

## AN APPRECIATION

*[We reproduce below the acceptance speech of Prof. Peter Molnar on 10 May 2005 at Bangalore on his receiving the scroll of Honorary Fellowship of the Society — Editor]*

Let me first thank S.V. Srikantia for his generous introduction, which brought back pleasant memories of days when I studied the Himalaya before I saw them with my eyes, and B. P. Radhakrishna for his sage views of our science and its essential elements. In addition, I thank you all for coming here today on an occasion special to me, despite many of you not knowing me at all.

Let me give you a brief history of my experiences in India and some of their special aspects.

In 1976, I stopped for one day in Delhi, en route from Beijing, China to Tashkent, and ultimately Tajikistan, in the Soviet Union. As I left the airport, seeking a place to sleep after flying all night, Waris Warsi and M. N. Qureshy swept me away to introduce me to "local hospitality." There began a long lesson in the art of hospitality, one of the lessons I cherish from India.

That autumn, I attended a workshop in Paris on the Himalaya, and I met a number of India's Himalayan geologists, including Srikantia. K. S. Valdiya, in particular, came to me and said, "I must show you the Himalaya," an invitation hard to resist. The following summer (1977) I interrupted fieldwork in Afghanistan to begin my lessons on the Himalaya, first with Valdiya and his colleagues, and later with Vinod Gaur and Anshu Sinha.

These lessons continued in 1983, during which I spent more than 4 weeks in the field, partly with Valdiya and Gaur, and partly with Sinha, Vikram Thakur, A. C. Nanda, Surendar Kumar, N. S. Viridi, and others. It is no wonder that my India colleagues have planted my most indelible impressions of the Himalaya.

In the fall of 1983, the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology bestowed on me what was then and remains today one of my greatest honors; I gave the Scientific Lecture at the 100th anniversary of D. N. Wadia's birth, a celebration attended by Wadia's wife, though of course, she did not stay for my lecture. She was not a scientist.

A sad experience in my life then caused what proved to be a lull for more than 10 years in my geological activity in India.

In 1997, I resumed work, a study of the Karakorum fault in Ladakh. To avoid any semblance of scientific imperialism,

I asked Vinod Gaur if he would like to join us, and he responded immediately by telling me that he could bring GPS receivers. In a flash, he doubled our joint research efforts, and I am proud to say that his GPS measurements not only corroborated our estimate of the Quaternary slip rate on the Karakorum fault, but also constrained the present-day rate of overthrusting in the western Himalaya.

Then in 2002, Gaur, with essential help from Alok Gupta, arranged for me to visit India again, including a 10-day study of the Himalaya with him, Valdiya, and Bahadur Kotlia. Kotlia, in fact, persuaded the Indo-Tibetan Border Police to make me an honorary member – the only time in my life I have been a member of a police force. We were treated to local hospitality from Munsiri to the Milam glacier and back. Then, later on this trip, Valdiya and A. C. Narayana introduced me to *Sahyadri*, the Western Ghats, whose geological enigmas have brought me back again this year. This is a special pleasure, because finally I am able to meet B. P. Radhakrishna, whose work on *Sahyadri* I know well.

Radhakrishna quoted Francis Pettijohn, one of the United States' most outstanding field geologists as saying something like "Geology is done with the boots on".

As a geophysicist who has carried out extensive fieldwork, let me quote Albert Einstein who said much the same, if a bit differently and in a different context: "The field is the only reality." As with most profound statements, the broadest interpretation of the statement often eludes the author, but if Einstein had been a geologist, surely he would have said the same.

It should be clear that India and Indian geology has figured prominently in my life and in my work, but as important as its geology have been Indian geologists, and I am honored to be one of you. Specifically, I thank the Geological Society of India, its office bearers and executive council, particularly B. P. Radhakrishna, in selecting me to be an Honorary Fellow of the Society.

*Department of Geological Sciences  
University of Colorado at Boulder  
Boulder, Colorado – 80309, USA  
Email: molnar@cires@colorado.edu*

PETER MOLNAR