

slope eased, and then I rushed on to Topavan. Das dismisses the help he got as 'irritating' as I was trying to 'lead him down on a string'.

Help, though rushed immediately, was too late for Singh. All members of the camp who were present helped to bring down the bodies of P. Singh and N. Sah and to evacuate P. M. Das down to Tapovan.

P. M. Das seems to have lost the correct perspective of the events in retrospect. This may be due to his not remembering the events so clearly as he was suffering from shock. Perhaps, after he was almost ostracized by many in camp and then grilled during an official inquiry, this article may have been written as some sort of a reflex action.

SANJEEV SAITH

16, St. Bernards Row,
Edinburgh EH4 1HW U.K.
25 March 1983

Dear Harish,

Thank you for your letter of about three months ago asking if you could reprint my article¹ on the Pilgun Gad in the *Himalayan Journal*. I must apologise for being so slow to reply. To be honest I have mixed feelings about your request. I enjoy the *Himalayan Journal*, would like to support it and feel it would be rather churlish of me to refuse. On the other hand I do feel that as more and more of the Himalaya are 'Opened Up' for trekking and tourism and climbing, it would be nice if some areas were left unvisited and little known. An important part of the experience of travelling and climbing in the Himalaya, for me and I think for many others, is the fact that there aren't good maps and guides—the aspect of the unknown adventure which is diluted by the knowledge of too many previous travellers and the details of their exploits.

You may quite rightly ask, then, why I wrote my article in the first place, and I have to confess I cannot give a very satisfactory answer. There is, I think, in all of us to varying degrees, the desire to share our mountain experiences by telling others as well as the awareness that by telling too many others we may only make it less possible for them to share the same quality of experience. There is an inherent contradiction in writing articles extolling 'unspoilt' wilderness areas in journals which essentially encourage people to go there. My own view is that while each individual traveller or climber may act from the best of motives, as a total group we may have the 'Midas Touch' and end up by destroying the possibility for future generations to experience anything like the adventure that we ourselves enjoyed. Already of course we are a great way along that road. It is impossible for us to experience the same quality of remoteness in the Himalaya

1. See page 180—Ed.

that Shipton and Tilman experienced, to say nothing of their nineteenth century forebears. My only excuse for writing the AJ article is that I felt it was unlikely to draw to the Bhillangana area too many of the larger type of expedition that I particularly deplore. You will notice that I devoted little space to our climbing activities for this reason. Although I have not been to the Gangotri glacier, and would indeed very much like to do so, the thought of dozens of expeditions converging on the place every season is to me a little distasteful. Of course the Baltoro is far worse.

I don't know if you have been to the Alps, but if you have may be you will understand something of what I am trying to say. Of course the forests and mountains of the Alps are still magnificent, beautiful, inspiring—choose whatever word you wish—and many people derive great enjoyment from them every year. But the more popular mountains and routes are desperately overcrowded, full of litter, degraded with ironmongery and cable cars, and generally turned into a human playground instead of being a place where we can lose our sense of ourselves and realise something of the wider majesty of nature.

Well, in spite of all this I do not really wish to prevent you from reprinting my article if you feel strongly that you still want to. It is, after all, only a straw in the wind and I don't suppose it will make a jot of difference in the long run whether it is reprinted or not. However I wanted to explain to you some of the misgivings that made me hesitate to accede before. (I may say that Dave Broadhead who was my companion on the Pilgun trip feels the same way.) If you feel any sympathy with these notions perhaps you will consider how the H.J. can retain its character as a vehicle for communication between enthusiasts for the Himalaya, while not becoming an agent in the destructive processes of popularisation or touristification.

Yours sincerely,

GEOFF COHEN

3rd April 1983

Dear Geoff,

Thank you for your letter of 25 March, 1983. By the time you reacted to my request to reprint your article, H.J. was already in press with your article included with the kind permission of the editor of A.J. As I had not received any objection from you, I went ahead with the temptation to reprint your excellent article.

It is indeed gratifying to note your concern about Bhillangna valley. In the days of 'commercial tourism' such thoughts are most welcome. Rest assured that the *Himalayan Journal* shares your concern to the

fullest. I was trekking in the Bhillangna valley last year and I too would hate to see its forest denuded and tourist parties overwhelming the simple people of Gangi. Our intention is to record your trek as information and record for the mountaineers. And it is hoped that mountaineers, readers of H.J., like that of *Alpine Journal*, will be more responsible than tourists, contractors and poachers. However haven't we too learnt a lot about the remote valley 3 of Himalaya from the writings of Shipton and Tilman?

Bhillangna has received trekkers and pilgrims for many years now. Let us hope that in future whatever mountaineers are attracted to this beautiful valley by your article will be equally responsible.

Yours sincerely,

HARISH KAPADIA