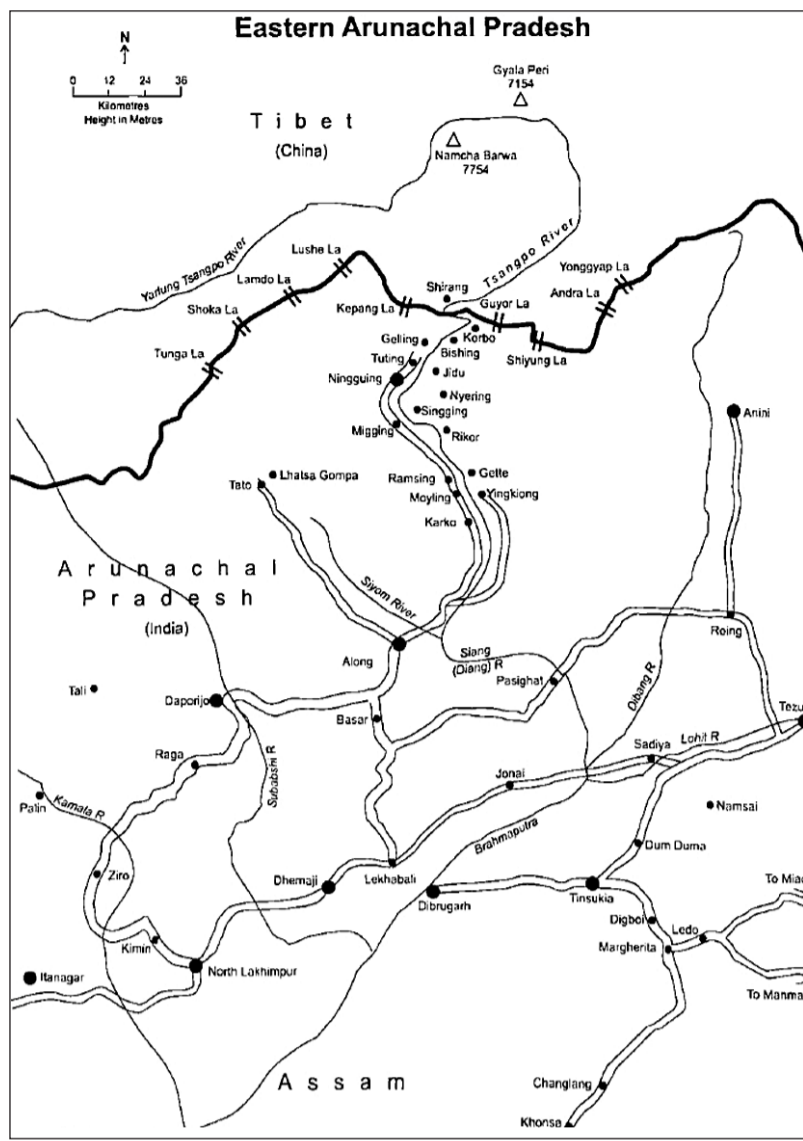
Lessons from the Past for Today

The story of the Seven Sutherland Sisters is a cautionary tale about the fleeting nature of fame and the importance of innovation. While their incredible hair earned them celebrity status and wealth, their inability to evolve with changing times caused their brand to fade into obscurity.

Even now, many brands and individuals make the same mistake, resting on past glory instead of embracing change, creativity, and growth. The sisters' legacy reminds us that success is not only about what makes you famous but also about how you sustain and evolve that fame in an ever-changing world.

Final Thoughts

The Seven Sutherland Sisters dazzled the Victorian world with their breathtaking hair and entrepreneurial spirit. Though their moment in the spotlight was brief, their story lives on as a fascinating chapter in the history of beauty, fame, and the importance of adaptation. So, next time you hear about them, remember: their hair was legendary, but their real story lies in the lessons their rise and fall teach us today.



Harish Kapadia

Since Kingdon Ward's day, there have been no significant advances. The Tsangpo still guard its secrets, and will continue to do so until the last great Asian adventure, a journey all the way up the Brahmaputra from the Assam valley to the Tibetan plateau, is undertaken.

