

## **8th Giritra Convention: July 11 & 12, 2009**

Giritra Convention was conceived seven years ago: the idea was to bring mountain-lovers together and facilitate a dialogue. It also sought to give an identity to trekkers in Maharashtra.

Maharashtra Sewa Sangh, and one of the trekking groups in the state organise it jointly. This year's host was Nisarg-Mitra group of Panvel.

The theme of the Eighth Convention was 'Social Responsibility and Mountaineering'. Special Guest H.P.S. Ahluwalia himself had set a great example of how a mountaineer can fulfill the social responsibility. An accident rendered him disabled. But he went on to set up a well-equipped hospital for the disabled. A short film on his herculean efforts, plus an interview with him on the eve of the convention unfolded this story of an achievement, as lofty as the Everest that he had scaled once.

The main programme began next day with an exhibition of photographs, and another of medicinal herbs growing in the hills which can come in handy during treks. Chandrashekhar Vaze, president of Maharashtra Sewa Sangh, made the introduction. Bharat Thakur welcomed the guests. Giritra Awards were given away at the hands of Sambhajirao Bhide Guruji, and Major H.P.S. Ahluwalia, president, IMF.

In his presidential address, Bhide Guruji praised the theme of the convention. He also made an appeal to the audience to preserve the history of Maharashtra. The film on the convention's central theme, which dealt with this vast subject succinctly, was a hit. Suhas Joshi's efforts were well-appreciated. Later, Samir Karve interviewed Chandrashekhar Barve, Padmakar Gaikwad and Dhananjay Madan on the same topic.

The success of the meet gave a new confidence to Nisarg Mitra. Its volunteers could interact with several senior mountaineers on a big stage. Mugdha Sarang and Vijay Pawar earned compliments for their fluent compeering. The gathering was a success of teamwork put in by Maharashtra Sewa Sangh, several trekking groups, and mountain lovers.