

CORRESPONDENCE

To Mr. Harish Kapadia
Editor
The Himalayan Journal

(A) Re: **Regarding claim of first ascent of Lampak I (South Lampak) (6325 m) by expedition led by Dr. P. M. Das.**

Dear Mr Kapadia,

Happy New Year.

I draw your attention to the expedition report published in *The Himalayan Journal* Vol. 60 page 54 (Article 9), on Lampak group of peaks by Dr. P. M. Das under the heading 'A journey into the northern fringe of the Nanda Devi bio-sphere reserve'. Dr. Das' claim of first ascent of Lampak I (Lampak South) seems to me discordant as the peak was first ascended by a group of mountaineers from West Bengal in the year 1969 under the leadership of P. Chakrobarty. Report of this ascent was published in the *Himalayan Mountaineering Institute Journal*, No. VI, page 47.

This may please be clarified.

With best wishes.

Regards.

K K Ray

(B) Letter from Dr. P M Das to Harish Kapadia

13 April 2005

Dear Harish,

Kindly refer to your letter dated 3rd April 2005 with the enclosed article 'First Ascent of South Lampak', by 'Leader of the Expedition', appearing in the *HMI Journal* at the time. I have got the *HMI Journal* examined very minutely by my entire summit team members and have the following comments to offer:

1. This is the first mountaineering article I have seen in any journal where the author is referred to as 'Leader of the Expedition'. (No name?). The first line mentioning the date of Murray's Scottish Himalayan Expedition as 1963 is incorrect. Please refer to *HJ* Vol. 16.
2. The claim of first ascent of a mountain as per accepted norms has to be sustained and authenticated and the onus of proving the claim lies on the climbers. In this case no account appears in the *Himalayan Journal* of the Himalayan Club or in the *Indian Mountaineer* of the IMF which are the reputed journals of India. One fails to apprehend as to why the leader of the 1969 team did not insist on recording their ascent in these reputable journals of the country or elsewhere abroad (Publication in *The HMI Journal* is not an authentication of a claim).
3. The *HMI Journal* Vol VI article does not contain a single photograph of the mountain, leave alone that of the upper sections of the same.
4. Prior to the expedition we had several enquiries at the IMF and were informed that there was no official report on record of an ascent of Lampak South. *The Himalayan Journal* also had none.
5. As far as the article itself is concerned, the description of the climb above Camp II has left us confused, especially regarding location of their Camp III, description of climbing done and route taken on the final day. We had opened the route prior to the summit climb and despite so, the final portion from the rock self to the summit took six hours of almost continuous climbing. Mind you, ours was a very fit summit team including two very experienced climbers who had recently been high on Everest, two others who were seasoned Himalayan climbers in their thirties and an experienced HAP. Also remember that we had only a few days ago climbed to the summit of Lampak North and were therefore superbly fit. On the other hand, their claims to have accomplished this feat in just four hours of climbing on difficult virgin slopes on which they had not set foot before! That too in the post- monsoon season when the ice is more exposed than in the pre-monsoon season and would require more technical climbing.

6. As mentioned above, a claim needs to be authenticated / substantiated with as many photographs as possible. The absence of a single photograph in the article of the *HMI Journal* is noticeable. Contrast this with the fact that I had submitted as many as 20 photographs to substantiate our claim!
7. However, I would be the last person to deprive any other climbing team from establishing a genuine claim of a first ascent prior to mine; provided it is proved beyond doubt. Therefore you may like to ask the leader of the Asansol team to send me a set of convincing photographs which will be studied impartially and if are satisfied , we would recommend the records to be amended. Not otherwise.

I am addressing this letter to you and not to Tushar Sarkar or Kankan K Ray , since they have not addressed themselves to me but you may like to convey the relevant extracts of this letter to them as is required.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,
Dr. P M Das.

(C) Kindly refer to your letter addressed to Mr. Harish Kapadia, Editor *HJ* in connection with the claim of the first ascent of Lampak I.

Mr. Kapadia asked a few queries on the subject. I am already in touch with the organisation for a proper reply. With due respect to all concerned, I could not resist myself from highlighting a few points on this issue which you will certainly appreciate.

1. The date of Scottish climb is simply a printing mistake.
2. The *Indian Mountaineer* started its publication only after 1977 and *HJ* publishes only a selected and limited number of articles and this system is still being followed.
3. Constraint of space and economy may sometime deter publication of photographs. (So far information collected, photographs of the upper slopes of the peak were submitted to IMF just after the ascent in 1969). These may be checked with the IMF records.

4. Apart from the report published in *HMIJ & MLA's* (Mountain Lovers Association) own journal the information of ascent are available in *The Himalayan Hand Book* by Joydeep Sarkar and *Exploring the Hidden Himalaya* by Soli S Mehta and Harish Kapadia. A Bengali Book titled *Lampak* was also published in 1971 by a member of the team Chowdhury Abdur Rahim who by profession was once a Judge of the High Court of the State.
5. The team can only clarify the technical points raised regarding timings themselves.

Lastly I am astonished to know that how a question of post mortem of a claimed ascent may arise after 26 years (when nobody had contradicted the claim before, even by IMF).

The leader of the team Prasanta Chackraborty was a very experienced and knowledgeable mountaineer of the State, but unfortunately he passed away a few years back. However I am endorsing a copy of this letter to the summiteers of Lampak I, Pranesh Chowdhury and Milan Sengupta who were also very tough and experienced mountaineers of the past, for their comments on this issue.

Regards

Yours sincerely,

Kankan K Ray

(D) Letter from Ramesh Sharma of Punjab Police expedition team (on behalf of Dr. P M Das) to K K Ray. in reply to above letter.