For earlier explorers, journeys towards the Tibetan highlands from India began in the plains of Assam, arranging supplies, mules and porters. Now, roads have been built leading many kilometres towards the mountains, so, the journey begins with hiring a taxi. We hired a big one for the 985 km journey from Dibrugarh, in the valley of Assam, to Tuting high in Arunachal Pradesh (formerly NEFA), heading towards the Tsangpo bend.

The first thing one has to ensure while hiring a taxi in mountain areas, apart from good tyres, a good driver and enough diesel, is to see that it has a good cassette player. The hill drivers are addicted to driving with music, any will do as long it makes enough noise to keep him company. In fact, when fog and rain make visibility poor, volume of music is made louder and louder to enable the driver to concentrate better. Our taxi had a player with unique features. The tape always ran at a faster speed making well-known male singers sound more

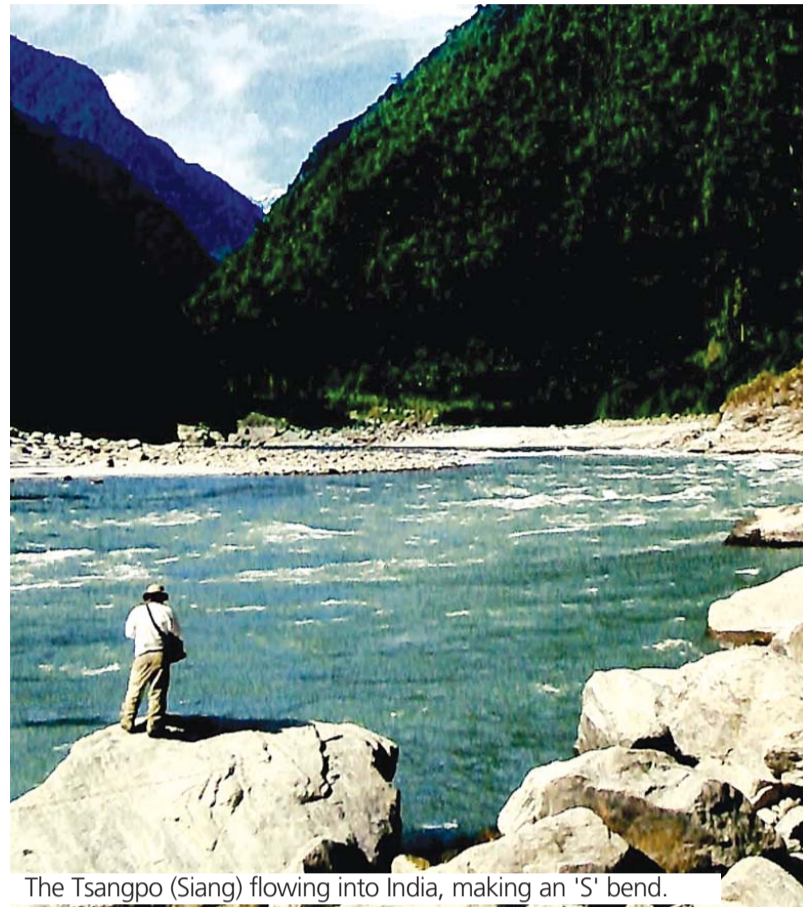


Tsangpo-Siang 'S' Bend at border. Dapang Peak (5570 m) in left background. Bailey had reached foot of this peak on Nugong Asi Nala.

like female singers, and as far as female singers were concerned, the less said the better. As we drove along narrow lanes of the so called 'National Highway No. 52', the driver matched his speed with that of the tape. But I found it too difficult to keep my mind's eye on as fast a track as the tape. It was exasperating to imagine lightly clad Bollywood actresses dancing to these tunes so fast, rather too fast for my liking.

