

1st Girimitra Convention: July 14, 2002

The first Girimitra Convention was held in 2002, the International Mountain Year. Around five hundred trekkers were present for this gathering, which had an air of informality. It was rather a get-together; sans much planning. There was just a strong desire to bring mountain-lovers together and have an interaction.

Mr. Sharad Ovalekar "sir", a first-generation trekker who had groomed many youngsters down the years, presided over the meet. Ramdas Gujarathi inaugurated it; veteran mountaineer Hrishikesh Yadav welcomed the delegates.

It being the first time, the speakers had to explain the thinking behind the gathering. In his address, Ovalekar appreciated the organisers' efforts, and provided some guidance about how it should be followed up in the years to come. The main attraction of the event was a presentation on the first civilian expedition to Everest, and an interview of two men who were a part of it; Hrishikesh Yadav and Uday Kolwankar.

Also, there was a slide-show by Jagannath Raul on Fort Raigad. Pradip Kelkar, who had scaled a hundred Sahyadri peaks, presented a thrilling audio-visual show on rock-climbing. Plus, a short-film on breathtaking climbing of Katra cliff by Aarohak, Pune, was screened.

A memorial-pillar, a homage to hundreds of known/unknown mountaineers who died in expeditions, was unveiled. In an admirable gesture, a few local guides who had been a great help to trekkers in the Sahyadris over the years, were felicitated. Among them were Krishna Aagiwale and his wife (Mahuli), Mr. and Mrs. Balu Chaudhari (Aajoba hill), Mr. Jau-katkari (Baan), Balu Paradhi (Kondiwade), Kamalu Paradhi (Irshalwadi).

There was also an exhibition of rare photographs by well-known Marathi writer, the late G N Dandekar, who was an avid mountain-lover.

All in all, in the very first attempt, without any great theme, the organisers succeeded in putting together discussions and presentations on number of topics.