Dear Shri Kankan K Ray,

Kindly refer to your letter endorsed to Dr. P M Das, President of Punjab police Adventure Sports Club dated 21st May 2005.

Dr. Das is not available for a few weeks and has asked me to write to you in order to avoid delay, after discussing each of your points mentioned in the endorsement.

1. As already mentioned, the IMF intimated no recorded ascent of Lampak I prior to our expedition. The IMF and HC web sites and records of Alpine Club which bore list of unclimbed peaks reported Lampak I as unclimbed all these years. The HJ may not have

published your article in 1969/1970 but how do you explain that it did not do so for 26 years? And this was a major virgin peak! It is therefore not understood why you did not take up the matter with these authorities to record your claim in all these years.

2. The book *Exploring the Hidden Himalaya* by Mehta and Kapadia does make a mention of a reported ascent. This book is mentioned in the bibliography of *HJ* article by Dr. Das.
3. It is not our desire to conduct a post mortem of your claim. In fact, it is the Editor of the *HJ* (Mr. H Kapadia) who asked for comments/ reaction to the article written in the *HMI Journal*. This was faithfully done in letter and spirit.

We wish your climbing association many more happy years of climbing.

Yours sincerely,
Ramesh Sharma
Joint secretary, Lampak Peaks Expeditions-2003.

(E) Letter from K K Ray to Harish Kapadia cc to Ramesh Sarma in reply.

29 June 2005.

My dear Mr. Kapadia,

Firstly, I must apologise for writing this letter with considerable delay. I received a letter from Mr. Ramesh Sharma, Secretary cum treasurer Punjab police Adventure Sports Club where in he on behalf of Dr. P M Das furnished a few points in support of their claim of first ascent of Lampak I. It appears very unconvincing to me for reasons as stated under:

1. In the year 1969/70 there was no systematic record keeping in the IMF, If it was so the report submitted by Mountain Lovers Association for their expedition to Lampak I in 1969 could have been easily traced as it was itself approved and financed by IMF and report submitted.
2. Since 1960 there were a continuous flow of expeditions from the country whose number now reaches to nearly 1500. It is not possible for a single annual Journal to accommodate all the information in it.

3. Lastly, I think the information of ascent available in the following books and journals are more than enough to establish the fact of the first ascent of the peak in 1969 of the Bengal team.

References available to first ascent of Lampak South, 6325 m

- A. The Alpine Club: Himalayan Index: see www.alpine-club.org.uk

Lampak 6325 m 20,751 ft 30°37'29" 79°56'39" No. = 4413

Year	Status	Route	Journal	Year	Volume	Issue	Page
1969 as	SW	Ridge	AAJ	1970	17	44	186,187
1969 as	SW	Ridge	AJ	1970	75	319	194
1969 as	SW	Ridge	HJ	1969	29	182	

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- B. *The Himalayan Journal*, Vol. 29, p. 182 (in table)

'9. South Lampak Mountain Lover's Association, P. Chakraborty
1st Ascent 21.9.1969 (20,750 ft)'

- C. *The Himalayan Club Newsletter*, No. 27, page 4

'6. South Lampak (20,750 ft) - was climbed on 21st September by
the Kalla Glacier Expedition - sponsored by Mountain Lover's
Association, Asansol and led by P. Chakraborty.'

Base Camp was established at 15, 500 ft and Camp I at 16,400 ft.
After a number of attempts from Camp II to achieve the saddle
between South Lampak and Pk. 21,340 ft, the team turned its
attention to the South West ridge and after establishing Camp III
at 18, 250 ft just below a towering spur, traversed the ice-wall
and followed the ridge to the summit. The summiteers were
M. Sengupta, P. Chaudhury and Sherpas Pasang Tchering, Sim Dorji
and Ang Chhutar.'

- D. Similar information is printed in the *Himalayan Handbook*,
by Joydeep Sircar, Published, at Kolkatta, 1969, p. 85, *American
Alpine Journal*, 1970, p. 186, *The Alpine Journal*, Vol. 75, 1970, p. 194.
Exploring the Hidden Himalaya, page 60, by Soli S Mehta and
Harish Kapadia, *West Bengal Mountaineers Hand Book*, by Kankan
K Ray.

A full article on the expedition was published in the *Himalayan Mountaineering Institute Journal*, Vol. IV, p. 47

Yours sincerely,
K K Ray

(Correspondence on this subject is now closed)

The Editor,
The Himalayan Journal,

Sir,

I read with keen interest, your article entitled 'A Trek in Tawang Tract' based on your walk along the Indian portion of the Bailey Trail which appeared in the well produced 75th anniversary issue, HJ Vol.60. My congratulations.

Reading it, I was reminded of my own climbs, walks and exploration in the Arunachal Himalaya along the McMahon Line. I had written extensive notes on the natural history and travels along the McMahon Line which included an account of exploration of Kangto and the first ascents in the Gorichen group of peaks. These are recorded in published articles in the *Himalayan Journal* Vol. 50 entitled 'Travels in the Arunachal Himalaya'. (Page 84). H.J. Vol 51, page 181, records 'Exploration and climbs in the East Kameng, 1994'. These H.J.'s may be referred to by the interested mountaineers.

A photograph of Kangto was also sent but was not published and is probably with your 'editor's papers' and there is a video film-recording of my team's exploratory work done from this approach which should be available in H.M.I. Darjeeling. ¹

Yours etc.

Dr P.M. Das
Camp Faridkot

¹ Only line drawings were received, which are printed in the article. No photographs were received with the above articles and there are none available in the records of the Himalayan Club. - ed