The Brahmaputra, one of India's mightiest rivers, originates in lake Manasarovar in Western Tibet. It starts off as an unimpressive rivulet and cleaves an easterly course across the Tibetan plateau. The river, called Yarlung Tsangpo (Tsangpo means 'river' in Tibetan) in Tibet, steadily swells up being fed by glacial melts from the Himalaya. It takes a southern course at the Namcha Barwa massif in what is known as the Tsangpo gorge. Further south, at Pemako, the river tumbles over a giant waterfall, thus acquiring the energy and momentum with which it sweeps into India. Over a century, explorers and mapmakers were puzzled as to where and how the Tsangpo cuts through high mountain, and after the gorge, which direction it takes. One school of thought believed it to proceed further east to join the Irrawaddy or the Salween and flow into the Myanمار. Others believed that it flows south into India what is now Arunachal Pradesh. But here too, it was matter of conjecture as to how it flowed south: to the Subansiri, or into the Siang (also called the

Reaching The Bend



The Tsangpo (Siang) flowing into India, making an 'S' bend.

Dihang) or into the Dibang further east. Due to various names and hostile tribal areas, the course could not be fully investigated. The final question was that does it flow into the Assam plains to form the Brahmaputra?

Aerial photography and satellite imagery have now confirmed beyond doubt that the Tsangpo enters India, is called the Siang and forms a major tributary of the Brahmaputra. But all said and done, seeing is believing, and nobody had done that so far, that is reaching the spot where Tsangpo flowed into India to be called the Siang.

The Tsangpo bend expedition 2004 was organised with two main objectives: firstly, to reach the bend where Tsangpo enters India and secondly, to see if Namcha Barwa could be viewed from the Upper Siang valley. The expedition comprised of Harish Kapadia, Motup Chewang and Wing Commander V K Sashindran.

We had come only some distance after landing at the Dibrugarh airport. The first thing we noticed in Dibrugarh was the drive through the famed tea gardens. The one nearest to the town was called Cha Khowa, it being the first one to be established by the British more than a century ago. Cha means 'tea' and Khowa means 'plant', so, this name, given by the British, was simple as it meant 'tea garden.' Soon, we crossed the mighty Brahmaputra in a huge ferry, which accommodated four army trucks and a number of people on this two-hour ride across. As the boat was expertly navigated looking between two bamboo poles as indicators, and going through several channels, we relaxed on the upper deck.

On the other bank (northern bank), we drove to Itanagar to obtain our inner line permits. The capital of Arunachal Pradesh had nothing much to offer, except one curious sight. As we checked into a hotel, we noticed that the clerk at the reception desk had locked himself behind an iron grill and we were to pass our registration and money through its little gaps. It made for a funny sight and illustrated how fragile security was in these areas.

Things have moved on since then, and today, we did not encounter a single tribe, which looked like a 'tribe'. Most of them were wearing city clothes, were educated, using telephones and going about their business.

Christianity is prevalent here and there was a large Baptist church at Ziro and many small churches built in bamboo huts. This was the earliest spread of the religion in the area and villagers who earlier followed 'Donyi-Polo' (the Sun and Moon Gods) religion were converted to Christianity. Though foreigners are not allowed to enter

Arunachal Pradesh

local priests who are trained at Shillong, continue the worship. Verrier Elwin studied the traditions and beliefs of locals and local customs. He has written several books on it.

We drove to Daporijo in the Subansiri valley across a high ridge of Joram Top. Near the lakes and in some villages, there were bamboo typical headgear.

Along the road, we saw two important products of Arunachal Pradesh. One was mithun, which is the main strength of local farmers. It is yak-like in appearance, strong and semi-domesticated. In the early days, the wealth of a local would be judged on how many mithuns he owned. During marriages, it is still quite common to sacrifice several mithuns for a feast. We saw large fields of chillies being grown, in a variety of colours and shapes. These were very hot but no Arunachal meal is complete without a dose of hot chillies. One particular variety is known as the 'Mithun Mirchi' (mithun chilli) as it is so strong that by eating it, even a Mithun can be tamed. These were small but extremely potent chillies, the *Juwa khursuni* (mirchi that can take life). Eat three of them, and your life could be in danger. Our friend Motup ate some mithun mirchis, and literally for weeks, he complained of serious acidity.

