

The Sun Also Rises

Darjeeling, West Bengal, India

It was 4:00am when Nima, our guide in India, met us in the lobby of the Mayfair Hotel in Darjeeling. He was bundled in a black down jacket and armed with a flashlight for our morning sunrise observance on Tiger Hill. It is the highest point in Darjeeling where one can watch the sunrise paint the surrounding regal Himalayan summits a fluorescent orange, giving life



to the sleeping giants of Darjeeling. This is an everyday occurrence when 500 to 600 people trudge up to Tiger Hill to celebrate the morning sunrise. Walking up Tiger Hill is not an easy undertaking at an elevation of 8000 ft. It was not the view of the majestic Himalayas that took our breath away, it was the altitude. To ease the chilling temperature, chai vendors, carrying giant thermoses, moved effortlessly



through the crowd pouring their morning elixir into tiny bathroom Dixie cups while continuing their familiar chants “Chai, chai, chai!”. At 6:00am the sun rose in the east to the throng of observers’ cheers welcoming the day and like a religious service left with the blessing of sun.

Leaving Darjeeling



Mayfair Hotel Darjeeling India

Having received the sun’s blessing on Tiger Hill and after a wonderful buffet breakfast at the extraordinary Mayfair Hotel, Nima and our driver, Pema, prepared us for our 4-hour drive to the city of Siliguri, India. A road trip without music is like a day without chai, and Tom Petty’s song “Learning to Fly” offered a melody and composition that melded the twists and turns of the roads in West Bengal, India’s hills.

Nima informed us that it was necessary to leave the hotel very early in the morning for

the airport because of an impending political party strike in West Bengal that could block roads and close businesses. Arrangements at Bagdogra Airport with Druk Airline escorts ensured our timely departure on DrukAir flight 131 to Bangkok, Thailand, our Asia Sanctuary. It’s at times like this in India where ques are not enforced and mob etiquette is the rule of order. You have to push your way to the departure gate through the throng of hopefuls; it’s a sign of respect to make it to front and receive the acknowledgment and accolades of those left behind. You have to be an extreme extrovert under the Meyers-Briggs standard to survive Gate Crashing 101.

Commented [RD1]:

A Story of Karmic Remunerations



Nima Dhondup, our guide, was born in Darjeeling's Tibetan Refugee Camp in 1960. His parents followed the footsteps of the [14th Dalai Lama](#) along with 150,000 Tibetan refugees who fled to Darjeeling, India. Nima was gracious enough to take us to the camp where his brother still resides.

Refugee accommodations were minimal at best 10x12 rooms per family but Nima and his family survived. His story is one of karma remunerations. As the first baby to be born in the Camp, his photograph was publicized in newspapers around the world, resulting in an educational fund from 2 women in England who supported him through his university years. His benefactors never revealed themselves and to this day, Nima passes that same kindness and

support to the Tibetan Refugees at the Tibet Self-Help Center.



Here's Nima 1980

A SECTION OF THE STAFF 1980

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Photograph of Nima's father receiving a vaccination from the Dalai Lama's sister-in-law











His Birth Place 1960





