

## 5th Giritra Convention: July 23, 2006

The Sammelan has now become a big yearly event, attended by trekking lovers from all corners of Maharashtra. Suggestions to make it better were pouring in, newer themes were being considered. Trek Kshitij of Dombivali accepted the responsibility of organising the 2006 Convention. This year's theme was 'The Sahyadris'.

Writer and mountaineer P K Ghanekar was slated to preside over the Convention, but he could not attend due to unavoidable circumstances. His message to the participants was read out. Former Director of Archaeological Department of Maharashtra, Arvind Jamkhedekar, and founder-director of Kesari Tours, Kesari Patil, were the special guests.

Sahyadris is a vast range. It houses innumerable rivers, forests, forts, temples, and diverse flora and fauna. A presentation, 'The Story of Sahyadris', was made during the convention. Ameya Joshi, Suhas Joshi, Ganesh Abhyankar, Prasanna Vaidya, Saurabh Joglekar, Abhijit Awalaskar, Sudeep Athavale, Parag Dabke, Charuta Kulkarni, Yuvraj Gurjar, Mandar Joshi and Pankaj Juvekar took great efforts to put it together. A presentation on the central theme has become a regular feature of Giritra Conventions since then.

Forts are something that give a historical dimension to the Sahyadris. But governments generally neglect them. Sometime before, the state government had decided to hand over the forts to corporate sector for preservation. In view of this policy decision, a discussion was arranged, however government's representatives remained absent, despite the invitation. But others spoke: Harish Kapadia talked about the significance of Sahyadris, and the possibility of promoting tourism on the lines of Alps in Europe. Arvind Jamkhedekar spoke about the apathy of the archaeological department towards the forts in its care. Handing over the forts to corporates could be a ploy to evade the responsibility, he said. Kesari Patil regretted that in the absence of infrastructure, promoting tourism was difficult.

Another panel discussion took a review of the 50 years of rock climbing in Maharashtra. Shashi Ranade, Dilip Zunjarrao, Shrikant Oak, Moreshwar Kulkarni and Vikas Satarkar took part in it.

For the first time, a photography competition was held; there were some 450 entries. A select few were put on display.

A reference guide containing a comprehensive list of forts and peaks in Maharashtra was published.

The chief organiser of the 5th Convention was Suhas Joshi, who was ably assisted by 75 volunteers of Kshitij group. Sahyadris is the oldest range in India. The organising team of this convention, which centred around this ancient range, was full of young trekking enthusiasts.

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