We enjoyed the forest during the drive, looking at a wide variety of trees with great pleasure. Such rainforests were of great interest for the botanist F Kingdon Ward, who has written several books on the subject. Much of the forest here is privately owned, and ironically that is why it

#TSANGPO



Arunachal lady with my daughter-in-law!

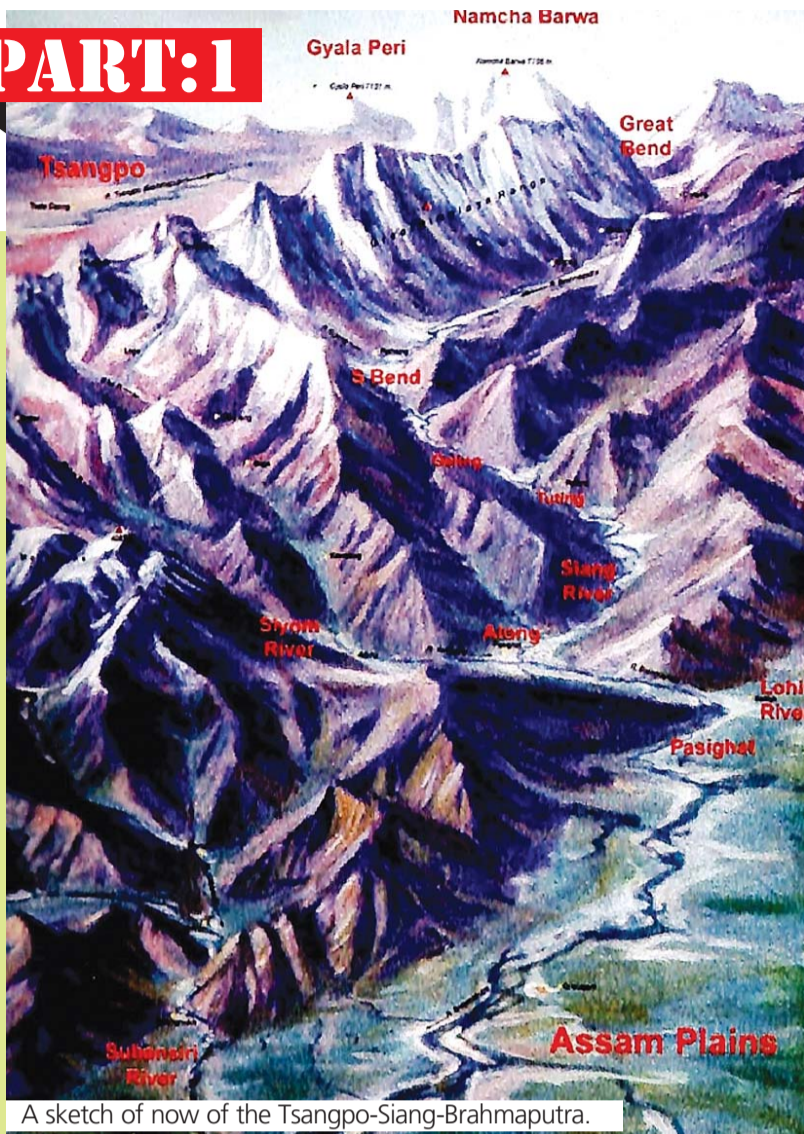
has been so well preserved. On way to Daporijo, by a coincidence, we came across several villages, with the names similar to those of our friends. One was called 'Gigi,' that of a friend of mine living in the USA, another was called 'Paka,' a friend living in Mumbai, and 'Dua,' maiden name of my daughter-in-law! was a pleasant surprise and we played a guessing game during our drive.

Soon, we were at Alou which was the original trade centre for salt and was called 'Alo'. The next day after completing formalities, we started driving towards Tuting along the Siyom river. The clear water of the Siyom began to merge with the muddy flow of the Tsangpo. The first view of Tsangpo (called the Siang or Dihang here) was stupendous. It now led us to our destination.

The Journey of the Tsangpo

At foot of the pass Mayum La, little southeast of Kailash and Mansarovar lake, starts a small stream. One cannot imagine that this stream will become a large river, travel long distances and cause much debate. This is the source of the Tsangpo (for Tibetans, simply the 'great river').

