

CORRESPONDENCE

Shuya Sekiguchi,
2-32-408, Chigusa dai,
Chiba City, Japan 260
6 August 1984

Dear Harish,

I have read your article¹ on Kailash in the *Himalayan Journal*, Vol 40, which I have received. Meantime, I have received from Mrs M. Fushimi copies of your report on your winter expedition and an article of Nandini Patel, leader of the Indo-Japanese team, which I have also studied comparing with the article by Eiko Miyazaki in the Japanese Alpine Club official report on the expedition.

As to the 1968 women's expedition, I would like to point out the following descriptions:

In Mrs Patel's article—'Following a goat-track, we reached the Chombu pass,' and in the Miyazaki's article—'At 8.30 a.m. we reached the top of the ridge which extends from the summit to north. We climbed up on the east side of this ridge. Each member proceeded on a little more *left side* on the ridge, that is, the *east side of the ridge . . .*'

These two descriptions obviously indicate that the peak they climbed is situated *south* of Chobu pass, provided that the Chombu pass described in the Patel's is identical with the Chobu pass.

I am going to see Mrs M. Fushimi at the end of the third week or at the beginning of the fourth week of this month for discussion on this matter.

I feel now it is not so difficult to have Mrs Fushimi as well as Mrs Hisano acknowledge the situation of not having climbed the peak.

With best wishes,

SHUYA SEKIGUCHI

1. *Editor's Note*: See article 'Around Kailash in Fourteen Days' in H.J. Vol. 40, p. 186, for a sketch map, description and photographs of the area. In the note to the above article the claim of the first ascent by the Indo-Japanese Ladies Expedition, 1968 of peak Mani-Mahesh Kailash, 18,556 ft in Chamba was doubted due to various reasons as enumerated. Mr. Sekiguchi, a member of The Himalayan Club in Japan agreed to look into the matter thoroughly as no records were available with the sponsors, The Indian Mountaineering Foundation. The leader of the team Ms. Nandini Pandya (now Patel) did not reply to any letters. Solely due to his efforts to trace the records available with the Japanese members, we now have a clear picture of their first ascent.

19 September 1984

Dear Harish,

Re: *Climb of Kailash in 1968*

I have talked with Mrs Yoko Ihara and Mrs Eiko Hisano, both members of the team, on their climb to Kailash several times and have investigated the pictures received from them. As a result thereof, I have found it necessary to change my views on their climb given in my previous letter to you.

I would like to point out the following points which have become clear.

On 10 May 1968, after setting up a camp at 4190 m at the foot of the southeast ridge of Kailash, a recon party reached the Chobu pass, but could not find out any possible route to the summit via its south face. They returned to the camp and never again to the pass. Mrs Ihara wrote down in her diary on that day that; 'Indian members and Sherpas go up to recon a route. Soon after come back they say Kailash is just above us. Rugged rock mountain. Am unwilling to climb such mountain'.

On 11 May, they turned to reconnoitre the east side of Kailash and discovered a possible route to the summit on the east face of the main ridge from the summit (Charoi Dhar).

On 12 May, all members and Sherpas moved. They first traversed around the foot of the rugged SE ridge of Kailash to other side thereof and established a final camp at a height of 4510 m. In this respect, Mrs Ihara says that they first traversed on very steep snow-slope downward and then climbed up on the snow-slope in the opposite side of the rugged ridge and that the camp site was a snowfield and the main ridge from the summit could be seen but the summit could not be seen therefrom.

In the reports or any articles on the climb ever published, there is no description about their traverse to the opposite side of the southeast ridge of Kailash and the location of their final camp.

Before dawn of 13 May 1968, all members and Sherpas left the final camp for the summit of Kailash. First, they climbed up the east face of the main ridge from the summit. From the top of the ridge to the summit they climbed up a little left (east) side of the ridge. It was not a rugged ridge. First half of the climbed ridge was wide and gentle slope and the last half was narrow and steep slope. Their photos are comparable to the picture of the west face taken by the Calcutta expedition. The shapes of upper part of the summit ridge resemble. You will see there is no up-and-down.

It was officially reported that they left the final camp at 3.00 a.m. and reached the top of the main ridge from the summit at 8.30 a.m. and finally reached the summit at 10.30 a.m. However, we should note that only the first rope could reach the summit at 10.30 a.m. and the last rope reached the summit nearly at noon and barely managed to get to the final camp after dark.

The enclosed photos were taken from the summit of Kailash, where as colour prints were taken from the top of the main ridge just below (north of) the summit.

These pictures are copies from the photographs Mrs Ihara and Mrs Hisano now possess. Note that no negative films are available here as they were confiscated by The Indian Mountaineering Foundation at that time, and only few printed copies were given to each member in New Delhi.

It is very regrettable that the incompleteness in reporting the climb, especially, failure to describe about their traverse to the other side of SE ridge of Kailash and the location of the final camp in their reports or any articles has caused raising a doubt on their climb. After the lapse of sixteen years, most of the detail in the expedition have been forgotten. Unless the pictures were available, we would not be able to arrive at the truth on their climb.

I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

With best wishes,

SHUYA SEKIGUCHI

8 January 1985

Dear Mr Sekiguchi,

Please refer to our various correspondence regarding the climb of Kailash by the Indo-Japanese Expedition of 1968. I have since received a not-too-clear map and have considered the matter again with your fresh information.

Though a few points are unclear any benefit of doubt must go to the climber and I would agree with your view that the ladies have climbed the true peak of Kailash. I must mention that it is possible to accept the claim solely due to your efforts in finding out new information and photographs. On the available past information any competent authority would reach a negative decision. Indeed, an inquiry committee set up by I.M.F. also reached the conclusion that the wrong peak was climbed. However, I have written to I.M.F. clarifying the revised stand and acceptance of the claim.