

EDITORIAL

I became the Hon. Editor of the *Himalayan Journal*, in 1978, almost by default. Soli Mehta, then the current editor was posted out to Sudan where postal services were so bad that he lost almost half the Journal in transit. So it was me, who without much editorial experience but with much enthusiasm, joined his team and soon found myself in the hot seat.

Thus began a fruitful journey rubbing shoulders with the best in many fields. First was of course Soli himself. We had some wonderful times joking, with pots of tea and great meals – ah yes! and we did some editing too! Part of this fun-filled initiation was R. E. Hawkins, an author and expert who had held senior positions in the literary world. He revamped the style and systems of the Journal. Though he was far senior to me in all respects, he insisted on being an ‘Assistant Editor’ as he believed that only a mountaineer should edit a climbing journal. He was not a recluse but an expert who concentrated on the work at hand and this cut out any ‘coffee time’ with him!

At the same time H. Adams Carter, then the longest serving editor of the *American Alpine Journal* became a guiding force. Not a week passed without a letter from him to me the novice, always encouraging, guiding and at the same time inquiring about matters he did not know. Later when I met him at New Delhi we shared the same enthusiasm and bonding those letters had created. Soon other contacts developed with editors around the world as well as leading mountaineers and trekkers in the hay days of high altitude climbing and exploration.

A crucial part of the editor’s job is to help people with information - for that I had to gather that knowledge myself. The building of this repository of knowledge was the most important contribution *HJ* made to me! I could remain in touch with all activities in the Himalaya and elsewhere and gather local and current news. It was satisfying to draw an accurate sketch map, check heights, follow information about a climb and play with words in articles I received or wrote. The magic was complete with an increased understanding of printing technology – not the best in India then but changing rapidly. And then would come the proud moment – that of holding the final copy. Satisfaction came with a letter of appreciation or suggestion, written by masters, like Trevor Braham or Aamir Ali who knew about these things. While meeting mountaineers

or researchers abroad I could see the great respect they had for the *HJ*. Though I certainly made few mistakes, it was such high expectations from the *HJ* that made me redouble my efforts to give it the best.

At home different people assisted as editors and added flavour to the final production. As all were good friends, it added to the fun. Muslim H. Contractor worked closely with me for several years and would have rightfully taken over as editor at least a decade back, if not earlier. But life took him to the US and though we tried, it was not possible to have a long distance editor. So it continued with Dhiren Toolsidas and Monesh Devjani who too, went off to greener pastures. During the last few years, Nandini Purandare and Rajesh Gadgil have remained steadfast supporters and have contributed much while updating technologies and contents.

We followed some specific policies too. One of the first was to accept, in fact seek, articles from non-English writers to cover their climbs and explorations. Thus achievements of the Japanese, Poles, Czech and in some cases even Indians were recorded, even translating or re-writing articles when required. This encouraged the contribution of the non-English speaking world to our mountain history to be recorded. We receive plenty of material to choose from, as *HJ* does not commission authors but chooses from what is received. But the best articles, as any editor knows, comes from people whom you know or can cajole to write. Leading climbers are always busy and not all are tuned to writing so we had to follow up and pester a challenge in days before the emails. During last decade, as 'Everests' had been climbed too often, the focus shifted to smaller peaks, various other aspects related to the Himalaya, trekking and explorations of unknown valleys.

A cricket commentator once mentioned that people should retire when they are asked, 'why do you retire' instead of 'why don't you retire?' Thus after this long innings I wish to hand over this charge to a younger person – I would, of course be available for any help required. *HJ* will positively march on.

I would like to doubly dedicate my efforts. First to my late soldier son Lt. Nawang Kapadia who died defending the Himalaya in Kashmir in 2000. He read many of the issues I produced and graciously allowed me to sit more at my table instead of trekking and playing with him. Secondly I dedicate my efforts to the Himalayan Club and its members.

Harish Kapadia