It travels along the great Tibetan barren plateau on its eastward course gathering many small rivulets, and soon, acquires name of the Yarlung Tsangpo to distinguish itself from other rivers. At Saga in Central Tibet, it is a huge river and has to be crossed in ferry (a bridge across the river is almost complete). In the early days, it was crossed by small boats, sometimes, on inflated animal skins, all sounding romantic but dangerous. Now, there are two bridges across it, at Lhatse and Gonggar, thus allowing easy access. The river continues east to pass Yamdrok Tso and Lhasa, little to its south. The Younghusband Expedition to Tibet in 1904 had to cross the Tsangpo in improvised



A sketch of now of the Tsangpo-Siang-Brahmaputra.

Explorations from Assam

The exploration from the south, Assam valley started in 1824 when Lt. Wilcox surveyed a number of rivers including the Siang and the Lohit that formed the Brahmaputra. They learnt from locals that the Siang and the Siang were the same river but it could not be verified as hostile tribes did not allow any entry along the course of the Siang. At the same time, various theories again surfaced about the Tsangpo flowing into the Irawaddy and the Salween, especially a view held by Robert Gordon, who was a government official in Assam. Lectures at the Royal Geographical Society saw much heated exchanges between explorers.

The Riddle of the Tsangpo

In 1910, the Chinese had expanded their influence in the Pome and Zayul districts and down the Lohit into Assam. This alarmed the British government who decided to move to interiors of the tribal country of NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency). Noel Williamson, who was following the Siang to check the Chinese infiltration, was murdered by tribes. A major punitive force under General Hamilton Bower was sent which burned many Abor villages. The main force of the expedi-

tion stayed at Kebang while other detachments went up many side valleys. One detachment followed the Siang to reach Singing about 40 miles (64 km) from the border: the gap between this observation and Kinthup's earlier observation from Onlet was only 80 miles (128 km) in a straight line.

Ahead of Moyling, the road was rough, narrow, winding and with many potholes. As the road deteriorated, our taxi slowed down but its cassette player played songs as fast as before. The show must go on, so now, the heroines were dancing rather slowly in my imagination, but with more jerks. The road signs too were unimpressive. 'If your brakes are not fit, you will land up in shit!'

By late evening, we were comfortably stationed in the rest house at Tuting and making our final arrangements. It was a small little village with Dipan Peak (3338 m) rising in background, Yang Sang chu drained into the Tsangpo from the east. This valley contains several trekking opportunities with high altitude lakes and the peak of Doni Lipik (4612 m). The only attraction in Tuting was ruins of a Dakota aircraft, which crash-landed here in 1988. We visited village Jiddu across the Tsangpo crossing over a Foot Suspension Bridge or FSB and we were to cross many such FSBs during our trek. These bridges were locally constructed of bamboo planks over steel wires. Many times, they are slanting on one side, some footholds are broken, swings high over turbulent river, but it gets you across! Tuting in a way was the end of the inhabited world for only about two small villages were situated ahead and a special clearance was required to proceed further.

These last kilometres from the Indian side would physically link up the exploration of Kinthup and the British.

Harman, now posted in Darjeeling, again deputed Kinthup to Tibet in 1880. As Kinthup was illiterate, a Chinese lama accompanied him. From Darjeeling, they went to Lhasa and followed the course of the Tsangpo to Chetang and Gyala Sindong. After 15 miles (24 km), they reached Pemakochung village, where, as Kinthup described, the Tsangpo fell 150 ft (45 m) in a waterfall, which came to be known as the 'rainbow waterfall.'



Traditional bamboo tower over a grave.

With the interest in the Tsangpo growing, the Survey of India deputed the first of its Pundit explorers, Nain Singh to venture here. He travelled in disguise as Tibet was closed to outsiders, and in two epic journeys, in 1865 and 1874, followed the course to Lhasa and beyond. Reaching Chetang, east of Lhasa, he was forced to turn south as his subterfuge was revealed to the Chinese. He crossed into India at Tawang. His notes and information were invaluable. Another Pundit, Lala, was deputed to continue south from Chetang where Nain Singh had reached but he failed in 1876 and 1877.

