

EDITORIAL

Life begins at 50 — at least for the *Himalayan Journal*. After completing a half century of publication, the H.J. continues its innings with a fresh stance and a new batting guard.

The present volume is a mixture of ideas and events, as almost all the previous issues were. A team of strong Japanese climbers achieve the ultimate climb of Everest — by its most difficult route (SW face) in its most difficult season (winter). Nanda Devi East is climbed by the British, alpine style, in the true sense of the word. Nanga Parbat almost 'robs' a team of four young Germans. The French traverse glaciers to the north of the Karakoram and record this unfrequented area with the most delectable photographs. Dhaulagiri is climbed systematically by the Americans, while a Dutch climber tries it solo and is almost reduced to tears. Indians and the British join up to explore Kinnaur and climb two high peaks, apart from playing cricket and performing *pujas*. We have articles on unknown Arunachal valleys being explored, both on foot and on motorbike, and suggestions about the height and name of Masherbrum II.

In these stories the human touch is evident. Climbers have hallucinations ('other experiences') on Indradhanush Parbat and Dhaulagiri. There are new ideas, like taking bearings of each marker wand on Kedar Dome accurately which saves the team by hastening their retreat in a storm. Medical advances, the Japanese develop an 'oxygen metre' which tells you how acclimatised you are by a touch of the fingers. And of course, indomitable spirit, as a Japanese mountain enthusiast, aged 80 and with a heart problem, reaches the high altitude base camp. All these and lots more!

The death of Jack Gibson last year marks the end of an era. He, as the past President and Hon. member, was a pillar of strength to the Club. For the Club, like the country, he was the last of the 'British connection'. During the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee at Delhi there was a suggestion that the Club had had its time and now should be wound up as an imperial relic. Gibson was on his feet, rushing to the dais, almost before the speaker had finished. His fitting defence

put beyond doubt any such suggestions for all time to come. There was never a better, what Bill Aitken calls, 'lover of mountains, teacher of men', and if I may add, supporter of the Himalayan Club.

Last year assistant editor M. H. Contractor has temporarily shifted to Delhi. My pleasures during visits to Delhi increased many fold, but so did the hardships of production. Now papers fly across India regularly to produce this issue, with no loss of efficiency, thanks to modern communication. But to offset any loss, we have Monesh Devjani joining the team from this issue. He brings with him a mountaineer's keen eye, enthusiasm and the much needed local support — we live on the same road. Welcome aboard. To them and all the old faithfuls, my many thanks.

So lets begin H.J. Volume 51!

Bombay
May 1995

HARISH KAPADIA