

EDITORIAL

Sometime ago I had an exchange of letters about names in the Himalaya, or to be precise, changes in the names of the Himalayan places. The British spelling of the river Sutlej is now changed to the original Indian word Satluj. Once it was incorporated on the maps officially we generally accepted it, like Shimla and Kullu for the well known Simla and Kulu. I ended the letters then, with a wish, that hopefully the name of Bombay would not be changed.

But, alas, now that has happened, and Bombay is Mumbai! But come to think of it, in our local languages (Marathi, and my mother tongue Gujarati) it was always called Mumbai. So we have escaped lightly, unlike a few other grotesque changes of name which I need not mention.

In this issue my favourite selections would be two brilliant pieces. The first one by Mikel Vause considers why we climb in a different vein. The second one is a delightful recollection by that super-editor Margaret Body recalling her long association with many mountaineers. Someone suggested the title 'Maggie's Teenage Ninja Climbers' for that article. But we have settled for a more respectful title. Americans and Indians climb peaks in the Kullu valley, K2 is climbed solo and there are tributes to friends, flowers and legends of the mountains.

Muslim Contractor, who has been long standing climbing friend and editor with me, has decided to shift to Canada in search of greener pastures. Once at a camp in Lahaul a climber greeted me and then looked around inquiring, 'Where is Muslim Contractor? I thought you two must be editing papers here together'. One of his best assets was his name. When introduced, 'By the way, he is Muslim', you would always get the reply, 'So what?' If you said 'He is Muslim Contractor' the query would be, 'Do you have a Hindu contractor also?' Either way you cannot win!

But my favourite piece about his name is from the book No Place to Fall, by Victor Saunders.

Looking over the list from Harish early in the year (for the Panch Chuli expedition), Chris Bonington commented on the name Muslim Contractor.

'That is a person, not a job, isn't it?'

'Yes Chris, he was with us on Rimo. Good company too.'

'Funny sort of name that, Muslim, don't you think?'

'Yes indeed.....Christian.'

Muslim will be missed in many ways but life has moved on for him and one has to wish him bon voyage.

This issue is published with all the usual supporters and the usual last minute rushes. Rajesh Gadgil joins us as Hon. Assistant Editor with the enthusiasm of a mountaineer, which he is. He is not an experienced hand at editing but he shakes his head vigorously, as you will read in the article here, so as to learn faster.

As we go to press, the Government of India has again dithered about the names, suggesting that the good old name 'Bombay' should be retained for international usage. I will leave it to readers to decide between the Bard's, 'What's in a name....' or my indigenous title of an article, 'Lots in a name'!

Bombay/Mumbai

HARISH KAPADIA