In 1874, the Assam Survey was placed under Lt. Henry Harman. He measured the flow of various rivers and found that the flow in the Siang was greater than others, thus, proving that most likely, the river was the Tsangpo. He recruited Nem Singh in 1878-79 to be dispatched to Tibet. Kinthup, a tailor from Darjeeling, accompanied him. They followed the Tsangpo from Chetang onwards between the gorge of Namcha Barwa and Gyala Peri and turned south to reach Gyala Sindong before returning. They had taken the exploration further by 287 miles (460 km), thus making a major contribution.

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The Chinese lama unfortunately sold Kinthup to slavery and disappeared. Kinthup escaped and reached Marping, 35 miles (56 km) downstream but was captured. However, later, he was allowed to go on a pilgrimage. He crossed the Tsangpo to opposite bank and prepared 500 logs with special markings. These were to be thrown into the Tsangpo, and if they appeared in the Brahmaputra, it would conclusively prove the course of the river.

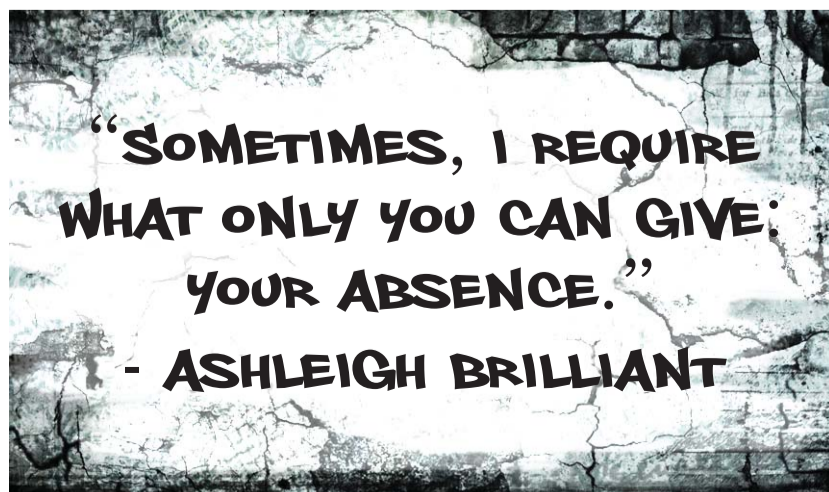
In 1882, he was allowed on another pilgrimage to Lhasa from where he arranged for a letter to be sent to Nem Singh in Darjeeling, informing Harman about the logs and dates when he would throw them in water. Unfortunately, Harman had left India and the letter was not opened. Not knowing this, Kinthup returned to Marping and threw logs into the river. Afterwards, he followed the Tsangpo downstream as far as small village Onlet (Olon). It was close to Dalbuing (called 'Tarpin' by Kinthup). He could see the haze of the Assam plains and a small village (Korbo) on the banks of the Tsangpo in India. He was about 40 miles (64 km) in a straight line from the border. He returned to Darjeeling in 1884 and took up his old job as a tailor. Two years later, the Survey deputed him, but he was hardly believed. It was only in 1913 that his description was acknowledged as remarkably accurate.

To be continued...



Tsangpo-Siang Bend.

THE WALL

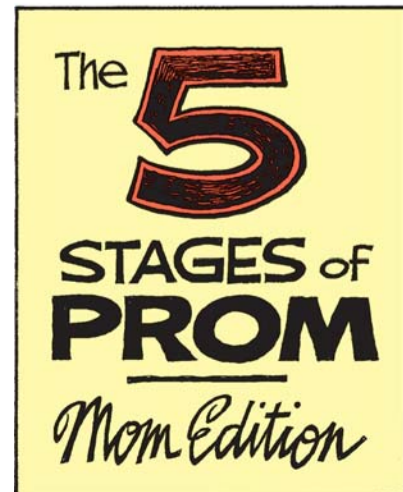


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

